

The Landeswehr War¹

I have attempted to put all place names in their modern Latvian form. These often differ quite considerably from the Estonian and German forms, but does at least allow one to use a modern map. It is unfortunate that the main battle suffers more than most in this respect, since Cēsis = Võnnu = Wenden (in Latvian, Estonian and German respectively).

Time is given in Tallinn time, which is 40 minutes ahead of Berlin time.

The Estonian casualty figures appear quite unreliable – often sources contradict each other – but are given as an indication of the intensity of the fighting. The “wounded” is those unable to continue fighting, so excludes light wounds and includes men concussed or with severe contusions.

Preliminaries

The Estonian 3rd Division had been facing Latvia when the Soviet front collapsed at the end of May under pressure from the Freikorps' drive on Riga, and therefore it fell to them to advance southwards. On 2 June the advance guard of the 2nd Cēsis Regiment arrived in Cēsis from Rūjiena, meeting up with a company sent ahead. They were joined there briefly by Broad Gauge Train #2, which was slowed by the need to fix the bridge at Strenči (just north of Valmeira), which the Reds had destroyed. Colonel Zemitāns arrived that night. The plan appears to have been to leave the Latvians in charge of as much of the north of Latvia as possible, to set up civilian authority and recruit, while ensuring that sufficient Estonian support was available to them if required.

The Estonian 6th Regiment, in the Valmeira area, and the 3rd Regiment, in the Smiltene area, were intending to head basically south-east towards Jēkabpils (the last regiment, the 9th, was heading down the coast near Limbaži). This would take the 6th Regiment very close to Cēsis, and through it if they followed the rail line. However as the Soviet opposition had evaporated troops from the 2nd Division (Estonian 1st Cavalry Regiment and a Danish company) were able to take Jēkabpils on 5 June by themselves, leaving the planned action unnecessary. A couple of days later the town was turned over to the North Latvian 1st Valmeira Regiment and some of the North-Latvian Partisan detachment (about 250 men) as part of the plan that the Latvians should man the sector here against the Soviets and set up local government. The Latvians promptly started to make an armoured train.

Meanwhile the Landeswehr had headed four columns out of Riga. One headed down the Daugava River towards Jēkabpils, and the other three headed northeast, towards Cēsis and Smiltene. By the night of 2 June there were a couple of hundred men in Ieriķi, just south of Cēsis and a cavalry detachment near Smiltene.

There followed a series of delegations on the spot as well as some radio communications between capitals. The Estonians were prepared to negotiate but right from the start ordered their soldiers to open fire if approached by the enemy after a first warning. The fundamental position of the Germans was that the Estonians should retire to their linguistic boundary while the Estonians maintained that they only recognised the Ulmanis Government as sovereign in Latvia and that government had specifically invited them. From the strategic viewpoint, the Estonians insisted that they could not allow potential foes to approach behind their troops facing the Soviets and that the broad gauge railway from Gulbene to Valka was an essential part of their defensive line. They asked that the Landeswehr move east to face the Bolsheviks. There seems to be no reason to believe that if the Balts had agreed to go and man the line against the Soviets that the Estonians would have been anything other than happy.

The First Confrontations

The general positions and movements are shown on the map under “Cēsu kaujas” in Latvijas Brīvības Cīņas, page 94.

By the night of 4 June it was clear that neither party would give way. The Estonians felt that the Germans were merely seeking time to scout their strength and positions, and gave an ultimatum that hostilities would be considered to have commenced the next day if the Germans did not retire. They began to ready their men, basically the 3rd Division, getting those in Valmeira to move forward while their trains patrolled actively. The 2nd Division, facing the Soviets, was ordered to halt its offensive and pull its troops back in case they were required.

The Germans for their part seem to have never had any intention of serious negotiation. They pushed men forward until there were 3 battalions, 2 squadrons and 4 guns near Cēsis, with another 1½ battalions, a cavalry detachment and 2 guns in Ieriķi, slightly to the rear. Unfortunately for him, although von der Goltz's intelligence about Estonian strength was approximately correct, he was led to believe that the Reds would begin an offensive on Riga with two divisions, and a large part of the Iron Division was sent to Ogre to cover this.

On 5 June there was a skirmish at the bridge over the Amata river, just south of Cēsis, when the Estonians moved a train forward to see if the Germans had evacuated Ieriķi as demanded. It is often stated that the Germans started the fighting, but since the Estonians had clearly stated that hostilities had commenced, there is no particular substance to the claim – neither side attempted in any real manner to avoid the following battles and who fired the first shot is largely irrelevant.

¹ This is the Estonian term for the fighting.



The Germans attacked in force the next day, starting at 3:30 in the morning, attempting to outflank Cēsis town from two sides. The defenders were the Latvian 2nd Cēsis Regiment, who were positioned in a semicircle south of the town itself. The train #2 went forward and briefly skirmished but the defenders were unable to stop the German advance. By 3 in the afternoon the town was abandoned, the train assisting to ferry Latvians out.

This was the first time in combat for the Latvian troops and the Estonian account is that many panicked and continued to retire as far back as Valmeira. Certainly they were not used in the following days, which suggests that they were indeed badly shaken by their experience.

The Estonian Division commander, Lt-Colonel Reek, only learnt of the bad news that evening. He immediately ordered his men forward. The 6th Regiment moved its 1st Battalion to the north-west of Cēsis at Stalbe, the other two heading down the main road towards Cēsis. The command of this regiment, the Latvians and the three armoured trains now present (BG #2, #4 and #5) were given to Alamkapten Tallo. Three batteries of the 3rd Artillery Regiment (1st = 2 x 12cm guns, 2nd = 2 x 9cm guns and 6th = 4 x 9cm guns) moved to Valmeira, along with Lt-Colonel Reek, and were then sent off towards the action after some encouragement from their divisional commander.

The rest of the Estonian forces were spread out across the breadth of northern Latvia. The Balodis Latvian forces were also spreading out.

On 7 June the 1st Battalion took positions based on Lenči and spread along the road past Stalbe, along with the Tallinn Independent Squadron and 6th Battery. The 2nd Battalion, with the 4th Battery, settled behind the Gauja River, to the west of the railway and highway, to link up with the 1st at Lenči. The 3rd Battalion and 1st Battery were to the east of the railway, behind the Rauna river. Further to the east the 3rd Regiment was in Rauna town and had pushed forward to hold the main highway south of the town. The Latvian Cēsis Regiment was slightly to the rear in Liepa, reforming. The Landeswehr, by now estimated by the Estonians at some 1,500 to 2,000 men, formed a semicircle around the northern half of the town, 2 to 3 km out, but had pushed pickets up to the Estonian line. The Estonians noted two German planes operating at this time.

Attack of 8 June

The basic positions and movements are shown in Map 12 of Eesti Vabadussõda.

The Estonian Left Wing

The attack was launched early in the morning with the 2nd Battalion, advancing over open land from the east, as the main thrust. The armoured car "Estonia" had arrived to support the right flank of the attack, presumably on the road. The armoured trains were unable to advance because the rail line had been demolished. The left flank was delayed waiting for the elements of the 3rd Regiment to the south to catch up. By 6 o'clock they were about 5 kms from the town from Jēkuļi through to Friedenberg estate¹ and the enemy's lines were clearly visible. After waiting some time for the delayed support from the 3rd Regiment the lines were re-arranged and a firefight commenced. At 10 o'clock the advance continued, and a hour later the 5th Company took Annasmuiža estate,² along with a height overlooking it. The 7th Company was making little progress in the middle, being in the open, so the battalion commander added the reserve 8th Company to the Annasmuiža attack. However the Balts concentrated their MG and cannon fire there so that even the added support of the trains to the 4th battery, which had made it past the first obstacle and were now delayed near Jēkuļi by another, were insufficient. The Estonians were forced to retire from the estate, although they soon returned.

Meanwhile the 6th Company, on the extreme left, which benefited from some cover, was able to advance as far as Rukums, where it was pinned. In order to support this, the Division commander ordered the 3rd Regiment to send two companies in support. But the order was not given until 3 o'clock in the afternoon, and by the time it took an hour to reach Rauna and two hours to send the companies the German counter-attack had driven the advanced company back to alongside the 7th Company near Friedenberg. At 4 o'clock the Germans attacked with 3 companies in the centre and tried to outflank the Estonians to the south. The two Estonian companies had to retire with the 7th, still in open country, taking heavy fire. It was not until 8 in the evening that the promised two companies from the 3rd Regiment arrived, whereupon they were attached to the 2nd Battalion and positioned on the southern end of the Jaunrauna to Veselava³ road.

The Annasmuiža position was abandoned to shorten the front during the night and the trains retired back a bit – #2 had been damaged during the fighting. The Battalion now had three of its companies at the northern end on the line – the 5th had crossed the railway line; the 8th and then 7th ran from the railway to Bites. The 6th then covered the open stretch behind the Rauna river and the end of the line was guarded by the two companies of the 3rd Regiment.

The Estonian Right

The 3rd Battalion started its advance at the same time, but it only had 2 companies, a foot scouts detachment and the attached battery. It was advancing through forest, which led to the companies losing contact. They were all stopped by

¹ This may be modern Priekuļu muiža.

² Annenhof

³ Shown as Veselauka on the Estonian maps.



German fire at the forest's edge, including mortars on near the railway line. Moving their battery forward and the one of the 1st Battalion to the east from Lenči was insufficient to suppress the Balts, since they were well hidden. The battalion commander ordered a withdrawal and the men moved back across the Gauja, except the eastern end which linked up to the 3rd Battalion.

Only the battery and one company of the 1st Battalion participated on the day. The company made several attempts, into the evening, to force the Gauja bridge at Silke¹ but could not due to MG and mortar fire.

Aftermath

The Estonians recorded only 3 dead and 23 wounded in the battle – concentrated in the 7th Company, 2nd Battalion, which had spent most of its time in the open. The German casualties were said to be five times as large, but this is probably poetic licence.

One cannot but feel that the attack was more by way of sounding out than determined offensive, given the low casualties. The advance was on a long frontage and contact was lost between advancing elements. Oddly, the 3rd Regiment in Rauna seemed unprepared to support the attack, despite the fact that they must have heard the fighting, and on the other side the 1st Battalion, 6th Regiment attempted to force the bridge with only one company (out of four companies and squadron). It is also possible that the MG and mortar strength of the Balts came as a surprise, and the damage to the railway prevented the trains, and their landing companies, from assisting.

The Balts Counter-Attack

The Estonians intended to try again on the 10th, but the Landeswehr launched their counter the day before at 2 o'clock in the morning. They drove up the rail line, capturing the height and were able to open flanking fire to both sides. The fog allowed them to bring up a battery to close range. The Estonians tried to remain as long as they could to enable the trains #4 and #5 to retire across the bridge (presumably they did not have steam up and so took some time getting started). Both trains took damage, including a major hit on a MG carriage of #4, but eventually made it across. The infantry could not use the bridge, due to the amount of fire, and some had to cross the Gauja and Rauna by swimming.

The Balts do not appear to have attempted to cross the rivers, which allowed the Estonians to rally. The 4th Battery, in particular, had managed to get their horses separated from their guns and it took a while to sort them out. The armoured car "Estonia" came up to defend the bridge, before departing at 4 o'clock for the 3rd Regiment in Veselava.

The next day a Balt unit (a company of the 1st Baltic Battalion?) crossed the Gauja at Vinduli ferry, perhaps 100 strong, again at 2 o'clock in the morning. The 1st Battalion sent a platoon up, by which time the Balts had moved north-west 3 kilometres. The 6th Battery had just received new British guns and, together with the 1st Battery, were able to drive back the attack. Some three hours after the crossing the Balts were back on their side. The 6th Battery now started to shell the enemy rear, hitting the horses of a German squadron, 50 of whom bolted across the Silke bridge to be collected by the grateful Estonians!

Meanwhile

The 3rd Regiment had no opposition at this time, but were approached by a Russian unit belonging to Prince Lieven, who asked to be allowed to march to join the White Russians in Pskov. They were not allowed to pass by the Estonians. The Russians assured the Estonians that they would not attack, even if ordered to by the German command.

Much further east a squadron, 70 sabres plus tail, under Captain Engelhardt was scouting in the Gulbene area. It bumped into elements of the 2nd Division and some testy negotiations ensued. On 7 June there was some fighting between the Estonian Horse Scouts in the area, and the Germans retired after having a fair portion of their tail captured.

On 8 June a German plane was forced down near Narva, and the next day two more were "shot" down – the Estonian 4th Regiment were obviously good shots. These planes were attempting to reach the White Russian "Northern Army Corps" to interest them in operations against the Estonians. While there was no real chance of such a plan ever coming to fruit, it must have confirmed all the Estonians suspicions regarding the real aims of the Landeswehr and Freikorps.

Truce

By now the Allies had put pressure on the Estonians to negotiate. A party came from Tallinn with both Allied and Estonian officers and crossed the lines to Cēsis on 9 June. By the morning of 10 June a truce had been agreed to, starting at 7:50 that morning. There was also to be no regrouping or air activity. Twelve hours warning were required before it could be broken.

Negotiations continued, both sides sending military and civilian negotiators – the "Latvians" were represented by Niedra's war minister and Fletcher for the Landeswehr. The Allies were unfortunately headed by the US Lt-Colonel Greene, who was new to the area and still pro-German. The Balts continued to demand that the Estonians return behind their linguistic boundary and that the North-Latvian Brigade be placed under their command. The Estonians were happy to retire a bit, but insisted on keeping the rail lines to supply their troops facing the Soviets (especially Valka–Ieriķi–

¹ To the east, on the Cēsis–Straupe road.



Gulbene). The Allies main objective was to get both parties facing the Soviets and tried to persuade the Balts to move to the Jēkabpils front, and were happy that all the Latvian forces, Lettish and Balt, would remain under Landeswehr command to do so.

The negotiations recommenced on 13 June, but now the Allied party was headed by the British Lt-General Gough. He had far less patience with the Germans and demanded they all withdraw, that the Reich Germans start to withdraw from Latvia and the Landeswehr move to Soviet front. The Balts hesitated, not happy with the new turn. A few days later they replied that the Estonians were withdrawing from the Soviet front (not true) and that the Landeswehr could not move to replace them until after the Estonians had withdrawn back to their country. Obviously nothing was moving much and both sides issued ultimatums: the Estonians giving the negotiations scheduled for 20 June as the last chance for an agreement, but this was trumped by the Balts who at exactly the same time gave the Estonians until 18 June to retire to their linguistic border. Neither side willing to move, it was agreed that the truce would end on 19 June. The Estonian command ordered their men to be ready, but not to start hostilities.

The truce was not particularly well kept, mainly because both sides tended to send men out to scout, or spy, on the other. The Germans also keep up some aerial reconnaissance. The Germans built a pontoon bridge near Inčukalns to assist transporting troops over the Gauja. As part of their preparations the Freikorps “lent” the Iron Division to Niedra’s Balt Latvian government, to keep up the pretence that this was a solely a Latvian-Estonian affair.

Fighting Recommences

See Eesti Vabadussõda map 14 for the deployments in the Cēsis area.

Von der Goltz’s plan was to strike up the Sigulda to Valmeira road with the Iron Division, outflanking the Cēsis position. A covering force would operate against the Estonians in Limbaži, but if the main thrust was blocked, then another outflanking move in this direction might be used. The Landeswehr was to attack after the Iron Division had broken the line at Stalbe, starting with an outflanking attack on the right (Böckelmann column) and then after an hour’s delay each time, attacks towards Starte (Malmede column) and then up the rail line (Von Jena column).

Other Iron Division forces were in Ogre, poised to resist a feared Bolshevik attack and also, presumably, because they did not trust the Balodis Brigade not to side with the enemy. By now the whole of the Landeswehr’s 1st Regiment (the former Manteuffel Stormtroop battalion), arguably their best unit, was in Riga shooting “Communists” (after a brief spell by two companies at Cēsis). This seems rather odd, but perhaps they were put at ease by the lack of determination shown in the Estonian attack before the truce. The Iron Division, however, was clearly not fully committed to the attack and its commander, Major Bischoff, argued against the plan.

Lt-Colonel Reek appears to have largely guessed that the attacks would be on the flanks. He felt that the broken nature of the land around the Cēsis-Valmeira rail line and the armoured trains would make progress difficult in his centre. Accordingly he left only a thin cover north of Cēsis town – a battalion of the 6th Regiment – and placed the green Latvian regiment in the open fields to the east. The bulk of the 6th Regiment – three battalions and 2 armoured cars – he moved to guard the Sigulda-Valmeira road (ie facing the Iron Division’s main thrust). The 3rd Regiment he placed to his right – one battalion extending the wing of the Latvians and the other battalions behind it stretching eastwards.

This extension of the 3rd Regiment in front of Rauna was caused by the presence of various units along the Riga-Pskov highway – there were an unknown number of Germans and some of Balodis’s Latvian Brigade. Prince Lieven’s Russians were no longer seen but were unaccounted for. Although both the Latvians and Russians professed neutrality, the Estonians could not be certain that they would not attack if it looked like the Balts were going to win. The 9th Regiment, which was quite weak, was guarding the Limbaži area.

The Estonians were intending to defend initially, counter-attacking when opportunity presented. This was politically advantageous, since it presented the Balts as the aggressors, and they were also at this point still expecting reinforcements from the other fronts. There was a planned second defensive line just south of the Estonian border covering Valka (ie they did not intend to defend Valmeira).

19 June

See Eesti Vabadussõda map 13 for the fighting around Limbaži and Straupe.¹

The flank detachment of the Iron Division (a battalion, a squadron and a battery) started out on the western road to Limbaži with the assistance of aerial reconnaissance. They were advancing towards the Estonian 9th Regiment, which was neither strong, nor very good. Some Estonian foot scouts repelled a small unit of scouting German cavalry just south of Vidriži at midday, and then again at 5 o’clock in the afternoon. By 9 o’clock a German infantry company arrived and the scouts retired into Vidriži, intending to defend it with the local Latvian home defence unit. At 11 o’clock the Germans attacked with artillery, taking the town in half an hour, and killing half a dozen defenders.

The Iron Division also moved a battalion up the eastern road to Limbaži, but both sides contented themselves with some

¹ Roopa in Estonian.



sending forward patrols to skirmish with the enemy.

20 June

Limbaži

Captain Blankenburg received orders to press ahead – it appears that he was to clear Limbaži and then turn right and advance towards Valmeira (reaching Augstroze perhaps). This would place him in a position to cover the flank of the Iron Division's main drive. The Estonian and Latvians had retired from Vidriži back to the Aijaži–Igate region, but they now fell back to join the main body of the 2nd Battalion, 9th Regiment at Vankul, east of the lake (just under 10km south of Limbaži). They attacked at 1:30 p.m. but were repulsed, thanks partly to the Estonian 4th Battery platoon. At 4 p.m. they attacked again, now with artillery support, and this time successfully. The Estonians fell back about 2 kilometres. The Germans reached this about 5 o'clock and attacked with two companies. A firefight started with the Estonian 5th Company and foot scouts (and presumably Latvians), later the German artillery duelled with the attached platoon of the 4th Battery and German planes attacked ground targets.

At 6:30 the Estonian regimental commander reached the battalion HQ at Mucnieks,¹ and from there the two officers went forward. Hearing the sound of the fighting, they decided to attempt to envelop the Germans from both sides – the 8th Company would round the lake to the west and the 7th Company would cut across from their positions on the road near Strasde to Vankul, being careful that no-one was in their rear. The Signals Officer ran back to Mucnieks and telephoned the orders at 7 o'clock. The 6th Company was coming up from the rear down the main road and the 1st Company in Jaunit was to come across as well.

At 8 o'clock the Germans pierced the Estonian front, using a rye field that hindered vision to get behind the rear of the defending units, who retired hastily. One German company now pressed on up the road to Baldas and the other, with the cavalry remained behind it in Bullmuiža. This time it was the turn of the Germans to be surprised as the Estonian 6th Company, having moved forward in the shelter of a stream and some bushes was able, after eliminating a small MG post on the hill overlooking them, to creep up on the forward German column through another rye field. A charge in the flank and the Germans fled. The pursuit was cut short by supporting German fire, presumably from the rear unit.

The 4th Battery had not yet reached a suitable position, but now the Estonian regimental artillery opened a lively fire. The commanders of the 5th and 6th Companies were ordered to follow up the retiring enemy. By this time, between 9 and 10 o'clock, the 8th Company, less a platoon left to guard its flank, had made its flanking march around the lake and stood in the way of the German retreat. Unfortunately the Germans seemed to have spotted this and skirted the area using small forest roads. Their way should have been blocked by the 7th Company, which had been ordered to attack the rear on that side, but after concentrating its forces it had failed to advance as ordered – perhaps fearing an attack in the rear from the east. The Germans were thus able to escape what could have been a very nasty trap. Nonetheless the Estonians took half a dozen MGs, about 100 rifles and estimated the German dead as 19 on the field and some taken with the retreating units. Their own losses were slight – they are recorded as 2 dead and 3 dozen wounded.

There was a short pursuit the next morning, which led to units mistaking each other and one man killed and a couple wounded by friendly fire. The regiment then retired back to its old positions. Scouts reported that the Germans had retired past Vidriži. The poor German performance during the day and precipitous retreat may be partly explained by the fact that the commander, Blankenburg, had been mortally wounded during the attack.

Some speculation: there is no mention of the third German company, but it presumably was following behind the forward two, as was standard operating procedure in WWI. The MG company may have been parcelled out, which would explain the separate MG section that needed to be silenced before the leading German column could be safely attacked in the flank and the number captured. The Estonians only mention approximately 30 cavalry, but it seems likely that the rest were operating as flank and rear pickets – perhaps that is how the retreating units knew to take side routes to avoid the company in their rear, although the airplanes may also have spotted this movement. Finally, the ratio of German to Estonian dead may well be the result of wounded and stragglers being shot rather than captured – little quarter was shown in open battle.

Straupe

Early in the morning a column moved up from the main Iron Division force towards Straupe, with the objective of breaking through in the Stalbe area to Lenči. The 4th Squadron rode ahead, followed by the 3rd Btn/1st Regt, half the 7th Battery and a mortar company. The rest followed 1½ kms back (2nd Btn/2nd Regt, Jäger battalion, 2½ batteries).

Straupe was stormed at 9 a.m. and the small unit of dismounted cavalry scouts departed north. Von Kleist then ordered a rest for the main body and sent the leading column out scouting, with the cavalry squadron to advance to Stalbe. The cavalry was caught by flanking fire from the Estonian cavalry scouts, who had set up an ambush, and retired in disorder.

The Estonians now advanced with the 15th Company, supported by a platoon of the pupils company, cavalry scouts and the Latvian squadron. The 15th Company broke in two and attacked the town from two directions, using the stone walls of the local cemetery as cover on one side, but seem to have been beaten off fairly easily, losing 2 dead, three captured

¹ Mutsenek in Estonian.



and 2 wounded. Now the Estonian artillery (3 guns) opened up. A section an HMG crew crept up through a rye field and opened up on a battery in the German rear – there was a flurry of activity and automobiles started to retire, but return battery and MG fire soon saw the Estonians off.

The Germans had actually had an attack against Stalbe planned for 4 p.m. but it seems the two Estonian attacks disorganised them, and it was cancelled and defensive positions taken. This was extremely fortunate for the Estonians, because the defenders of Stalbe (2nd Btn, 6th Regt) had just completed a march from Lode (to the NE of Cēsis) and were quite tired. The defenders retired back from their positions near Straupe, because they feared that they would be too easily outflanked. The Latvian cavalry retired back to Valmeira and was not seen again in the fighting, it seems because there was concern its German uniforms would lead to confusion.

Although the Limbaži attack had faltered due to superior enemy forces and an ambush, the lack of energy shown by von Kleist is hard to explain. Nevertheless, despite the Iron Division not reaching anywhere near Lenči, the Landeswehr was still ordered to attack the next day.

The Estonian 3rd Division appear to have been convinced that the Iron Division force was much larger than it actually was, so in this sector they spent the entire battle on defence, despite orders from Laidoner to attack.

21 June

See Eesti Vabadussõda map 14, although map 13 shows the terrain in the Straupe/Stalbe area better.

Limbaži–Vidriži

Having seen off the flanking force of the Iron Division the day before the 9th Regiment remained basically inactive. In the afternoon it was forbidden to advance down the road south until Straupe had been retaken. Scouts heading towards Straupe ran into the parts of the German 4th Squadron, and retired after a brief firefight, allowing the cavalry into Lēdurga.

Stalbe

The Estonian 4th Battalion was behind the swampy Nabba river valley. To their left the 2nd Battalion held the open ground across to Ozols, by Rusleg Lake, again mostly covered with swampy stream along the front at the bottom of the wheat-covered Stalbe heights. However forest covered the frontage of the 8th Company on the right, allowing the enemy to advance unhindered, and there was some open ground on the left of the line near Muceniaks and Ozols.

The Estonians located a battery in an orchard near Stalbe, with their observer in the tavern, and opened fire on Straupe at 4 a.m.. The German artillery replied, and the shooting lasted for several hours, with occasional pauses.

Von Kleist meanwhile ordered his men out to scout the Estonian positions. The 2nd Battalion was to scout the right side, between Rusleg Lake and Stalbe; the 3rd Battalion would take the centre; the Jäger Battalion would take the left out to the road to Limbaži. The officers' patrol of the 4th Squadron was to see if contact could be made with Blankenburg's column to the west. At 6 o'clock the Estonians started seeing the first scouts and opened fire.

At 8 o'clock a general attack was made on the central Estonian battalion (the 2nd). With artillery support the Germans advanced in bounds, to reach 150–200 metres of the two Estonian companies in front of Stalbe. After half an hour of rifle, MG and artillery defensive fire, the Germans withdrew at about 10 a.m. An hour later the 3rd Battalion attacked again, supported by two batteries, part of the MG company, a mortar platoon and two infantry guns. A company on their right flank also attacked, with two mortars and an infantry gun in support, while the rest of the battalion probed for weakness in the defenders' lines. The Jäger battalion remained in place on the left and the other troops were kept as a reserve behind the height north of Straupe. It seems that von Kleist had been incorrectly told by air reconnaissance (twice) that an enemy column was advancing on his extreme left near Viciems and he felt unable to move the Jägers, though they were to support the attacks with their fire.

The attack, and another that followed in the afternoon, were unable to make progress despite the strong artillery and mortar fire. The Estonian 2nd Battalion commander and the 7th Company commander were both incapacitated and the troops on the Stalbe hill suffered badly in their little foxholes. There was a partial collapse in the Estonian lines when a platoon of the Pupils' Company near Lake Rusleg were surprised and fled.

Regrouping, von Kleist took two Jäger companies from the left flank to the right and used them to outflank the defenders around Ozols and Muceniaks, leaving only one Jäger company and 2 MGs to guard the left flank. Around 4 o'clock they broke the line, which was only guarded by a single remaining Pupils' platoon and advanced on Stalbe estate. The 6th Company and most of the Pupils' Company were defending it, although the students failed to see the attack until quite late because of big park trees. Under heavy MG fire the Germans moved up to assault the estate when two armoured cars and NG Train #4 Landing Company arrived down the road from Valmeira, having marched from Valka. The "Estonia" carried on down the road while the "Toonela" moved to among the estate houses, which led to a swift retreat by the Germans. The students and Landing Company now filled the breach in the line at Ozols, without the cars which could not move through the poor terrain. Meanwhile the supporting attack in the centre came within 100 metres of the Estonians before being beaten back. The corresponding artillery duel resulted in the destruction of one



German gun.

One more attempt was made by the Iron Division 2nd Battalion on Mucenieks in the evening but not very successfully, partly because the Jäger commander, fearing a flank attack from Rusleg Lake area refused to advance in support (in fact there were only pickets in the area). Shooting continued until 11 p.m. however.

Von Kleist had learnt during the day of the sad fate of the Blankenburg column, confirmed by his returning cavalry patrol. He thus started to fear for his flank even more, although he must have worked out that the column reported by the planes was bogus. Still he prepared once more to attack to support the Landeswehr.

The Estonian 4th Battalion to the west saw only scouts all day, but the 1st Battalion to the east managed to shoot down a low-flying plane that had earlier been bothering the Estonian artillery.

The Estonian losses for the day are recorded as 4 officers and 18 other ranks, dead and wounded.

Cēsis

See Eesti Vabadussõda map 14.

At 1 in the morning a small group, reinforced with MGs and mortars, attacked the Silke bridge but were forced back across. The Vinduli ferry was also the scene of activity, though no crossing. These were probably merely decoy attacks to disguise the main thrust, because this sector was very quiet for the rest of the day.

Although both Iron Division columns had still failed to attain their objectives, the Baltic Landeswehr attacked as planned, with the thrust starting in the east (Böckelmann), followed by one to its north (Malmede) until the entire eastern portion of the Cēsis line was in action (Jena last). At 2:15 an artillery and mortar bombardment preceded the attack by the Malmede column, especially on the Cēsis regiment (which was the only one in the open to any extent). Meanwhile the Böckelmann column had attacked the 3rd Btn, 3rd Regt in the forest around Veselava. Quarter of an hour later the two forward battalions of the Cēsis Regiment, largely in the open, was also bombarded (the third battalion was in close reserve) and German troops could be seen moving forward. The Latvian artillery tried to knock out the Balt artillery, but without great success, partly because it was unable to co-ordinate properly with the infantry. From 3:30 the Balt infantry attack intensified, especially on the junction between the Latvians and the Estonians to their left. At 5 o'clock the von Jena column entered the fray, in the direction of the bridges over the Gauja on the road to Valmeira and also the northern end of the Cēsis regiment.

The join between the Latvians and the 3rd Regiment was put under sufficient pressure that a company of the Estonians retired from the farmstead they were holding in the line, but by 7 o'clock the Latvians had recovered that section and once more linked back up with the Estonians. However, the rest of the Latvian lines were not going well and all the reserves were fed in. The Balts used gas in counter-battery fire and although losses were low this forced the Valmeira Battery to first change position at 7 o'clock slightly north and then to move further, to near Lode on the railway line. The Cēsis Battery also moved, to the forest edge north of Lode.

The new positions enabled the artillery, along with the train "Kapitan Irv", to stem the attacks along the road northwards, but left the Cēsis Regiment in the open completely unsupported. The German artillery took advantage and between 8 and 9 o'clock the Lettish companies lost contact with both their regimental HQ and supporting units.

As part of the German thrust their armoured train had crossed the Rauna just before 7 o'clock and dispersed the local Estonian forces, including a landing company of NG train #3 at the railway bridge. It had been delayed in its attack by the need to remove all the obstacles on the track to prevent enemy trains, and then by damage caused by Estonian artillery trying to hit it. The Estonians now gathered at the edge of the forest encircling Lode, including the landing battalion of train #2 which had been sent up in support and the 11th Company towards the west. Despite the fact that the Balts had two batteries brought up and some MGs hidden in the trees on the south bank of the Rauna, they were able to make any real headway. Their artillery took some losses, including a large amount of its ammunition (later a gun blew up, killing many of the crew and putting another out of action – it was not a good day for the Balt gunners). The train took some minor hits and halted just short of Lode station.

It seems that about 9 o'clock the southern portion of the Cēsis Regiment was pushed back sufficiently that the Germans could outflank the northern portion, which broke. Several officers having been lost, many of the men panicked and scattered, but the bulk of the 2nd and 3rd Battalions, together with the HQ headed north to the east of Lode (estimated at some 350–400 organised bayonets that afternoon) to join in the forces surrounding that station. Two German columns now moved into the hole left by the retreat of the Letts – the first attacked north towards Liepa and Lode following the retreating Letts and the other also attacked north, but further east towards Skangaļi and Starte.

The Landeswehr armoured train decided soon after 9 o'clock to attack Lode station – presumably in conjunction with the column that was pursuing the retiring Letts. Unfortunately it ran into two Estonian trains at short range and after taking a couple more minor hits retired back to Cēsis to get water. The Landeswehr coming from the south pressed on however, taking Liepe, and things started to look desperate enough that every available defender, cooks and clerks included, was pressed into preventing them from taking Lode. The trains and recently arrived Latvian artillery assisted.

Also adding its weight was the Estonian 1st Battery, who were able to shoot into the left flank of the Balts advancing on Lode. Once again gas was tried by the Balts in counter-battery fire, but unsuccessfully this time. The southern Gauja



bank was now the scene of some apparent activity, so the Estonian artillery shifted its focus to there at about 10 o'clock, and with the 11th Company they kept any Landeswehr from grouping for a crossing.

With the northern end of the line gone, during the next hour the Latvian 1st Battalion was also forced back, but the remainder (125–150 bayonets) chose to head east to just north of Rauna, presumably since the way north was blocked. A column followed up, which also forced the Estonian 3rd Regiment to evacuate the Veselauska area rather than be attacked in the rear, and they fell back to Rauna. Further south the Böckelmann column was able to continue its passage along the Riga–Pskov highway, now that the enemy in front of it had retired.

Just before 11 o'clock Lt-Colonel Reek, commander of the Estonian Division, and Captain Karl Parts of the Armoured Trains *Divizion* met to discuss the situation. They agreed that the Kuperjanov Battalion, recently arrived at the Lode station, would attack Liepa accompanied by the Kalevlaste Maleva Battalion if it arrived in time. They were aware that the 1st Battalion of the 1st Regiment was heading south from Valka and it was directed towards Starte and Rauna to link up with the 3rd Regiment, it being considered important that the Rauna heights be held. Obviously though he did not feel that the retreat of the Cēsis Regiment was too threatening though, since he felt able to send the two armoured cars and the NG Train #4 Landing Company from Valmeira to aid the troops in Stalbe – fortunately, since they arrived just in time to help crush the breakthrough there, as we have seen above. The BG Train #2 arrived at Lode just after 11 a.m., the 2nd Battery/3rd Arty Regt was unloaded and ready by 3 p.m. Unfortunately the lack of artillery commander reduced the effectiveness of the combined group in the area, which now numbered 2 heavy guns, 6 light guns and the guns of 3 trains.

The Kuperjanov Battalion ran into the enemy on the Cēsis–Skangaļi road as they moved towards Liepa at around 11:30, adding straggling Latvians to their strength as they went. The BG train #2 Battalion accompanied them. A intense fire-fight developed, with both sides taking full advantage of forest cover and pushing up MGs and light guns in support. This situation was to last into the evening, with dangerous German cavalry unit threatening the Estonian eastern flank repulsed by artillery just after 3 o'clock.

About noon the German armoured train made another attempt on Lode station. Despite encountering the three trains there and taking some hits it continued to close range. The brief battle ended when the German locomotive took damage and it retired, possibly having done serious damage to one of the Estonian trains. The rail bridge was now the subject of some attention by Estonian artillery, presumably to prevent repeat attacks.

The 3rd Regiment had been basically holding the Landeswehr in the Veselava area, with minor scares, until the collapse of the Cēsis Regiment. The 1st and 3rd Battalions fell back using delaying actions and were joined by the Lettish 1st Battalion, until at 2 pm they were just in front of Rauna, with the Latvians to their north up to Mūris. Communication with HQ in Valmeira was now only possible by way of the Rauna–Biksēja connection, and half the 3rd Regiment's 5th Company in Smiltene was transported by train to Biksēja to guard the regimental "tail" and the phone lines. The Tallinn Independent Squadron patrolled the area between the Rauna and Lide. The Balts continued their attacks into the night, and although the regimental commander reported that his situation was intolerably bad, the Estonians and Latvians held their ground.

The Gauja river line north and east of Cēsis saw little action during the day – a small crossing near the Vinduli ferry and an attack on the Silke bridge were both beaten off fairly quickly. However, at about 4 p.m. a handful of Estonians crossed in a boat near the Vinduli road and took the pickets by surprise, taking an MG and a mortar in the process. More men followed and headed towards Cēsis town. The Balts halted and started a fire-fight. The arrival of a detachment formed out of the German rear echelon men in the town forced them back and between 6 and 7 o'clock they returned to the north bank of the river. Although losses had been light and was only minor scale, the diversion had a huge benefit for the Estonians because the 1st Battalion, 1st Regiment of the Iron Division which had been in reserve at Inčulkaļns (on the railway to Riga) was now sent to Cēsis because the Balt command feared an Estonian drive across the Gauja when its presence was required in far more important sectors.

Meanwhile the eastern-most of the Balt columns that had headed north after breaking through the Latvians had been largely unopposed. They took Starte before 4 p.m. and cavalry scouts were at Murmuiža, just south of Valmeira. Lt-Colonel Reek sent his last reserves – the armoured car "Vanapagan", a handful of men from NG train #4 and the 6th Regiment sappers – to halt them. They met some retreating Latvians there, including 15 cavalymen, but no enemy. The car skirmished briefly during a scouting trip south but returned to the Murmuiža estate, where reinforcements were promised. Meanwhile the units in Starte – including men of the Petersdorff Battalion, Drachenfels Squadron and artillery – remained there overnight.

At about 8 p.m. Captain Parts ordered all the artillery in the Lode area to support the Kuperjanov Battalion still making no real progress towards Liepa. Earlier the "Kapten Irw" Landing Battalion had attempted to outflank the enemy left in the forests but had been repelled after fierce fighting among the trees. The bombardment however was sufficient to compel the Balts to retreat – the pursuers taking rifles, grenades and an infantry gun that had been causing them many problems.

After taking Liepa several companies pressed on towards the Rauna bridge under the cover of the artillery. After some resistance the Balts pulled back south of the Rauna, although many stragglers were caught. The Landeswehr train tried to support the support its infantry but was then called back to Cēsis to combat the looting that had started there.



In the middle of the afternoon Reek had been told by the Estonian High Command to counter-attack and that the 2nd Division would support this by attacking towards Ieriki. Reek was given command of the 2nd Cavalry Regiment, but not know where it was – in fact it was to spend the night near Vecpiebalga, some 45 kilometres south-east of Cēsis. Other reinforcements included the heavy platoon of the 1st Battery/3rd Arty Regt, which was unpacked in Lode by 8 p.m. and the Kalevlaste Maleva which arrived in Valmeira at that same time.

The day ended with the Iron Division held in the west and north of Cēsis, but with a gaping hole in the Estonian line east of the town. The limited Estonian counter-attacks had held the Rauna bridge area, but since Reek had considered this a relatively easy place to defend and was the only place his strength in trains could be used this was perhaps unsurprising. If the Landeswehr forces in Starte had moved west into the flank and rear of the Estonians in the late afternoon, the situation would have been much grimmer. As it was, the commander of the 3rd Division concluded that the Landeswehr was not especially strong, and prepared to counter-attack, as ordered by Laidoner during the day.

Estonian losses for the day are hard to piece together but do not seem very high – the 3rd Regiment lost 11 dead, 2 missing, 62 wounded. The Kapiten Irw Battalion 5 dead and 11 wounded. However, the majority of the losses were almost certainly in the Cēsis Regiment, aggravated by the fact that both sides seem to have shot all prisoners taken in the field (though not those taken by surprise or taken in less heated moments).

22 June

See Eesti Vabadussõda map 15.

Limbaži–Vidriži

After remaining basically stationary the day before, the Estonians now moved on. The regimental commander was concerned that the covering force proposed by Reek would be insufficient if the Germans rallied and attacked again so he sent only half his force towards Straupe, via Lēdurga.

His 1st Company moved along the coast.

His 3rd, 7th and 8th Companies, regimental battery and scouts headed towards Limbaži, spotting first enemy scouts and a reconnaissance plane and then a larger body dug in to defend Vever farm. Assaulting Vever frontally seemed too costly, so a company moved through the forest to out-flank the enemy, who retreated, leaving behind several MGs. This however took most of the afternoon. The plane, which had dropped some bombs, was hit and forced to land.

The Estonians then moved on to Bīriņi, where opposition was again met. This time one company attacked frontally, while the other two each tried to turn a flank. There was rifle, MG and artillery fire in response but few losses. After an hour the attackers were close to the estate when the Iron Division troops broke and fled, abandoning 6 MGs. The attackers now quartered there for the night, disturbed by a returning cavalry unit who apparently did not realise that their main unit had retired and some artillery fire between 2 and 3 o'clock. The column only lost one officer and one ranker dead and half a dozen wounded during the day.

Reek had now ordered no further advance southwards until Straupe was captured, so the advance halted.

Meanwhile the other companies moved south down a more eastern road reaching Lēdurga unhindered. After scouting the area to ensure that there was no enemy remaining the 5th and 6th Companies turned east and moved on to Jugla estate. There they had a brief clash with the enemy, who retired. This left them well positioned behind the rear of the Iron Division in Straupe.

Straupe–Stalbe

Von Kleist informed the Landeswehr HQ very early in the morning of 22 June that there were strong enemy forces in the Stalbe area and that Major Bischoff, commanding the Iron Division, had asked that the 1st Battalion/1st Regiment (the reserve that had been fruitlessly sent to Cēsis the day before) attack along the Cēsis–Stalbe road, starting at 5 a.m. The situation of the Landeswehr, however, meant that this did not happen.

The Estonians moreover were in a position to support their men and the 1st Company/6th Regiment (who had been guarding the Gauja south of Vinduli) were sent to Stalbe, arriving at 3 a.m. After a short rest they attacked the Ozols and Mucenieks farms (where the Germans had broken through the day before) in the company of the NG train #4 Landing Company. They found only pickets there, but were brought under artillery and mortar fire, killing the company commander. Then the Germans counter-attacked, including an out-flanking movement from the east. Between 8 and 9 o'clock the defenders were forced out of both farms and retired back to Stalbe. Slightly to the east of that attack portions of the Jäger Battalion attacked the company in Brencitis farm, who feared being outflanked and retired northwards. With the flank failing, and contact with the 1st Battalion under threat, the regiment commander sent the "Estonia" armoured car down the road, which prevented further German exploitation of the breach. The Jäger commander then informed von Kleist that he held the Mucenieks–Ozols–Brencitis farms line and would advance with the arrival of the requested 1st Battalion reserve (which was never to arrive).

At midday the Germans learned that the Estonians had occupied Vidriži and that an enemy column had been spotted from the air moving towards Lēdurga. Trusting in the Iron Division HQ's promise to support the flanking detachment,



von Kleist continued to attack, hoping that the 1st Battalion supposedly coming from Cēsis would provide the difference. He now organised his line so that two Jäger companies remained on the right of the line Mucenieks–Ozols–Brencitis; two companies of the 2nd Battalion were in the middle with the third withdrawn as a reserve; the 3rd Battalion on the left now curled back so that it ended in front of Straupe; the third Jäger company was in the Straupe parson's house at the end of the line.

In the afternoon another attempt was made on Stalbe. The Pupils', Landing and 6th Companies, 6th Battery and "Toonela" armoured car were able to repel it. Then the 1st Company went on to recapture the Mucenieks and Ozols farms and the 3rd Company returned to retake its former position in Brencitis.

It was only at 5:40 in the afternoon that von Kleist was informed that the 1st Battalion he expected from Cēsis would not be attacking. One last attempt to break the Estonians was made, this time more directly north at the Estonian 7th and 8th Companies, who were supported by the 6th Battery. Despite the strong artillery support, which caused considerable casualties, the attack only lasted half an hour.

At 9:15 p.m. von Kleist gave the order to withdraw, primarily due to the presence of the Estonian 9th Regiment to his rear. During the day he had lost some 2 officers and 8 rankers killed, 39 wounded. The Jägers and 9th Battery covered the retirement during the night, which the Estonians facing them did not discover until morning – their passivity throughout the whole battle being in marked contrast with the rest of their colleagues.

Cēsis Area

The Kalevlaste Maleva arrived just north of Lode at 3 a.m. and was unloaded 45 minutes later. It started to move off to Skangaļi, minus the recently raised 4th Company, to combat the dangerous concentration of Landeswehr troops there. On the way they met the 2nd Landing Company of BG train #2. They ran across a German column, possibly cavalry, with light artillery and rear echelon elements. These demanded that the Estonians surrender, but fled after a short fight. Another group in front of Skangaļi was also repelled and soon after 6 o'clock the destination was reached. A short assault by one Kalevlaste and the train company took the hamlet, capturing one MG and two field guns (left behind because the horses were killed). The other two companies had been forced to halt because the Latvian Cēsis Regiment units in Silmatulis farm, who they were trying to make contact with, had opened fire in error. Soon the Skangaļi units, already under German artillery and mortar fire, were also shot at by their own side – this time Estonian and Latvian artillery at Lode who did not know that the village had been taken from the Balts. At 7 a.m. the two companies, suffering from bombardment and fearing a counter-attack retired a kilometre away into a rye field on a hill.

The Cēsis regiment had now let the other two Kalevlaste companies past but by then the Landeswehr had re-occupied the village. Once more it was assaulted, with the assistance of two Latvian guns. Initially suppressed, a second attempt crossed the 700 metre gap, although this was not until 1 o'clock in the afternoon. There was some close combat house fighting before it was cleared. Eight German Maxims and 2 Madsens were amongst the trophies.

The first three companies of the Kalevlaste then moved south a short distance to Irbite, where they spent the night. They had lost about 18 dead and 41 wounded (plus several more for the train company at Skangaļi). The fourth company was split into platoons, which were used for scouting towards Ustup, holding Lissit and kept in reserve.

Another newly arrived unit, the 2nd Battalion of the 1st Regiment in Valmeira, was also used to combat the Landeswehr's breakthrough. At 6 a.m., leaving one company behind to escort the 1st Battery/1st Arty Regt that was due to follow soon, but taking the 1st Regiments' foot scouts, they advanced via Murmuiža to Starte to link up with the "Vanapagan". It was intended that it then move south, taking Starte, and advance to link up with the 3rd Regiment near Smurgis farm as part of the general counter-offensive. To provide some reserve in Valmeira they were replaced there by the Sapper Detachment of the 6th Regiment, NG train #4 Landing Company and probably also the Latvian cavalry.

The "Vanapagan" had gone on a scouting mission towards Starte at 3 o'clock but mechanical problems caused this to be stopped for several hours and the advancing column caught up with it before Sproge. Enemy scouts and a plane dropping a message were seen, and briefly skirmished with. Approaching Starte the three 1st Regiment companies formed line and advanced with the scouts in reserve. This time it was the misfortune of the armoured car to come under friendly fire from the Latvian batteries in Lode – it had to retire and send a messenger to warn the artillery.

The attack on Starte commenced at midday. There was a field in front of the village, extending for half a kilometre to the forest edge on the western side of the road while the eastern side was more open but bumpy. The 5th Company, advancing down the road, thus had the best terrain and made the best progress, but was forced into using ditches and depressions for cover to avoid the mortar and artillery fire, which fortunately for them mostly went long. The Balts had positioned MGs in the field in front of the village, one of which on the forest's edge was captured by the 5th Company. The "Vanapagan" now rushed full throttle into the enemy lines and opened fire, which was the sign for the Estonian battalion to charge and the Germans to retreat, although an MG between the houses continued to fire until suppressed by men crawling up in ditches. The German losses were large, since many men were taken prisoner, and included at least 3 MGs.

It appears that the units defending Starte and Skangaļi, above, included companies from the Petersdorff Freikorps and hence the large number of MGs available to the defenders. The attacks coincided and removed the threat of the Malmede column breakthrough. The 2nd Battalion continued to advance south without meeting opposition and spent the



night at the Rauska farm. The “Vanapagan” had to remain in Starte since it was running low on fuel. The Landeswehr units retreated to the Jaunrauna estate.

The Kuperjanov Battalion in Liepe also advanced south, but also south-east, probably in conjunction with the Latvian Cēsis Regiment. The aim of the southern thrust was to threaten the rear of the Germans in Skangaļi and Starte, but since this also put their own flank and rear at risk the advance was initially hesitant. After 1 p.m., when the two columns east of them had cleared Skangaļi and Starte, described above, the pace picked up. The enemy had collected near Jaunrauna most of the units that had broken through with the Malmede column. The Landeswehr held off the pressure from the Kuperjanov, although some infantry and a fair amount of “tail” fled westwards when an LMG raiding party attacked them. During the night the remaining units, including the Petersdorff corps, Malmede Battalion, Baden mountain guns and Fletcher’s Staff retreated freely. The Estonians were able to finish the evening astride the Cēsis–Rauna road and losses for the day were very light.

The attacks above were intended partly to relieve pressure on the 3rd Regiment, still defending the Riga-Pskov highway area near Rauna. The Germans had two armoured cars but the Estonians had damaged the road in order to restrict their manoeuvre. Böckelmann started attacking at 6:30 a.m., advancing to the ruins of the Rauna castle, but with the arrival of the regiments foot scouts from the reserve the Estonians were able to push the Balts back after a two hour struggle. At about 2 p.m. the attacks stopped and the Landeswehr pulled back. They evacuated their artillery and mortars from the Rauna church estate after the Estonian artillery set fire to it and the Estonian 1st Company used the chaos to sneak up in a ditch and raid the estate. The road sector was the scene of a fire exchange lasting until 6 p.m., when a German plane gave the signal to retreat. The armoured cars now held the position until dark, whereupon they too withdrew. The Estonians lost perhaps 6 dead and 20 wounded, although other sources give 5 more dead. There is no mention of what the Latvians slightly to the north did during the day.

The rest of the front was relatively quiet. The armoured trains and their landing companies remained in the bridge area. There were some artillery exchanges and these were sufficient to prevent an Estonian attempt to capture the crossing. During the day all three trains were hit, with light damage and men wounded.

The Gauja river front saw only weak exchanges of fire.

The Estonians saw that their moment was ripe and had started to organise a strong attack. The Armoured Train *Divizion* (i.e. the trains, the Kalevlaste Maleva and Kuperjanov Battalion) was to form one column. Another group was formed under Colonel Heinze, commander of the 1st Regiment, from Heinze’s own 2nd Battalion, the 3rd Regiment, the 3rd and 4th Batteries of the 3rd Arty Regt, the 1st Battery of the 1st Arty Regt and the 2nd Cavalry Regiment which had now arrived. These units were all in the eastern edge of the Estonian deployment, and the cavalry (which was spending the night in Drusti, to the south) was ordered to get into the enemy’s rear to cut off his retreat. The 6th and 9th Regiments were ordered to take Straupe. At 11:15 Lt-Colonel Reek gave 3 a.m. as the start time.

Until late in the day Major Fletcher was still hoping to retake the offensive, but the collapse of the Iron Division made the position in Cēsis untenable. Both his flanks were now under huge threat and it was not as if the middle was doing very well anyway. He decided to withdraw immediately.

23 June – the Battle of Cēsis Won

The Blankenburg column had been ordered to move to Lēdurga to protect von Kleist, but felt unable to with the Estonian 9th Regiment in their way.

The town of Straupe was occupied at 7 a.m. by the 6th Regiment, with the flanking units of the 9th Regiment arriving 2½ hours later. The Iron Division had dumped 50 cases of artillery ammunition in the pond in the middle of town and inhabitants spoke of the discontent expressed by the Germans when they found that they were fighting Estonians, not Bolsheviks.

Ogre was also abandoned at this time, with the troops there ordered to concentrate on Riga.

The first elements of the Estonian army entered Cēsis town at about 6:30, having met only small rear guards and the Balt armoured train. Poor reconnaissance prevented them from realising what had happened until too late. The rail line had been demolished in many places, preventing the trains from pursuing the enemy – they did not enter the town until 11 a.m. The hasty retreat had prevented the Freikorps from taking all they would have wished – one locomotive and 102 carriages remained in Cēsis, along with various motor vehicles.

Thus the whole of von der Goltz’s forces were now retreating and the “Battle of Cēsis” as such was over.

In the four days the Estonian and Latvian losses were approximately 110 dead, 13 missing and 375 wounded (out of perhaps 9,000 fighting men, a touch over 5% losses). The Estonians took: 39 MGs, 8 mortars, 6 artillery pieces (at least 3 not working), 2 planes (shot down and recovered), 1 motorcycle and 3 trucks.

Pursuit

It was not until 10 a.m. on 23 June that Reek gave the order to pursue. The 9th and half the 6th Regiment were to try and cut the Riga–Pskov highway. The 3rd and 4th Battalions of the 6th Regiment were to be held in reserve. The Armoured



Train *Divizion* was to follow down the rail line, obviously, and Heinze's group take Ieriķi. The 2nd Cavalry were to take the Nītaure road junction (which basically meant moving parallel but south of the Pskov highway). The Latvian Cēsis Regiment were quartered in Cēsis to reorganise – at the time their battalions stood at about 225, 300 and 275 bayonets.

The five Iron Division battalions concentrated in the Englārte area (near Ragana) and the Landeswehr in the Inčulkalns region. There were positions here from WWI and the Estonian command did not want to let the retreating enemy settle in them.

At 11 a.m. the 9th Regiment received the order to capture Englārte and Inčulkalns together with the 6th Regiment. However the 6th Regiment was still in Straupe so the commander of the 9th decided to act alone in the meantime. His 2nd and 4th Companies attacked along the Inciems–Englārte road, while his 7th and 8th Companies attacked in the Bīriņi–Englārte road area and the 3rd Company would attempt to turn the enemy's left flank. The 7th and 8th drifted rightwards however, and in the end four companies went in frontally and only one in the flank. The Germans allowed the attackers to come to 500m before opening fire with MGs, and artillery on the western flank. The Estonians were suppressed and the 8th and part of the 7th retired to some woods. The regimental commander made them come back, but this time to initiate a firefight rather than a charge, with the Estonian battery assisting. The 3rd Company managed to get round the Germans' left successfully and captured a battery, the horses being killed and crew dispersed, but were driven off with heavy losses. The firefight continued into the evening. The Estonians lost 17 dead, 8 missing, and 34 wounded – the vast bulk of them from the flanking 3rd Company.

While this was occurring the 1st Company of the 9th Regiment advanced along the coast and the destroyer "Wambola" arrived opposite Saulkrasti, which it shelled briefly. The 6th Regiment started off a bit after midday, with the cavalry scouts and armoured car in front, followed by 1st and 2nd Battalions, the two 9th Regiment companies and the 1st and 6th Batteries. They all spent the night at Inciems estate.

Major Bischoff, despite holding off the attack, felt his Iron Division was too exhausted to remain where they were and withdrew across the Gauja, leaving only a small rearguard in Jaunamuiža.

The troops at Cēsis moved much more slowly, despite meeting no opposition. The Kuperjanov Battalion spent the night at Ieriķi, the Kalevlaste Maleva reached Drabeši, a rail stop north of that, and the rest of the infantry much less. Even the cavalry did not get very far, part making Skujene and the rest only Dzerbenes.

The trains did initially move ahead, in time to prevent the destruction of Ieriķi station, but were unable to proceed past the blown up Amata bridge. Substantial engineering works were needed to fix this, which took until 29 June (it was a 20 metre bridge some 18 metres above the river). The road bridge had also been destroyed.

24 June

See Eesti Vabadussõda map 16.

The 9th Regiment moved more westward this day from Engelarte, taking up positions on the north side of the Gauja from Murjan to the Riga–Straupe road.

The 6th Regiment continued to advance towards Inčulkalns, with the two armoured cars, 6 companies and a battery as an advanced column. Only a rear guard was met at Jaunamuiža, and eventually the units settled in on the north bank of the Gauja. The Germans had had time to destroy the Inčulkalns bridge but various pieces of equipment were collected during the day, in a more or less ruined state.

The two battalions of the Armoured Train *Divizion* quickly drove a small rear guard from in front of Sigulda to take the town that afternoon. The Heinze group moved slowly behind them, only reaching Ieriķi, with the cavalry guarding the southern flank (perhaps fearing the remaining Iron Division units in Ogre).

25 June

The 9th Regiment spent the 25th skirmishing across the Gauja.

Lt-Colonel Reek had given orders the previous day to continue the offensive, with Riga the eventual aim. As a result, the Kuperjanov Battalion and 6th Regiment set out to attack Inčulkalns. The 2nd Battalion set off with 7th and 8th Companies and the 6th Battery to cross the Gauja and attack Inčulkalns from the north, whereas the 5th and 6th Companies would go via Sigulda and attack along the southern bank. On the way though the regimental commander moved the Kuperjanov Battalion and 2nd Battery to the front of the attack along the highway and placed the 5th and 6th Companies in the reserve with the 1st Battalion.

The Kuperjanovs' attack started from a wood across the 500–1,000m towards the barbed wire and trenches but was repulsed with heavy enemy artillery fire. A later attack in the same place including a company of the Kalevlaste Maleva was also repelled. The 8th Company, however, had crossed at a ford and forced the enemy from the first two lines of trenches, before being joined by the 7th Company. The third line was defended more fiercely however, with a heavy battery taking the Estonians under fire and several attempts at counter-attacks. In the twilight the Germans managed to outflank the 7th Company, causing them to retire a bit. The 1st Battery now moved up to assist (presumably the 6th



Battery had been up until now, although it is not noted) and at 11 p.m. opened fire on Inčulkalns estate. The 7th and 8th Companies spent the night in the 2nd row of trenches, having lost 7 men and 11 wounded in their attack.

The 3rd Regiment and 2nd Cavalry regiment moved very little, but the Latvian Cēsis regiment and artillery commenced moving to Ligatne, just above Sigulda, presumably by rail.

The armoured car “Vanapagan” was being overhauled in Valmeira, the “Toonela” was told to move to the Riga–Pskov highway (crossing the Gauja near Cēsis since the other bridges were out) and the “Estonia” had serious mechanical problems.

26 and 27 June

The commander of the 8th Company of the 9th Regiment noticed that the Germans were retiring and crossed his company over the river at Murjan farm. The rest of his battalion helped build a bridge at Inčulkalns sufficient to cross artillery and light trucks and then the bulk of the regiment crossed. The 1st Battalion remained on the north bank, while the 1st Company and scouts searched the coastal area. They located some in trenches at Carnivaka but did not attack. The 1st Company was recalled to the rest of its battalion in Murjani.

The Germans had also withdrawn from Inčulkalns town during the night and at about 2:30 a.m. the 7th and 8th Companies of the 6th Regiment were able to occupy it, followed soon by the Kuperjanov and the 1st Battalion. The 3rd Battalion, which had initially stayed behind in Straupe also arrived during the day. The pupils company of the 4th Battalion was sent to Cēsis and withdrawn from combat and the other three companies of that battalion were broken up to fill out the 1st and 3rd Battalions. The attached landing company was in Valmeira but would return later in the month.

The Kuperjanov Battalion now pressed on to Ropaži, where they met the German lines. A car was let through under a white flag containing a delegation under von Taube of the Landeswehr, some Germans, a Russian officer and two US officers, and was directed to the battalion staff at Sile tavern. The Kalevlaste Maleva joined them. An attack of one company each of these battalions, with artillery support, took Ropaži in the morning of the 27th – surprising the Germans who thought a truce was being arranged.

In fact the truce was rejected out of hand by Laidoner and the Estonians. It was clear that the Baltic-German alliance in Latvia was quickly losing political support since the same day he also received a message from Prince Lieven explaining that his men and the Letts of Balodis were in Riga ensuring order, and describing the uniforms so that there would be no misunderstanding. The fighting would continue until one side or the other was clearly beaten.

The remainder of the Estonian army advanced more slowly, dislodging pickets and rear-guards on their way, but without any major actions. The 3rd Regiment to the extreme south still moved very slowly, still wary of an attack from that flank.

New German Positions

See Eesti Vabadussõda map 16.

The Germans had now established themselves in a new position, which utilised the local lakes and rivers to good advantage. The Iron Division moved back first, with the Landeswehr covering the retirement, crossing over so that it now took the eastern side. The units previously in Ogre joined them here, so that the entire division was present. The Landeswehr was also brought up to full strength with the arrival of the 1st Baltic Regiment from Riga.

The line started near Salaspils on the Daugava, and the first section was guarded to Stopiņi by 1st Regiment, 3 batteries and a squadron. From there to the Šeluchina leather plant following the Mazla-Jugla river there was the 3rd Regiment, 2 batteries and a squadron. The last sector to the Jugla lake was occupied by the 2nd Regiment, with 3 batteries and one squadron. The Jäger Battalion was in reserve.

The Landeswehr by the evening of the 27th were covering from the Jugla Lake to the nearby L-Baltezers Lake with the 1st Baltic Regiment. The 2nd Regiment was in reserve at the Bellenhof estate, just behind. The short stretch between the two Baltezers Lakes and the stretch of canal from the Adleri estate to the Gauja was held by the Petersdorff and Khaynach units and at least two batteries. The Gauja from the canal to the sea was held by the 3rd Baltic Regiment.

With these men added in the Estonians size advantage was mostly nullified and von der Goltz started to plan offensive action again. Unfortunately for him, although he now had enough men, their morale was poor. But the line offered very good defence, most of it behind considerable water features or which channelled attackers into narrow lines of attack, and he could have reasonably expected to hold out for some time – although the low troop density did not allow every crossing to be guarded properly.

The only open land was the southern-most section of the front lines, between the Daugava and Maza-Jugla Rivers. This was flat and unobstructed, but was the last sector to get any Estonian troops because the threat from Ogre delayed the advance of the 3rd Regiment. It was also quite swampy and covered with many large forests with few roads, so artillery and armoured car support would be difficult for attackers and would allow plenty of ambush opportunities.

North of there the Maza-Jugla river formed a decent barrier for a smallish river. Unusually for a local river it has cut a steep-sided valley and is deep rather than wide. Much of the river was bordered by open hay land on flat areas with a



tendency to get swampy. The main road crosses at what was a biggish island in 1919, which has a hill giving a height advantage over the Estonian positions, had some small woods, two stone buildings and the remains of WWI German trenches. The bridge itself was mined with barbed wire obstacles.

The lakes area is dead flat, making covering the gaps with artillery and machine-guns very easy. The canal linking the lakes to the Gauja River was 6 metres wide, and although shallow was muddy and difficult to cross. There were only two bridges, at Adleri and Podnek. The Gauja was now a decent-sized river, mostly over 200 metres wide, with no bridges, and it was only its curving path through the plain offered the attacker any advantages.

Facing them the Estonians assigned the 3rd Regiment to the stretch from Salaspils across to the Maza Jugla river, although they did not arrive for several days. The 6th Regiment, less its 2nd Battalion, was stretched along the Maza Jugla river. The Cēsis Regiment was also in this sector – the 2nd Battalion and Valmeira Battery in reserve at Sila and the 3rd Battalion took a short stretch of the front between the 3rd and 6th Regiments. The 1st Battalion was behind Jugla lake, with two companies and the Cēsis Battery operating to the east in support of the 6th Regiment and two to the west in support of the Armoured Trains *Divizion*.

The Lakes and canal area was held by the Armoured Trains *Divizion*, with the 2nd Battalion of the 6th Regiment attached to it guarding the canal stretch to the north. Initially the 2nd Battalion of the 1st Regiment was in reserve but then it moved forward to give the Kalevlaste Maleva and Kuperjanov Battalions a rest.

The 9th Division continued to have the coastal sector. It was just to receive 120 reinforcements for the 1st Battalion (and 200 men to form new 9th and 10th Companies, who never saw action) but this remained easily the least dense part of the line.

The 2nd Battalion of the 1st Regiment was in deep reserve in Sigulda. The Tallinn Independent Squadron was also pulled back as a reserve, before being sent to the 9th Regiment on the 30th.

The Estonians were also to start to suffer from supply problems. They had made an unexpectedly rapid advance into Latvia and their main link to the rear, the rail line, was broken.

28 June

After the Germans were forced from the Adleri estate to heights behind the canal, several crossing attempts were made by the 2nd Company of the 6th Regiment. After an attempt at the Adleri canal bridge during the evening of the 27th another was attempted unsuccessfully during the night of 28 June using timber thrown in to make a fordable crossing.

The Estonians also made an attempt on the bridge over the Maza-Jugla river. This was thrown back fairly easily, and the Germans followed up by gassing the Estonians in the local farms – the defenders having to resort to handkerchiefs dipped in water, which was not entirely successful.

There were various incidents all along the line as both sides probed the other, and occasionally shelled or machine-gunned positions, but without major casualties. German planes flew overhead, at sometimes bombed and strafed the Estonian lines.

29 June

The 2nd Cavalry regiment moved to Tinuzi, just above Ogre. A raid by one squadron surprised a German rear echelon unit in the process of packing up and captured 94 men and 40 carts, with horses, and full of equipment. It then patrolled this area, still based in Tinuzi, until the fighting stopped.

The bridge at the Amata river to Cēsis was repaired and the BG trains #2, #3 and “Kaptens Irw” arrived at Ropaži. Train #4 was left behind to guard the bridge. The 130mm naval gun, called “Rasputin”, attached to “Kaptens Irw” also arrived and work started on building a spur for it to operate from – it could only shell directly ahead, or the recoil would push it from the tracks.

The 2nd Battalion of the 6th Regiment made another attempt to cross the canal and take the hill (low rise, really) overlooking the bridge at Adleri. This time the 8th Company crossed at Podnek farm by surprise, capturing an MG nest which was then turned around. But a heavy fire was kept up by the defenders, a mortar fragment took out the MG and the company was forced to recross before the two following companies could join it. The fourth attempt by the battalion to force a passage, that afternoon at Adleri, was made with the support of four batteries (although the infantry commander had no connection to them, which reduced their effectiveness). One company made it across the bridge while another was suppressed before even getting there. The German MG fire was again too strong, however, and a rapid retirement was made. The battalion lost 4 dead and 30 wounded, including two officers, during the day.

During the day the Estonian Commander-in-Chief, General Laidoner, had arrived in Inčulkaļns and met with the local commanders. In the evening Lt-Colonel Reek gave the order for a general attack the next day at noon – each unit was ordered to break the line it faced, with the Kuperjanov and Kalevlaste Maleva Battalions being the reserve to exploit success. The aim was simple – to take Riga.



The machine-gun unit, 300 men, of the Armoured Trains *Divizion* arrived and was distributed the next day to the companies of the 2nd Battalion of the 1st Regiment (between the lakes). The Reserve Battalion of the *Divizion* was ordered forward to Ropaži, but it is not clear that it made it to the area before the truce.

30 June

Unknown to the commanders however, the 9th Regiment had already crossed the Gauja river. During the afternoon of the previous day the 1st Battalion had crossed in small boats in two places in the Carnikava region, assisted by locals and with no opposition and at a leisurely pace. It seems the Landeswehr had evacuated the Carnikava estate after it was bombarded by the 130mm gun of the Estonian gunboat “Tasuja” and did not even have pickets on the river.

The canal was also breached before the allotted time. An early morning attack was made with three companies of the 6th Regiment at the northern end while another kept the Adleri defenders busy. Once across the attackers met some resistance in the Remberge area, but this position was outflanked. The attack appears to have also been reinforced by a couple of landing companies from the trains, perhaps following behind, but stalled at this point. The heights over Adleri still remained in Landeswehr hands, dominating the area.

However, the Landeswehr was not entirely beaten. The 2nd Battalion of the 9th Regiment had also crossed the Gauja near Adazi during the day but was hit suddenly in wooded countryside, the companies losing contact with each other and retiring swiftly. Most made it back across the river, but the 5th Company’s line was cut off and it had to retire towards Remberge, where it met up with the 6th Regiment’s forces there. The attack then proceeded to move on to the 1st Battalion, and the two forward companies were surprised due to insufficient scouting. They panicked, followed soon afterwards by the two companies in Carnikava, and the entire battalion was forced back across the river. Despite the hasty retreat across the river the regiment lost only 8 dead and a dozen wounded, so it would seem that they were beaten by being outmanoeuvred and surprised rather than by ferocious fighting.

Along the rail line between the lakes the attack of the 2nd Battalion of the 1st Regiment was pre-empted by a German one, backed with planes, heavy artillery and gas. Reinforced by the train *divizion* machine-gunners, and supported by the artillery of the trains themselves, the Estonian battalion held off the attack but was unable to start its own. The day also saw a trip to the front-line of the “Kaptan Irw”. Three German attacks during the night were also repulsed.

The crossing attempts of the Maza-Jugla took a slightly different turn, with a long artillery bombardment and firefight for most of the day before the attack by two companies on the island at 2 p.m. The Germans had responded with their own artillery bombardment, again including gas, and easily stopped the infantry attack. The Estonian casualties were high enough that no other attack was attempted during the day, although the firefight continued. The Germans however tried to sneak platoons across the river at other places a couple of times, even forcing the temporary retirement of a defending company on one occasion. The Estonians appear to have badly underestimated the resistance of the Germans, and the ability of their artillery to suppress them, and did not even properly investigate building bridges or rafts to cross at other places.

The tardy 3rd Regiment was meant to have attacked in the open sector near the big river, but only just managed to get its battalions into fire contact with the enemy at Amaliņaz and Salaspils by the end of the day, so was in no position to attack.

The Estonian fleet – 2 destroyers, 2 gunboats, 2 minesweepers – had meanwhile moved from picking up the “Tasuja” at the Gauja’s mouth towards the Daugava. There they luckily captured a tug awaiting a grain shipment from Sweden for the freikorps, who informed them that they were in a minefield and how to get out of it. Learning that the 9th Regiment had been forced back across the Gauja they retired, after exchanging shots briefly and long range with German shore batteries.

The Estonian and Latvian division and regimental commanders meeting at the end of the day therefore had little to show for their efforts other than the small penetration at the northern end of the canal. Lt-Colonel Reek wanted the main attack to be along the rail line, but Captain Parts of the Armoured Trains argued this was impossible. The commander of the 6th Regiment said he could capture the island crossing of the Maza-Jugla if he got his 2nd Battalion back, but since that was the only unit making headway at the time (across the canal) it was clearly not an option. He was promised the Kalevlaste Maleva instead and a complementary attack by the 3rd Regiment to his south.

The Kuperjanov Battalion was ordered to support the 2nd Battalion of the 6th Regiment across the canal. It was hoped that success there would force the defenders out of the main thrust along the rail line rather than be out-flanked.

1 July

The plan around the canal was that the 2nd Battalion of the 6th Regiment would advance some of its forces along the river to assist the 9th Regiment to cross and then head towards the Kišu Lake.¹ Two companies were to move from the Remberge towards the Adleri heights while the Kuperjanov Battalion would join in from Podnek, leaving a company to demonstrate across the canal. After that, the attack would head around the lakes to attack the railway line area.

¹ Kišu Lake is the largest of the lakes in the area, just north of Riga.



Starting at 4 a.m., the attack met with little resistance. Either the enemy was surprised or, more likely, was already preparing to withdraw. Nearly the entire area north of the lakes was cleared with very few casualties. The 9th Regiment crossed unopposed and raced to the Kišu Lake. Prizes included a two or three gun battery in working order and various ammunition and carriages. The Estonians were also joined by a Latvian squadron from Balodis's troops.

In the centre the enemy had withdrawn due to the loss of its left flank back to the gap between the Kišu and Jugla Lakes. The Estonians advanced in the afternoon, slowed by the damage to the rail line and harassed by enemy artillery fire. Between 3 and 4 p.m. the landing battalion of "Kapten Irw" forced the Germans out of trenches in front of the Jugla River, so that this formed their front. The road and rail bridges were both destroyed and local factory buildings were turned into strongpoints. Even with their armoured train support the Estonians judged the Jugla nearly impossible to cross.

To the south the four companies of the 1st Battalion of the 6th Regiment assembled at 4 a.m. to attack the Maza-Jugla Island one more time. Once more however the enemy fire was too strong and the assembled Estonian and Latvian artillery unable to suppress it. The order came still to try again, but this time the Estonians used stealth rather than brawn. With one platoon attracting attention the three other platoons of the 3rd Company crept forward using a nearby stream. From there they moved into a rye field and crept forward to near the bridge. With a rush they were able to reach the bridge, assisted by the enemy in the nearby tavern guarding it running away.

Under heavy fire, the 3rd Company removed the obstacles on the bridge and then held on in the tavern while the 4th and then the 2nd Companies ran across the plain to join them. Once they saw their support coming they moved on to take the local power plant across the island where, missing the German artillery observer, they were again placed under accurate artillery fire, including gas. The 4th Company crossed the bridge and moved north to try and gain the hill. But the Germans had now started to counter-attack with a battalion and the two Estonian companies were quickly repulsed, many having to swim back across. The 2nd Company only made it to the bridge before being made by the shells and gas to return with heavy losses and the 1st Company cancelled its follow-up when it saw the other three retreating.

The Kalevlaste Maleva was now ordered to make an attempt, but as their commander expected, they were unable to approach close enough to assault the island thanks mostly to the inability to stop the German artillery fire, again including gas. A firefight ensued for a couple of hours before the Kalevlaste Maleva retired.

The attacks were costly – the 6th Regiment lost 29 men killed (some of which drowned), 7 captured and 66 wounded in the day, although some of these were from artillery and MG exchanges at other times. During the day the Estonian 6th Battery fired 1,200 rounds, the 3rd fired 480 and the Latvians added some more (although one of their batteries could not assist due to lack of ammunition).

The 3rd Regiment saw off a German attack along the rail line at 5 a.m. and then counter-attacked near Salaspils. Since only 8 wounded were recorded for the day, the attacks don't seem to have been pushed with great vigour.

The fleet were affected by stormy weather and merely exchanged a few brief shots with shore positions.

Late in the day Colonel du Parquet, leader of the French military mission, crossed the lines in order to arrange a truce and commence negotiating a withdrawal arrangement for both the Estonians and the Freikorps.

2 July

As so often happens, both sides sought to obtain advantage before the peace that they both saw were coming. It was important for the Germans to impress on the Estonians that although they might be beaten, that conquering Riga would take time and lives.

During the night a delegation had come from the 6th Battalion of the Balodis Latvians, offering to change sides. After initially considering to attack the Germans, they later decided to merely surrender. At 3 a.m. therefore around 600 men arrived in the lines of the 9th Regiment to surrender, and were sent to the rear.

In the early evening the 9th Regiment also cleared out the remaining Landeswehr north of the lakes, taking Milgravis and Mangasala fort, where they captured a shore battery with ammunition. However, it seems likely that the Balts were intending to retire anyway, and that the bombardment of the Estonian navy was more important than the small scouting forces that actually took the places. The 9th Regiment and 2nd Battalion of the 6th Regiment now set about assembling boats and rafts in order to force a crossing of the Kišu lake, the canal to the Daugava and the river itself, including capturing a German steamer during the night. Men were already on the boats when fighting ceased the next day.

After assisting the land forces the navy sent the "Lembit" up the river – it had a shallower draught than the other vessels. The Germans tried bombing it from planes and lost a land battery that tried to engage in a duel. It shelled Riga and its bridges briefly and then retired. Also during the day the Estonians received the surrender of three enemy auxiliary gunboats with Latvian crews and captured a fourth. Two of the boats were crewed by Estonians and the other two were operated by Letts. They started to explore the river mouth, including sending 40 men ashore at Bolderāja (on the southern bank near the Daugava mouth) until forced to retire.

The central sector was quiet apart from artillery. The Germans once again used gas and tried to hit the trains. The



Estonians replied, including big “Rasputin”, and attempted to hit the bridges over the Daugava.

Further east it was a bit more active, since this time it was the Iron Division that attacked at the island over the Jugla. Gas forced the Estonian 3rd Company to retire but the attack was nonetheless repulsed. Shooting lasted into the night.

The biggest action of the day however was the sector that had been quietest until then. An attack by the Estonian 3rd Regiment on Salaspils was supported by the 3rd Battery and a platoon of the 4th Battery (four guns total). After a couple of hours fighting Salaspils and Kircholm fell. However the Germans had been planning to launch an attack in this sector during the day until the collapse of the other wing of their line, and had large forces in the area. These counter-attacked, forcing the Estonians back after a fierce battle. The Estonians lost 31 dead and 106 wounded, which must have been about 10% of their forces involved.

Truce

Meanwhile, however, negotiations were making good progress. With the number of separate parties involved – Estonians, Germans, Balts, Russians, Letts and Allies – it was surprising how quickly terms were settled. Tempers flared and talks were suspended several times, but by 3:30 a.m. of 3 July terms were agreed and signed. The treaty was in English, very brief and set to start at midday of the same day.

The Germans agreed to pull back to positions behind the Lielupe and the Estonians to cease advancing.

Riga was to pass to Lettish hands, with the Allies maintaining order until a proper civilian government could be set up. The Germans were entitled to keep guards in the city to maintain their military stores until they could be transported out.

Although some Estonian soldiers expressed disappointment at not being able to finish their campaign with the big prize of Riga, the Estonian command realised that they had gained the essential requirements. They had other borders that were now of greater importance.

3 July and following

Neither side did particularly much before the official start of the truce. “Rasputin” fired its 12 remaining shells in the direction of Riga, but that was about it. The Estonian Navy however took a while to be informed and engaged in some shelling of the southern bank of the Daugava until a message came through at about 11 a.m.

The Germans spent the day withdrawing to the other bank of the Daugava, and soon had left the city entirely except for a few guards. The Landeswehr moved towards Tukums and the Germans settled around Jelgava. A Lettish squadron entered on 5 July and the next day the Cēsis Regiment followed.

By then the Estonians were planning their withdrawal. By 12 July the entire army was ordered to leave Latvia, and over the next few days the units were sent to other fronts or for a rest. By a treaty of 21 July all Latvian units in the Estonian army were formally transferred to Latvian control. The Latvians agreed to take the line against the Soviets up to Lake Luban until they were able to take a greater share – which was only in December when the freikorps were finally gone.

The Estonians lost from 24 June to 3 July over 150 men killed or missing, to which can be added a couple of dozen Latvians. There were over 400 wounded sufficiently to leave the fighting. (The high ratio of killed to wounded is probably because few men were taken prisoner in the field and several times the Estonians were repulsed having crossed water barriers that impeded retreat.)

There were more killed in the fighting around Riga than the Battle of Cēsis, and this suggests that the war was far from over if a truce had not been signed – indeed some of the bloodiest fighting of the war occurred on the last day near Salaspils. The strong defensive positions and increased strength of the Iron Division and Landeswehr were sufficient to counteract to a large extent their lowered morale. Several times vigorous counter-attacks drove back Estonians in a manner not really seen during the Cēsis fighting. It is reasonable to assume that Riga would have been taken if the fighting had continued, but it is not evident that it would have been at the first attempt and the cost would have been high on both sides. It seems unlikely that the Germans would have indulged in much street fighting once forced back to the city limits, but in order to cover any retirement over the Riga bridges, they likely would have been forced to destroy or set fire to the city.¹

¹ German soldiers fighting from houses would have been at huge risk from the Latvian civilians and they did not have the means to clear out the population. They also could not hope to block all the streets and access routes, which meant that defenders might be caught by a flanking move – which could be fatal in a war where it was not guaranteed that prisoners would not be shot. Finally, the Estonians might have chosen to merely surround the city and starve them out, which would not have taken long, given the lack of food.

