

Soviet Union to Estonia, 16-06-1940

In September 1939, Germany and the Soviet Union had agreed to marginally adapt their previous agreement laid out in the secret protocol to the 23 of August 1939 Soviet-German Treaty. The Baltic States firmly fell in the Soviet sphere of influence.¹ Following substantial pressure, Estonia (28 September), Latvia (5 October) and Lithuania (10 October), had signed mutual assistance pacts with the Soviet Union.² Estonia had done so in September 1939, after Soviet military aerial manoeuvres, and agreed to granting the Soviet Union a naval port at Paldiski and airfields on the islands Saaremaa and Hiiumaa. Part of the pact was a trade agreement which aimed at quadrupling bilateral trade and an explicit reference to Estonian sovereignty. In a secret annex, Estonia had given the Soviet Union permission to station no more than 25,000 forces in these locations.³ About seven months later Germany invaded Western Europe. The government of the Soviet Union then decided the time had come to annex the Baltic States. Lithuania was first on 14 June 1940, Latvia second, and Estonia third. The Soviet military shot down an airplane flying from Tallinn, the Estonian capital, to Helsinki on 15 June. Its naval forces also blocked Estonia's coast.⁴ Estonia and Latvia were presented with ultimatums similar in form (see case Soviet Union to Latvia, 16-06-1940) on 16 June immediately after one another. Like in the Latvian case, the Soviet government demanded regime change – and a new government 'capable and willing to warrant honest execution of the Soviet-Estonian mutual assistance pact'⁵ – and the admission of additional Soviet forces to which it demanded an answer within eight hours by 11.00 p.m. Moscow time.⁶ The time limit was accompanied by the oral threat that

in the event no answer indicating acceptance of the ultimatum was received by the stated time, the Red Army units concentrated at the boundary of the Estonian Republic would be ordered to march into the country, suppressing all resistance by armed force.⁷

After a short discussion between members of the Estonian government, the terms of the ultimatum were accepted.⁸ Whilst additional Soviet forces entered Estonia, the acting government resigned and a new regime was put in place.⁹ The next month a communist government was elected. The newly elected government then requested and was granted admission into the Soviet Union.¹⁰

¹ Sužiedēlis, 'The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact: The Documents'.

² Toynbee, *Survey of International Affairs, 1939-1946: The Initial Triumph of the Axis*, 43–44.

³ Toynbee, 44–45.

⁴ United States. Congress. House. Select Committee on Communist Aggression, *Report of the Select Committee to Investigate Communist Aggression and the Forced Incorporation of the Baltic States into the U.S.S.R. Third Interim Report of the Select Committee on Communist Aggression, House of Representatives, Eighty-Third Congress, Second Session, under Authority of H. Res. 346 and H. Res. 438*, no page number given.

⁵ Smith, *The Baltic States*, 27.

⁶ Smulkstys, 'The Incorporation of the Baltic States by the Soviet Union', no page number provided.

⁷ United States. Congress. House. Select Committee on Communist Aggression, *Report of the Select Committee to Investigate Communist Aggression and the Forced Incorporation of the Baltic States into the U.S.S.R. Third Interim Report of the Select Committee on Communist Aggression, House of Representatives, Eighty-Third Congress, Second Session, under Authority of H. Res. 346 and H. Res. 438*, 243.

⁸ United States. Congress. House. Select Committee on Communist Aggression, 243.

⁹ United States. Congress. House. Select Committee on Communist Aggression, 249–60.

¹⁰ United States. Congress. House. Select Committee on Communist Aggression, 264–86.