

Soviet Union to Lithuania, 14-06-1940

In September 1939, Germany and the Soviet Union slightly amended their agreement described in the secret protocol to the 23 of August 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, agreeing that the Baltic states fell firmly in the Soviet sphere of influence.¹ The Soviet Union pressured Estonia (28 September), Latvia (5 October) and Lithuania (10 October) into signing pacts of mutual assistance.² The mutual assistance pact between the Soviet Union and Lithuania had granted the Soviet Union the right to deploy 20,000 troops in Lithuania. It also stipulated a mutual consultation clause (in the case of aggression) and a trade agreement to promote cross country commerce as well as an explicit guarantee of Lithuania's sovereignty.³ Following the German invasion of Western Europe, the government of the Soviet Union decided to push ahead and annex the Baltic States. Towards the end of May, the government of the Soviet Union expressed its dissatisfaction that Soviet military personnel had disappeared on multiple occasions. It subsequently summoned Prime Minister Merkys of Lithuania on 12 June. In Moscow, Merkys was accused of having concluded secret military pacts with the other Baltic States. Foreign Minister Urbsys stayed behind in Moscow and met with his Soviet counterpart Molotov two days later. There and then, shortly before midnight on 14 June, he was given an ultimatum which would expire the next day at 10 a.m. The ultimatum demanded first, the prosecution of the Lithuanian minister of home affairs and the head of the security police for their responsibility in the alleged disappearance of Russian military personnel; second, the formation of a new government; and third, the acceptance of USSR forces on key strategic locations on Lithuanian soil to guarantee that the terms of the earlier signed pact were carried out.⁴ In case of non-compliance, the USSR would invade Lithuania as verbally communicated by the Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov.⁵ Meanwhile, large contingents of Soviet forces had been mobilised along the frontiers of the Baltic States.⁶ Despite fierce disagreement amongst Lithuania's senior political leadership, the decision was taken to accept the ultimatum. This was communicated to Moscow in the early hours of 15 June. The Lithuanian government resigned only hours later, and was replaced by a pro-Soviet regime. Leading political figures as well as entire units of the armed forces left Lithuania for Germany. Almost simultaneously, Soviet forces invaded the country.⁷ After elections

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

² Arnold Toynbee, *Survey of International Affairs, 1939-1946: The Initial Triumph of the Axis* (Oxford University Press, 1958), 43-44.

³ Toynbee, 48.

⁴ For the full text see, 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* (Washington, U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1954), 332-33, <http://archive.org/details/reportofselectco1954unit>.

⁵ Julius Smulkstys, 'The Incorporation of the Baltic States by the Soviet Union', *LITHUANIAN QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES* 14, no. 2 (Summer 1968): no page number, http://www.lituanus.org/1975/75_4_02.htm. Alfred Erich Senn, *Lithuania 1940: Revolution from Above* (Rodopi, 2007), 97. Max Beloff, *The Foreign Policy of Soviet Russia, 1936-1941*, vol. 2 (Oxford University Press, 1949), 329-31.; see also *Keesing's Contemporary Archives, 1937-1940, Vol. III*, vol. III (Longman Group, 1940), 4113-14, http://lib.uva.nl/primo_library/libweb/action/search.do?dscent=0&frbg=&scp.secs=scope%3A%28%22UVA%22%29%2Cprimo_central_multiple_fe&tab=all&dstmp=1401711316627&srt=rank&ct=search&mode=Basic&dum=true&indx=1&v1%28freeText%29=keesing%20contemporary%20archives&fn=search&vid=UVA.ultimatum, see David J. Dallin, *Soviet Russia's Foreign Policy 1939-1942* (Yale University Press, 1945), 245.

⁶ Senn, *Lithuania 1940*, 99.

⁷ Senn, 99. For a detailed account of the decision making process, see Thomas Remeikis, 'The Decision of the Lithuanian Government to Accept the Soviet Ultimatum of June 14, 1940', *Lithuanian Quarterly Journal Of Arts and Sciences* 21, no. 3 (Winter 1975): 19-44. See also 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*, 333.

took place in July the new pro-Soviet government demanded and was granted accession to the Soviet Union.⁸

⁸ 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.*