

# INVENTING MILITARY HISTORY TEACHING IN ESTONIAN MILITARY EDUCATION 1919–1940: APPROACHES, TOOLS, AND METHODS

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**ABSTRACT.** This article<sup>1</sup> analyses the teaching of military history in the Estonian army during the interwar period. The author argues that the basic concepts of military history teaching—the purpose, thematic distribution, and teaching methods—were developed by the former professor of the Czarist military academy, Gen. Lt. Aleksei Baiov, who stressed that history, along with strategy, constitutes the core of military science. However, Baiov and other Russian émigrés were heavily criticised by the Estonian commanders, particularly Gen. Nikolai Reek who estimated that a small country such as Estonia does not need a school of strategy. In the background, there was a theoretical clash between the old generation of bayonet tactics and the new generation of fire and movement transferred from pre-war Czarist Russia. Even though Baiov was fired in 1926, Reek’s reforms that subordinated history to the needs of tactical training remained incomplete even by the end of the 1930s. A number of questions about the utility and substance of military history remained unresolved. These have not been settled in Estonian officer education even today.

**Keywords:** officer education, General Staff, General Staff Academy, military thinking, military history of Estonia.

## 1. Introduction

How should military history be studied and taught, and what is its purpose? How can we transform our approach to military history to make it applicable in military practice? And what part of military science is covered by the discipline of military history? These questions—discussed in many European countries already over 100 years ago—are also salient in present day

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Estonia<sup>2</sup>. Even though similar discussions were held among Estonian military historians and service personnel just a few years ago, consensus has not yet been forged<sup>3</sup>. One option, in addition to studying foreign experiences, would be to take a look at the practices of teaching and researching military history in Estonia between the two world wars in order to determine how salient these issues were back then and what solutions were offered. As questions of military history have, to some extent, been dealt with by other researchers<sup>4</sup>, the task now at hand would be to determine how military history was seen during that period and identify the principles used to teach military history in the armed services.

In 1923, Estonian military education was incorporated into a single institution called the United Military Educational Institution (UMEI, Sõjaväe Ühendatud Õppeasutused)<sup>5</sup>. All schools of the Institution had their own curricula that contained instructions on teaching military history. Historian Andres Seene has done noteworthy work in the study of Estonian military education. Unfortunately, while Seene's research is thoroughly focused on the Higher Military School (HMS, Kõrgem Sõjakool) and the Military Technical School (MTS, Sõjaväe Tehnikakool), he devoted less attention to the education and courses of the Military School (MS, Sõjakool)<sup>6</sup>.

In the context of this article, another important study is the master's thesis of Andero Nimmer, defended in 2013, that dealt with the proceedings of the Historical Committee for the War of Independence from 1926 to 1940<sup>7</sup>. Despite the fact that Nimmer's research focused solely on the Historical Committee, it contains valuable information about how the commanding officers of the Estonian military perceived military history. It is important to note that, in his thesis, Nimmer concludes that even in the early 1930s, most officer corps did not consider military history research to be necessary

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<sup>2</sup> **Kopõtin, I.** 2016a. Sõjaajaloo õpetamisest ja uurimisest Saksa Bundeswehri kogemustele toetudes. – Sõdur, nr 6, pp. 45–49.

<sup>3</sup> **Piirimäe, K.** 2017a. Sõjaajalugu – kellele ja milleks? Sõjaajaloo perspektiivid (III). – Tuna, nr 1, pp. 146–148.

<sup>4</sup> **Nimmer, A.** 2013. Vabadussõja Ajaloo Komitee (1926–1940). Master's thesis. Tartu: Tartu Ülikool. [Nimmer 2013]

<sup>5</sup> The reason for a consolidation of the schools was lack of resources, especially regarding specialists and teaching staff, **Seene, A.** 2011. Eesti ohvitseride ettevalmistamise süsteemi kujunemine ja areng 1919–1940. Doctoral thesis. Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus, p. 41 [Seene 2011]

<sup>6</sup> **Seene** 2011.

<sup>7</sup> **Nimmer** 2013.

because, according to them, it lacked practical value for military training<sup>8</sup>. In this regard, the observation of Kaarel Piirimäe—that the Estonian military command, especially Commander in Chief Johan Laidoner, did not draw the right conclusions from the War of Independence—seems logical<sup>9</sup>. It is not quite clear whether this stemmed from a lack of strategic thinking on the part of the officer corps, in particular the high command, or whether it was the result of the inability of military educational institutions to develop the capability of officer corps to learn from military history. In any case, the present research can help to understand the importance of military history courses within Estonian military education in general.

## 2. The Beginning of Military History Teaching and the Crisis Concerning the Military History Paradigm

Several researchers have pointed out the extremely important role of the Russian émigrés in establishing Estonian military education tradition in the first half of the 1920s<sup>10</sup>. The Higher General Staff courses that began in Tondi in 1921 (and were later held at HMS) were taught by Russian émigré officers who laid down the foundation for teaching military history. An outstanding role in this was played by Lt. General Aleksei Baiov, a military historian and professor of the Imperial Nicholas General Staff Academy who taught several different subjects in both the Estonian Military School and General Staff courses. Among other things, he prepared the first curriculum for the General Staff courses and laid down the system for the organisation of studies<sup>11</sup>.

In spite of the prolific research, teaching activities and professionalism of Russian émigrés, UMEI considered their services a temporary measure until they could be replaced by Estonian teaching staff<sup>12</sup>. The teaching of

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90.

<sup>9</sup> Piirimäe, K. 2017b. Preparing for War in the 1930s: The myth of the Independence War and Laidoner's "active defence". – Estonian Yearbook of Military History, No. 7 (13), pp. 132–134.

<sup>10</sup> Pajur, A. 1999. Eesti riigikaitsepoliitika aastail 1918–1934. Tartu: Eesti Ajalooarhiiv, p. 153; Seene 2011, p. 43; Abisogomjan, R. 2007. Rol ruskikh vojennõh dejatelei v obštšestvennoi i kulturnoi žizni Estonskoi Respubliki 1920–1930-h gg. i ih literaturnoje nasledije. Master's thesis. Tartu: Tartu Ülikool, pp. 46–54 [Abisogomjan 2007]; Kopõtin, I. 2018. Rahvuslus ja lojaalsus Eesti sõjaväes vähemusrahvuste näitel 1918–1940. Doctoral thesis. Tallinn: Tallinna Ülikool, pp. 239–247 [Kopõtin 2018]

<sup>11</sup> Abisogomjan 2007, p. 48.

<sup>12</sup> Kopõtin 2018, pp. 243, 246.



**Picture 1.** Aleksei Baiov, former Lt. General of the Imperial Russian army and former professor at the Estonian General Staff courses. In the photo, taken in 1931, Baiov is wearing an Order of St. George, the fourth class of the highest military decoration of the Russian Empire. Courtesy: Parikas, Estonian Film Archive.

Russian émigrés was considered outdated due to their traditional teaching methodology, and they were accused of ignoring the contemporary experience of Estonia obtained from the War of Independence. As a result, all ties with the Russian émigrés were cut during 1923–1926<sup>13</sup>. The students were also not satisfied with the Russian teachers; discontent was especially acute among officers assigned to Standing Forces courses who had fought in the War of Independence. One of them called it “the Russian era, characterised by the overtones of general staff and determined to become a university with a grand strategy at any cost.”<sup>14</sup>

In retrospect, the harassment of Russian émigrés was, among other things, justified by a policy of fighting against the “Russian ethos”. The émigrés were blamed, not necessarily unfairly, for being disloyal to the Estonian state and not proficient in Estonian<sup>15</sup>.

Was there also a sense of generational conflict? The Estonian military cast aside the experience of non-Estonian specialists of the imperial army; in comparison, the Red Army gave former tsarist army officers (including Soviet military theoretician Aleksander Svechin, who was also known in the West) a chance to let their expertise shine. For understandable reasons, the principles of military education followed by the Entente Powers, above all in France, were preferred in the early 1920s; Estonia also tried to apply these Western ideas<sup>16</sup>. This is probably why Estonians felt like they had to get rid of Russians as quickly as possible.

The views of General Reek, a highly influential person in the development of the Estonian military and military education who advocated for teaching

<sup>13</sup> Kopotín 2018, pp. 243–244.

<sup>14</sup> H. J. 1928. Tondi. Veste. – Sõdur, nr 6–8, p. 328. [H. J. 1928]

<sup>15</sup> Kopõtin 2018, pp. 239–248.

<sup>16</sup> See O. J. 1928. Miks suundume läände. – Sõdur, nr 9–10, pp. 410–411.

military history, are therefore interesting in the context of this article. In 1921, Reek was the chairman of the Military Teaching Committee and an inspector of UMEI. He was considered competent to make decisions on such important assignments because he had obtained higher military education<sup>17</sup> and participated in the War of Independence as a regiment commander and chief of staff of a division and in the frontlines<sup>18</sup>. Yet, the employment of Reek can also be considered questionable since Reek only ever conducted short courses at the General Staff Academy; there were also other division and front staff commanders whose service in the War of Independence would have made them just as competent. One probable reason for the employment of Reek was the trust and authority that he had among officers in the 1920s. The views of Reek were supported by August Traksmäa and Juhan Tõrvand who called him a progressive-minded officer<sup>19</sup>. The candidacy of Reek was also supported by future Colonel Elias Kasak who also admitted that Reek was a commander with a difficult personality who had extended the invitation for Russian émigrés to teach at the academy but failed to create the necessary academic atmosphere at the General Staff courses and criticized the teaching staff rather unfairly<sup>20</sup>.

As one of the founders of higher military education in Estonia, Reek had made a statement before his studies in France in 1921, citing Helmuth von Moltke and John Frederick Charles Fuller, that thorough knowledge of military history is a key element in military education and that, alongside tactical training, it gives commanders the “foundation for mounting major operations”. Reek considered strategy and tactics to be the pillars of military science<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup> **Seene, A.** (toim.) 2015. Kindralleitnant Nikolai Reek ja tema sõjakirjanduslik pärand. – **Reek, N.** 2015. Sõjateaduslik testament. Tartu: Ilmamaa, pp. 9–10. [**Seene** 2015]. It is worth noting that the peacetime graduates of the General Staff Academy did not consider wartime graduates as their equals, calling them “недоучки” (half-educated) or even “недоноски” (premature babies) (**Ganin, A. V.** 2014. Zakat Nikolajevskoi vojennoi akademii 1914–1922. Moskva: Kniznitsa, p. 430). [**Ganin** 2014]

<sup>18</sup> **Seene** 2011, p. 41.

<sup>19</sup> **Tõrvand, J.** 1928. Rohkem objektiivsust ja õiglast analüüsi. – *Sõdur*, nr 9–10, pp. 378–379. [**Tõrvand** 1928] This is a notable fact because at least Traksmäa did not have a good relationship with Reek. Vt nt **Kasak, E.** (*sine anno*). Mälestusi, II osa. ERA 4996-1-125, p. 165. [**Kasak**]

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 159.

<sup>21</sup> **Reek, N.** 2015. Sõjateaduslik testament. Toim. A. Seene. Tartu: Ilmamaa, pp. 353, 357. [**Reek** 2015]



**Picture 2.** Chief of the General Staff Nikolai Reek was always interested in military education. In this photo, General Nikolai Reek is inspecting the Officers' School at Tondi, Tallinn, 1935. Courtesy: the private photo collection of Igor Kopõtin.

After his studies in France, Reek developed a different view about the importance of military history. In an article about officer education published in *Sõdur* magazine in 1926, Reek stated that military history is subordinate to tactical education. He insisted that significant cuts must be made to the history of the art of war syllabus taught at UMEI. In particular, he wanted to leave out the earlier history, before Napoleon's times, and turn nearly all focus on World War I (referred to at that time simply as the World War) and the War of Independence<sup>22</sup>. In other words, he believed that the general history of the art of war was necessary only insofar as it provided good tactical examples. In his estimation, teaching the history of the War of Independence served only two purposes: first, to ensure that officers got used to thinking and acting in the context of an independent Estonia, particularly taking into account the battlefield experience from the War of Independence and the use of human resources in Estonia<sup>23</sup>; and second, the history of the War of Independence was mostly necessary for training officers<sup>24</sup>. These were probably

<sup>22</sup> Reek 2015, p. 391.

<sup>23</sup> Seene, A. 2008. Kõrgem Sõjakool 1921–1940. – KVÜÕA toimetised, nr 9, p. 37. [Seene 2008]

<sup>24</sup> Reek 2015, p. 391.

the reasons why Reek made his “reform” in military education and started shaping the teaching of military history from that point on.

Reek felt that teaching the history of the War of Independence and synthesising its lessons was important for officers since it shaped the approach to Estonia’s military strategy. In the opinion of historian Kaarel Piirimäe, this was precisely the problem that led to key miscalculations about the future and vision of war. Piirimäe notes that the Russian émigré teaching staff perceived the experience of the War of Independence as equivalent to an irregular amateur armed conflict<sup>25</sup>. Although in retrospect their opinion seems justified, the reason why the stint of the Russian émigré teachers at UMEI was so short was because they did not give the War of Independence the credit it deserved. Admittedly, this was not a unique problem because, similarly to the Estonian General Staff courses, the old-school teaching staff of the General Staff Academy of the Red Army ignored the experience obtained from the Russian Civil War, considering that conflict to be an anomalous war<sup>26</sup>.

The fact that studying recent conflicts was preferred over studying past historical conflicts is not unusual in military education. Furthermore, there is reason to think that it stemmed from the experience of the Imperial Nicholas General Staff Academy. After defeat in the Russo–Japanese War, the General Staff Academy was accused of an inability to provide students the knowledge that is truly essential for warfare. Military history teaching came under fire since, apparently, it was preferable to teach details of little use about the history of the art of war from earlier periods while more significant recent conflicts were only superficially touched upon<sup>27</sup>. This is why, when teaching military history about the pre-1914 era, the academy focused above all on four recent armed conflicts with which the students were expected to be familiar down to the specific details<sup>28</sup>.

In this regard, it is important to note that the French model of military education, used by Reek in the 1920s, was criticized by Oskar Jalajas, a member of the Historical Committee for the War of Independence. He defended a

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<sup>25</sup> Piirimäe 2017b, pp. 129, 132–135.

<sup>26</sup> Mereckov, K. 2003. Na službe narodu. Moskva: Ast, pp. 12–13. [Mereckov 2003]

<sup>27</sup> For example, Gleb Vannovski, who later served as lecturer at the Estonian General Staff courses, clearly underestimated Japanese military strengths before the war, for which he was heavily criticised later, Brinjuk, N. J. (ed.) 2018. Nikolajevskaja Akademia Generalnogo Štaba (1832–1918). Sankt Peterburg: Dmitri Bulanin, p. 198. [Brinjuk 2018]

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 74–75.

graduate thesis in HMS<sup>29</sup> but his ideas reached a wider audience, including senior Estonian officers such as Colonel August Traksmaa, through articles published in the *Sõdur* magazine<sup>30</sup>. The Historical Committee for the War of Independence started to apply Jalajas' thesis in the field of methodology<sup>31</sup>.

In his thesis, Jalajas listed the advantages of learning from German and Soviet military history instead of the French model. More specifically, he criticized the French approach which undervalued the importance of military history in military science. They lacked the desire to learn from military history, they did not publish any papers on military history—claiming they wanted to save paper—and did not appreciate the practical value of military history in the changing circumstances of warfare. In general, the French claimed that winners did not need to learn anything from history<sup>32</sup>. It is hard to evaluate if Estonia had a similar winner's mentality from the victory in the War of Independence.

It is also difficult to say how much the crisis in French military history influenced Reek during his studies in Paris, but some of his comments contain ideas that are characteristic of the French School. For example, it is evident from the abovementioned opinion expressed by Reek that the practical value of military history lies solely in tactical education. At the same time, Reek also highly valued the military training and education system of Reichswehr. As a result, various elements from the German system were integrated into the Estonian military in the 1930s<sup>33</sup>. Yet it cannot be said that Reek entirely turned his back on Russian military theory. For example, he often quoted classic Russian military thinkers such as Generalissimo Aleksandr Suvorov, General Genrich Leer, General Mikhail Dargomirov, Professor Colonel Aleksandr Neznamov, and Professor Lieutenant General Nikolai Golovin in his papers<sup>34</sup>. Actually, the majority of his articles quote the opinions of different leading thinkers of the world on the evolution of military arts.

<sup>29</sup> **Jalajas, O.** 1929. Sõjakunstiajaloo ja sõjaajaloo uurimise tähtsus ja meetodid. Kõrgema Sõjakooli lõputöö. ERA 2124-3-268. [**Jalajas** 1929]

<sup>30</sup> **Nimmer** 2013, p. 19.

<sup>31</sup> **Vabadussõja Ajaloo Komitee Kaitsevägegede Staabi VI osakonna ülemale.** 3.9.1930. ERA 495-12-531, p. 159.

<sup>32</sup> **Jalajas** 1929, pp. 7–8; **Nimmer** 2013, p. 19.

<sup>33</sup> **Seene** 2011, pp. 46, 49, 51; **Reek** 2015, pp. 404–410; **Kopõtin, I.** 2016b. Reichswehri identiteedikriis: selle mõjud ja kajastamine Eestis 1919–1934. – *Ajalooline Ajakiri*, nr 1(155), p. 118.

<sup>34</sup> **Reek** 2015, pp. 127, 189–190, 197–198, 343–352.



Colonel August Traksmaa, a colleague of Reek's in teaching military history at UMEI, also saw a deep crisis arise in Estonian military history in the mid-1920s. In his view, the crisis escalated because, like the French army before them, the Estonian military command had lost confidence in the discipline of military history as a source of truth. For Traksmaa, the main problem was not the winner's mentality but rather the low-quality military historical literature published *en masse* after the War of Independence<sup>35</sup>.

Reek associated the crisis in Estonian military education specifically with Russian émigrés, a group he wished to get rid of. Andres Seene uses the term “Reek's reform” to denote the changes that took place in Estonian military education in 1926–1927, after the Russian émigrés were dismissed. In one article, Seene indicates that Reek promoted the use of active teaching methods modelled by the French military at UMEI. These were supported by the more progressive Estonian officers, including Traksmaa and Major General Juhan Tõrvand, but opposed by the older generation of teaching staff, including Major General Dmitri Lebedev, Colonel Artur Salf, and several others who expected students to memorise drafts from their lectures word for word, just like the Russian émigré teaching staff before them<sup>36</sup>.

Such an approach alongside the entire conflict probably had an influence on the processes that happened at the Nicholas General Staff Academy from 1905 to 1914. More precisely, following the Russo–Japanese War, an acute conflict broke out at the Academy between teachers representing the so-called bayonet generation and the newer “fire” generation<sup>37</sup>. Two giants of Russian military theory, Leer and Dragomirov, represented the older generation: simply put, they supported the obsolete bayonet battle theory derived from the art of war of the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>38</sup>. Thinkers of the older

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<sup>35</sup> Nimmer 2013, pp. 19–20.

<sup>36</sup> Seene 2008, pp. 42–43.

<sup>37</sup> Heavy criticism was levelled against the national school of thought represented, among others, by Leer and Dragomirov who ostensibly failed to study contemporary military problems and focused mostly on history. Michnevich and Baiov clearly belonged to that school, see Kudrjavitsev, N. 1913. Iskušeniija ruskogo polkovodšestva. – Voennõi Sbornik, № 4, pp. 25–31. Michnevich argued that Russian military art was equal and even superior to Western military art; even after the Russo–Turkish war of 1877–1878, he supported the bayonet over fire, Mihnevitiš, N. P. 2016. Osnovõ ruskogo voennogo iskusstva. Sravnitelnoi otšerk sostojanija voennogo iskusstva v Rossii i Zapadnoi Evrope v važneišeje istoričeskiej epohi. Moskva: URSS, pp. 136–137, 156, 168–169 [Mihnevitiš 2016]).

<sup>38</sup> Menning, B. W. 2004. The Offensive Revisited. Russian Preparation for Future War, 1906–1914. – Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, D.; Menning, B. W. (eds.). Reforming the Tsar's Army: Military Innovation in Imperial Russia from Peter the Great to the Revolution. Woodrow

generation included historian Professor General Nikolai Michnevich and Baiov, who was greatly influenced by the former. After defeat in the war, Baiov had to defend all theoretical positions of the older generation against heavy criticism<sup>39</sup>. Since the younger generation included capable French-trained professors Nikolai Golovin and Aleksandr Neznamov whose convictions were partially vindicated in the World War, the generational debate transferred over to Russian émigrés (Golovin) and the General Staff Academy of the Red Army (Neznamov). Among other things, the younger generation invited the teaching staff to modernise their methods, preferring a seminar format to lectures and independent study to rote memorisation. The conflict between Baiov and Reek can be placed in the exact same context. Furthermore, the students of UMEI sensed that some traits of the bayonet warfare generation were characteristic of older teachers. According to descriptions, some of them demanded that students execute a manoeuvre using *udaletskaia taktika*, *shvunk* and *armeiskaya konnitsa*, disregarding modern warfare tactics and the experiences obtained from recent wars<sup>40</sup>.

While still a professor at the Nicholas General Staff Academy, Baiov considered the history of the art of war an important subject in military education. The history of the art of war was intended to help students understand the current situation of themselves as well as adversaries, and serve as a foundation for military development. Baiov saw the use of active teaching methods proposed by Golovin and Neznamov (and slightly later in Estonia, Reek) as a risk, meaning that military education could lose scientific and formative value for military higher education and, therefore, become a NCO school or regiment training squad (as Reek put it, a “vocational school”)<sup>41</sup>. In this light, the conflict between Baiov and Reek ten years after the clash at the Nicholas General Staff Academy between different generations of teachers, or schools of thought, seems to be a logical process.

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Wilson Center Press with Cambridge University Press, p. 229; **Pintner, W.** 2009. Vene sõjaline mõtlemine: Lääne eeskuju ja Suvorovi vari. – Paret, P. (toim.). Nüüdisaegse strateegia kujundajad Machiavellist tuumaajastuni. Eesti Entsüklopeediakirjastus, Tallinn, pp. 433–437.

<sup>39</sup> **Brinjuk, N. J.; Koršunov, E. L.; Mihhailov, A. A.** 2017. ‘Celoe bogatstvo voennoj naučnoj mysli...’ Ob izdanii ‘Izvestij Imperatorskoj Nikolajevskoj Voennoj Akademii’ (‘Целое богатство военной научной мысли...’ Об издании ‘Известий Императорской Николаевской Военной Академии’). – *Vojenno-istoričeskij žurnal* (Военно-исторический журнал), № 12, pp. 25–26 [**Brinjuk, Koršunov, Mihhailov** 2017]

<sup>40</sup> **H. J.** 1928, p. 328. *Udaletskaia taktika* meant “decisive infantry charge using bayonets” in the Russian jargon.

<sup>41</sup> **Brinjuk, Koršunov, Mihhailov** 2017, p. 26.

Another outcome of Reek's reform was a preference of teaching tactics over strategy. As a result, tactics became the most important subject at UMEI and other subjects were assigned a mere supporting role.<sup>42</sup> While prior to the reform, the main emphasis of military education was on strategy, the philosophy of war, and the theoretical fundamentals of the history of the art of war, then after 1926, the focus turned on the practical skills needed by junior officers that would allow them to command units up to the company level<sup>43</sup>. From then on, there was a tendency to organise the entire military training process pursuant to the aforementioned vocational school principles<sup>44</sup>. The influence of the German military education model is recognisable in this shift: according to the German approach, officers had to acquire only that knowledge which they could apply in practice<sup>45</sup>.

If we look at the development of Estonian military education in comparison with Western and Eastern warfare cultures, Reek clearly preferred the Western culture<sup>46</sup>. Baiov, on the other hand, continuing in the footsteps of Michnevich, considered Russian warfare to be superior to that of the West<sup>47</sup>. As we will see below, Baiov's belief was reflected in his several years of teaching at UMEI. This was yet another cornerstone of the conflict between Baiov and Reek, i.e., the older and younger generation.

It is interesting that Jalajas took Baiov's side in this conflict. Jalajas called the changes that took place in Estonian military education in 1926–1927 not an illustrious reform but rather a deep crisis, associating them with the departure of Professor Aleksei Baiov. Jalajas noted that Baiov played a key

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<sup>42</sup> **Seene** 2011, p.44.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.

<sup>45</sup> **Seeckt, H. von** 1935. Gedanken eines Soldaten. Leipzig: K. F. Koehler, S., S. 127. See also **Corum, J. S.** 1992. Roots of Blitzkrieg: Hans von Seeckt and German Military Reform. Kansas: University Press of Kansas.

<sup>46</sup> General Tõrvand did not think that using Russian lecturers was "normal" but he compared the situation to the practices of the University of Tartu which, due to a lack of Estonian teachers, had also hired academics from abroad. Tõrvand did not think that the Russian military school was all bad since it was they who had laid the basis for Estonian success in the War of Independence (**Tõrvand** 1928, p. 378). Tõrvand thought attacks against Russian émigrés were associated not with concerns over teaching methods but rather with "nationalist xenophobia and post-revolutionary radicalism" (*ibid.*, p. 380).

<sup>47</sup> For example, **Baiov, A. K.** 2016. Vojennoje delo v epohu imperatora Pavla I. Otšerk ordinarnogo professora Imperatorskoi Nikolajevskoi Vojennoi Akademii Generalnogo štaba polkovnika A. K. Baiova. – Kapjov, E. Istorija Russkoi Armii. Moskva: Izdatelstvo Je, p. 169. Vrd **Mihnevič** 2016, pp. 6, 9, 133–134, 155–157.

role in the military history teaching of the Estonian military: his authority and influence were instrumental in teaching military history as a core subject at UMEI until 1926. After Baiov was dismissed, the proportion of military history subjects at UMEI was significantly reduced<sup>48</sup>.

Presumably, Jalajas was impressed not by Baiov personally but rather by the older generation in general since they considered military history to be the pillar of military science. What is also noteworthy is that Jalajas was one of the first Estonians to interpret—and adapt to Estonian conditions—the ideas of the renowned Soviet military theorist Aleksander Svechin. In Jalajas's interpretation of his most important ideas, military history was fundamental for force generation and military thinking. "If we fail to devote enough attention to historical studies, we can train only unskilled labourers in the military, unfit for conscious invention and unable to understand or apply rapid advances in military science," said Jalajas in his interpretation of Svechin about the role of military history in training Estonian officers<sup>49</sup>.

In an attempt to prove that military history must be approached scientifically, Jalajas claimed that military history and the history of the art of war are sub-disciplines of the "science of military history". Military history itself was, in turn, subordinate to the discipline of the history of the art of war which served as its main source. Jalajas never denied that he borrowed this hierarchy from the Russian tsarist army practice<sup>50</sup>. However, he defined the sub-disciplines of military history based on the approach of German historian Ernst Bernheim. Paraphrasing Bernheim, Jalajas defined military history as a discipline for researching and describing the spatial and temporal development of nations and states, or parties with a "psycho-physical" causal connection from the perspective of warfare values. "Psycho-physical" refers to the object of research via both intangible and tangible factors; "spatial-temporal development" means that research had to be carried out in the context of societal phenomena. Based on the general definition of the discipline of military history, it had to focus on studying a specific war from the viewpoint of warfare values. The history of the art of war, on the other hand, was a study of all wars from the viewpoint of the evolution of warfare<sup>51</sup>.

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<sup>48</sup> Jalajas 1929, p. 79.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 18–19.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 52–53; Nimmer 2013, p. 47.

Such a view of military history and division into two sub-disciplines was probably transferred to Estonian military education from the Russian General Staff Academy, particularly by Baiov. Even as late as 1912, Baiov published a paper at the Russian General Staff Academy where he gave a detailed overview about the development of the study of military history in Russia and introduced its principles. Baiov's description of the activities of a council led by Count Milyutin in 1865 is especially interesting. This is the council that defined the nature of learning military history as well as the goals and methods for teaching it. It is also responsible for dividing the discipline into two branches: history of war as an analysis and description of military campaigns, and history of the art of war, intended to study how the methods of warfare have changed in history, from antiquity to modern times<sup>52</sup>. As we can see below, the same principles were also in force in Estonian military education until 1940.

### 3. Military history subjects at HMS

Until 1926, or during the time Professor Baiov taught at HMS, there were two military history subjects: the history of the art of war and the history of the World War. They were quite thorough, exceeded in volume only by tactics and general staff service subjects<sup>53</sup>. After Baiov left UMEI, the teaching of military history at HMS was shaped by Reek. He believed that strategic principles had to be taught through the lens of the history of the art of war that included four subjects: general history of the art of war, the World War, the War of Independence, and the Russian Civil War<sup>54</sup>. In reality, however, only three subjects were taught because the Russian Civil War was not included as a separate subject. Therefore, as of 1927, three military history subjects were taught at

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<sup>52</sup> **Baiov, A.** 1912. *Istorija vojenjnogo iskusstva, kak nauka*. Sankt Peterburg: Tip Suvorina, pp. 7–8. This principle was later used and developed by the Red Army. For Soviet theorists, military history was supposed to consist of five elements: history of wars, history of the art of war, military organisation, history of military technology, and the history of military theory. (**Vigor, P. V.** 1990. *The Function of Military History in the Soviet Union*. – Reddel, C. W. (ed.). *Transformation in Russian and Soviet Military History*. Washington, D.C.: USAF Academy, p. 117).

<sup>53</sup> **Leets, G.** (*sine anno*). *Kõrgem Sõjakool 1921–1931*. Masinakiri. ERA 2124-3-588, p. 33. [Leets].

<sup>54</sup> **Reek, N.** 1926. *Meie kaitseväe juhtiva koosseisu – ohvitseride – kasvatuse ja väljaõppe alalt*. – *Sõdur*, nr 26–27, p. 553; **Seene** 2008, p. 37.

HMS: the history (evolution) of the art of war, the history of the World War, and the history of the War of Independence<sup>55</sup>. By then, the volume of military history and strategy subjects had been reduced to one-third of their former extent<sup>56</sup>. Despite all that, military history was generally considered to be one of the core subjects at HMS alongside tactics, strategy, and staff service<sup>57</sup>.

That was the period when Reek started to apply the principles of military education borrowed from France, integrate practical work methods into studies, and shift the main emphasis from strategy to tactics<sup>58</sup>. Reek's focus on recent conflicts was understood and accepted, especially by the students of MS who, themselves, wanted to know more about the history of the War of Independence and the World War. As mentioned before, the issue with studying conflicts from recent history at the Estonian HMS may have originated from the Nicholas General Staff Academy. It is comparable to the time when a similar question—which conflicts to teach and to what extent?—arose in the early years of the Red Army General Staff Academy. Even though old-school teachers preferred to focus on the earlier history of the art of war, students were always keen on studying the history of the Russian Civil War and the history of the World War<sup>59</sup>. Later studies and analyses of these two conflicts at the Red Army General Staff and Frunze Academy would form the basis of the now renowned deep operation theory<sup>60</sup>. When the Red Army General Staff Academy reopened in 1936, the chair of military history was also re-established. It mostly dealt with the study and teaching of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century history, analysed the major operations of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (for example, the Russo–Japanese War, the World War and the Russian Civil War), and developed a methodology for teaching military history. Although the history of the art of war also included older history, the main emphasis was still on studying the World War. These principles for teaching the history of the art of war and military history remained in force at the Red Army General Staff Academy until 1940. After that, the experiences obtained from

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<sup>55</sup> **Leets**, pp. 64–65; Exam protocol, September 1936, ERA 650-1-1734, p. 55.

<sup>56</sup> **Leets**, pp. 64–68.

<sup>57</sup> **Seene** 2008, p. 38.

<sup>58</sup> **Leets**, pp. 52, 65.

<sup>59</sup> **Mereckov** 2003, pp. 74–75; **Sandalov, L. M.** 1961. *Perežitoe*. Moskva: Vojenizdat, pp. 12–13.

<sup>60</sup> **Žilin, P. A.** 1986. *Istorija vojnogo iskusstva*. Moskva: Vojenizdat, pp. 106–107; **Kagan, F. W.** 2010. *The Rise and Fall of Soviet Operational Art*. – Higham, Robin; Kagan, Frederick W. *The Military History of the Soviet Union*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 86–87.

the Winter War and the Lake Khasan and Khalkhin Gol conflicts (which had recently taken place) were also analysed and integrated into the curricula<sup>61</sup>.

The history of the art of war was one of the most important subjects at HMS, taught from 1927 to 1934 by Colonel Richard Tomberg, a commander of the air forces<sup>62</sup>. In the mid-1930s, the history of the art of war was taught under the name “evolution of the art of war” (for second year cadets) and this included 20 hours of lectures and two hours of practical assignments. In the opening lecture, Tomberg used to discuss the importance of the evolution of military history and the art of war, and the methodologies and sources for studying it. Subsequent lessons would focus on a variety of topics ranging from ancient history to early 20<sup>th</sup> century, including a brief overview of the development of warfare in ancient times, knights’ armies and mercenaries in medieval times, the reforms of Louis XIV, the art of war of Peter the Great, Frederick the Great and Napoleon, and the French revolutions. The history of the art of war of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century was analysed more thoroughly. Tomberg would end the course with the development of 20<sup>th</sup> century warfare and a discussion about the future<sup>63</sup>. In 1934, because UMEI was constantly trying to reduce the proportion of military history courses, the subject matter was entrusted to Major Mart Haber, a fresh graduate of HMS, who was willing to teach the course in a volume of only 15 hours<sup>64</sup>.

The problem with the volume of the courses also pertained to the history of the World War course, with Colonel Herbert Grabbi being made the responsible lecturer in 1927<sup>65</sup>. At first, the volume of the course depended on a corresponding entrance exam: independent research by prospective students prior to admission was considered important for acquiring theoretical knowledge so that there would be more time for practical assignments. However, Grabbi found that the contents of the course—25 hours of lectures and one independent assignment for the winter period—was not enough to pass the course since there was no time for students to go through all the lecture materials printed by the teaching staff in 1930. It forced the lecturer to look for a way out, make the course more student-centred, and replace the

<sup>61</sup> Gaivoronski, F. F. *et al.* 1987. Akademiija Generalnogo Štaba. Moskva: Voenizdat, pp. 33, 42–43.

<sup>62</sup> Leets, pp. 64–65, 77–79.

<sup>63</sup> Kolonel Tomberg Kõrgema Sõjakooli asjadevalitsejale 1934. Märts. Aine Sõjakunsti evolutsioon ainekava. ERA 650-1-1707, pp. 36–37.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> Leets, pp. 64–65, 77–79.

lecture format with active study methods. In Grabbi's opinion, it was difficult to decide which subject matters to discuss during the course<sup>66</sup>.

As of 1927, the history of the War of Independence was taught by Lt. Col. Jaan Maide; in 1930, he was replaced with Colonel Traksmaa. The history of the War of Independence was different from other military history courses because of its more extensive 37-hour volume. The course was divided into two unequal parts. The first, introductory part focused on the impact of the Russian Revolution on Estonia; the second part directly focused on war events. The thematic structure of the course resembled the table of contents of *The history of the Estonian War of Independence*, published in the late 1930s by the workgroup of the Historical Committee for the War of Independence, led by Traksmaa, which described the military and, partially, military-political events<sup>67</sup>. The volume of the history of the War of Independence course was reduced by two thirds in the late 1930s. From there on, the course contained only ten lectures<sup>68</sup>.

The strategy course was also tightly intertwined with military history disciplines. The lecturer, Maj. Gen. Herbert Brede, connected strategy very strongly with the history of the art of war. In the 1930s, the subject matter of the course also covered the manoeuvres of Frederick the Great and Napoleon and the history of the general staff in the Franco–Prussian War and the World War, and it gave an overview of the strategies of three countries that participated in the World War using the examples of Ferdinand Foch, Erich Ludendorff, and Conrad Hötendorf. The volume of the course was equal to that of a history course, including a total of 20 hours of lectures and one hour of practical work<sup>69</sup>.

Even though, in the 1930s, the HMS attempted to reduce the capacity of the curriculum by cutting history courses, the subject matter of military history was, in spite of its theoretical nature, significantly covered in the management and staff service course<sup>70</sup>. Furthermore, probably because of the need for practical examples, two courses of military history focused solely

<sup>66</sup> Kolonelleitnant Grabbi Kõrgema Sõjakooli asjadevalitsejale 1934. Märts. ERA 650-1-1707, p. 83. [Grabbi 1934]

<sup>67</sup> Kava aines Eesti Vabadussõda 1934.–1935. õppeaasta peale. ERA 650-1-1707, p. 77.

<sup>68</sup> Vabadussõja ainekava (*sine anno*, probably 1935). ERA 495-12-574, pp. 990–991. [Vabadussõja ainekava, *sine anno*]

<sup>69</sup> Strateegia ainekava (*sine anno*, probably 1935). ERA 495-12-574, p. 985.

<sup>70</sup> Läbivõetud ja läbivõtmisel olevate õppeainete seis 1. veebruariks 1935. a. ERA 650-1-1706, p. 66.



on recently ended conflicts: the World War and the War of Independence. The French school's approach to military history was very distinct at that time, probably due to the fact that the predominant majority of lecturers who taught military history and strategy—Reek and Brede, Traksmaa and Grabbi—had obtained military education in France where they presumably adopted the French army's beliefs and views on military science, strategy, and military history.

#### 4. Military history subjects at MS

How was the teaching of military history structured in other subsidiary institutions of UMEI where lower-level commanders were educated? What principles were followed and what proportion of the curriculum was devoted to military history subjects in MS and MTK?

Statistics on the distribution of the UMEI courses in 1925–1926 show that the officers and cadets of MS were taught 16 military courses and 20 general courses. By volume, the history of the art of war came second after practical tactics, making up 9 and 10 per cent of the subjects taught to infantry officers, respectively. For senior and junior cadets, the history of the art of war occupied 10 to 14 per cent of the curriculum<sup>71</sup>. It is noteworthy that, besides the history of the art of war, students of the officers' class and cadets' general class (secondary education) could complement general courses with two history courses, homeland history and general history, whereas their volume was, likewise, considerable<sup>72</sup>.

The history of the art of war, taught to the officers' courses by Baiov in Russian, included 41 topics from the art of war of Ancient Greece to the World War battles of 1914, and took a total of 75 hours. We can detect a certain inclination towards Russia in the subject matters of the course—for example, in a discussion about Peter the Great and the Napoleonic era—although the Russian art of war in the Middle Ages was not included in the topics of discussion and the World War topics focused only on battles at the Western Front<sup>73</sup>. In retrospect, it is hard to say how much of Baiov's syllabus

<sup>71</sup> SÜÕ Alaliväe kursuste õppekava 1925.–26. õa. ERA 650-1-1668, p. 1.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> Sõjakunsti ajaloo ainekava Sõjakooli ohvitseride klassis (Alaliväe ohvitseride kursused) 1924.–1925. õa. ERA 650-1-1668, p. 14. [Sõjakunsti ajaloo ainekava Sõjakooli ohvitseride klassis 1924–1925]

was cut by the administration of UMEI but, compared to his lecture notes, the number of subject matters on Russia was remarkably reduced.

During the Baiov era at MS, the history of the art of war course was divided into two unequal parts. In 1924 and 1925, Baiov gave 10 lectures to the cadets' junior class where the subject matters ranged from Ancient Rome to the Napoleonic era<sup>74</sup>. The second part of the course, 25 lectures, was held for senior cadets, one third of which was devoted to the operations on the Baltic Sea in the first year of the World War. The course began with Napoleon's campaigns and included a selection of the more famous wars of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>75</sup>; Baiov apparently taught with a textbook by Michnevich<sup>76</sup>. Examinations were made up of a number of questions that required a thorough knowledge of different armed conflicts<sup>77</sup>. This gives grounds to presume that students could only pass the course by memorising facts: the same thing that the UMEI administration had criticized the Russian lecturers for. Interestingly enough, the examiner was probably not Baiov, i.e., the lecturer of the course, but someone else. For instance, in 1924, the examination was conducted by Richard Tomberg<sup>78</sup>, a captain who became a lecturer of the history of the art of war right after Baiov; in 1927, the examiner was Jaan Maide<sup>79</sup>. It is not quite clear what the aim of these substitutions was. Maybe it was to verify the results of Baiov's teaching, maybe Tomberg and Maide were serving as his assistants.

In 1924, probably on the initiative of Reek, the UMEI administration decided to make some cuts in both the cadets' and the officer candidates' class. As a result, ancient and medieval art of war were omitted, and the course began from the Gustavus Adolphus era<sup>80</sup>. In 1925, Baiov taught the history of the art of war to the officer candidates' class based on the abridged syllabus, a total of 31 lectures. In general, he covered the same topics as in

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<sup>74</sup> **Programma istorii voennogo iskusstva na 1924–25 uĉebnyj god. Kadettide noorem klass.** ERA 650-1-1668, p. 192.

<sup>75</sup> **Programma istorii voennogo iskusstva na 1924–25 uĉebnyj god. Kadettide vanem klass.** ERA 650-1-1668, p. 133.

<sup>76</sup> **Mihnevitsĥ, N. P.** 1897. *Voina meĝdu Germanije i Frantsije 1870–71. Tĥast 1. Ot natĥala voinō do Sedana vkljutĥitelno.* SPb: Nikolajevskaja akademija Generalnogo Őtaba.

<sup>77</sup> **Sōjakunsti ajaloo eksami kava** 1925. Aprill, ilmselt koostatud SŪŌ ũlema poolt. ERA 650-1-1668, pp. 193–196.

<sup>78</sup> **Sōjakunsti ajaloo eksami kava** 1924. ERA 650-1-1670, pp. 24–27.

<sup>79</sup> **Sōjakunsti ajaloo eksami kava, 1926.–1927. ōa.** ERA 650-1-1039, p. 33.

<sup>80</sup> **Sōjakunsti ainekava 1923.–1924. ōa.** ERA 650-1-1670, p. 30.

the cadets' class but the main emphasis was placed on the so-called decisive battles from the Ancient Roman era up to the WWI battles in Flanders in 1914<sup>81</sup>. In 1925 Baiov submitted the original syllabus that he had prepared in 1922, again, for the officer candidates' class. However, it was reduced even more extensively and the course was to begin from the Napoleonic era. One third of the course focused on the events of the World War, some of it in the expense of the Franco–Prussian and Russo–Japanese War<sup>82</sup>. Despite the cuts, the teaching of the history of the art of war continued in subsequent years after Baiov departed, and largely according to the thematic structure that he had prepared<sup>83</sup>.

As of 1927, following the decision of Reek, the older cadets' and officer candidates' classes of MS were taught the history of World War, a separate course integrated into other courses. The main emphasis of this course was on operations that took place during the periods of manoeuvre warfare in 1914 and 1918, whereas position warfare only served as a “connecting link.”<sup>84</sup> Because of this, the officer candidates and cadets of senior classes were required to have especially good knowledge of the Marne battles and Russian invasion to East Prussia<sup>85</sup>. In the history of the War of Independence course, taught in 1927 and 1928 by Lt. Col. Maide, the senior year cadets were required to know the most important battles and operations, such as the Battle of Narva, the Pskov and Petrograd operations, the war in northern Latvia, and the Landeswehr War<sup>86</sup>. In the 1930s, the history of the War of Independence course taught to the cadets was primarily seen as a little more intense continuation of what was taught to the officer candidates' class. Special attention had to be devoted to individual battle periods and war events in a political context<sup>87</sup>.

Military history, particularly regarding the World War and the Russo–Japanese War, was covered not only in military history subjects but also

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<sup>81</sup> **Programma istorii voennogo iskusstva na 1924–25 učebnyj god. Aspirantide klass.** ERA 650-1-1668, p. 296.

<sup>82</sup> **SÜÕ ülema (?) redigeeritud sõjakunsti ajaloo eksamikava 1925**, pp. 331–332.

<sup>83</sup> **Sõjakunsti ajaloo katse kava, 1927.–1928. õa.** ERA 650-1-1077, p. 21.

<sup>84</sup> **SÜÕ Sõjakooli õppekavad 1930. 2. osa. Kadettide õppekavad.** Tallinn: SÜÕ, pp. V–VI. [SÜÕ Sõjakooli õppekavad 1930]

<sup>85</sup> **Maailmasõja ajaloo katsekava kadettide ja aspirantide klassis, 1927.–1928. õa.** ERA 650-1-1077, p. 25.

<sup>86</sup> **Vabadussõja ajaloo katsekava kadettide klassis, 1927.–1928. õa.** 650-1-1077, p. 63.

<sup>87</sup> **SÜÕ Sõjakooli õppekavad 1930**, p. VI.

general tactics, but only before 1926<sup>88</sup>. Before the UMEI administration began to intervene, military history was strongly integrated into the subject matters of military courses in MS<sup>89</sup>. After Baiov and the other Russian émigrés were dismissed, military history became less integrated with other subjects in MS<sup>90</sup>.

The new cadets' class curriculum of UMEI, approved by the Defence Minister in 1930, re-categorised military history disciplines under general military courses, the purpose of which was not only to develop the intellect and general educational level of students but rather, alongside other military courses, create an integral set of knowledge and skills that was necessary for future officers as leaders and educators. The curriculum laid down the objectives of military history disciplines such as the history of the art of war and the history of the World War. Together with other general military courses, the purpose of military history was to demonstrate to students that "military sciences are just a part of the general sciences."<sup>91</sup> The thesis of the resulting curriculum was that the evolution of military science and the art of war were closely connected with general cultural development. Evidently by then, the senior officers belonging to the military command who approved the curriculum had developed a systematic and comprehensive understanding of military education as a whole as well as the meaning of military history specifically.

Based on both the official curricula and the correspondence of MS on matters pertaining to the organisation of studying, we can say that the teaching of military history disciplines did not change much in the 1930s. Although the volume of military history subjects did decrease slightly, the proportion of these compared to other subjects in the cadets' class curriculum pertained. The distribution of topics, likewise, remained unchanged. In the history of the art of war curriculum, much greater emphasis was placed on 19<sup>th</sup> century armed conflicts, highlighting the military events that had the greatest influence on the development of the art of war. While the history of the art of war was taken by the junior class, the history of the War of Independence and the history of the World War were taken by senior cadets<sup>92</sup>.

The distribution of military history subjects clearly displays the principle that Reek advocated for already in 1926, according to which MS should

<sup>88</sup> *Üldtaktika ainekava* 1924. ERA 650-1-1668, p. 270.

<sup>89</sup> *Programma taktiki pehoty na 1923–1924 učebnyj god*. ERA 650-1-1670, p. 1.

<sup>90</sup> *Jalaväetaktika katsekava, 1927.–1928. õa*. ERA 650-1-1077, pp. 2–4.

<sup>91</sup> *SÜÕ Sõjakooli õppekavad* 1930, p. II.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*; p. V; *Sõjakooli ainete jaotustabel* 1930. ERA 650-1-298, p. 22.

focus on teaching recent military events and give the older era only cursory treatment. In the same curriculum, the history of the art of war was recognised, probably as a result of the influence of Professor Baiov, as one of the oldest and most extensive courses in MS. Nevertheless, the cuts made in the subject matters were justified by saying that future officers only had to have minimum knowledge of military history events. For the designers of that curriculum, it was important that students continue researching the history of the art of war independently when serving as officers. For this purpose, MS was tasked with arousing interest in the subject and “leading the students to the sources for an in-depth study on the topic.”<sup>93</sup>

The teaching of history at MTS does not deserve much attention because the school operated with long hiatuses only for a few years and the education provided there had a clear technical slant. In 1920–1923, similarly to MS, both military history and general history were taught in MTS on a secondary school level. Military history and other military subjects were taught in the daytime, while secondary school subjects were taught in the evenings<sup>94</sup>. After 1936, Maj. Johannes Vermet, a military history teacher of MS, taught the history of the World War and the history of the art of war to third-year students at MTS. The choice of topics was similar to that of MS, starting with the art of war in ancient times and ending with the Franco–Prussian War. The history of the World War was a continuation of the history of the art of war and focused on analysing different battles<sup>95</sup>. In addition, Captain Edmund Püss, the assistant to the commander of the Historical Committee for the War of Independence, taught the history of the War of Independence at the Technical School. The topics covered in lessons were similar to those taught at MS and HMS<sup>96</sup>. Elements of military history were also present in other specialised lessons such as explosives, ordnance, and weapons instruction<sup>97</sup>.

According to Andres Seene who analysed the curricula of the cadets’ and officer candidates’ classes at MS, military history in Estonia was designed with the principle that the selection of subjects taught at MS and their teaching methods had to shape the military mindset of prospective military leaders,

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<sup>93</sup> SÕÕ Sõjakooli õppekavad 1930, p. V.

<sup>94</sup> Villemson, V. 2006. Eesti Vabariigi Sõjaväe Tehnikakool 1920–1923. – KVÜÕA toimetised, nr 6, pp. 59–60. [Villemson 2006]

<sup>95</sup> Orav, V. 2006. Eesti Vabariigi Sõjaväe Tehnikakool 1920–1923. – KVÜÕA toimetised, nr 6, pp. 156, 162. [Orav 2006]

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 174, 176.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 156–158, 174.

allowing them to orient and make quick decisions up to a company commander level. Nation-state ideology was considered important in approaching theoretical subjects; the teaching staff of every subject had to develop patriotism in students, their will to defend their country, and a sense of duty.<sup>98</sup> This largely determined the volume of military history disciplines and the corresponding goal-setting in studies. For example, in 1938, studies were extended at MS by one year; new courses included national defence and war leadership as a strategic subject matter, and Estonian history during the early medieval times<sup>99</sup>. Clearly, the number and volume of military history subjects taught at higher levels of military education was increased. This was quite reasonable since an understanding of military history was specifically needed at senior military leadership levels.

## 5. Military history teaching staff

The aforementioned Professor Baiov can be considered the first academic lecturer in Estonia. In 1904–1914, he worked as a professor and manager at the Nicholas General Staff Academy where he was responsible for academic proceedings and research. Many former students of Baiov have characterised him as lacking talent, a boring teacher who considered himself an expert on the Empress Anne era, and not interested in modern warfare. On the other hand, he was also perceived as being calm and supportive of students<sup>100</sup>. Despite his strong academic background and extensive experience, his lectures at the Academy were considered boring. During his time there, Baiov became a subject of the following joke. Once, the students of Baiov's class were awoken by a sudden crash of something falling. As it turned out, a rat had been running inside the auditorium's ceiling, stopped to listen to Baiov, and fallen asleep, so this is why it fell<sup>101</sup>. It was probably the outdated, obsolete teaching style of Baiov that encouraged Reek to look for ways to enliven the teaching process with active teaching methods. Nevertheless, Baiov's contribution to the development of Estonian military education should not be underestimated, especially when it comes to teaching military history.

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<sup>98</sup> Seene 2011, p. 54.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.

<sup>100</sup> Ganin 2014, pp. 374–375; Šapošnikov, B. M. 1982. Vospominanija. Vojenno-nautšnõje trudõ. Moskva: Vojennoje izdatelstvo ministerstva oboronõ SSSR, p. 125.

<sup>101</sup> Ganin 2014, p. 375.

Although Baiov was often criticised for his outdated teaching methods and use of Russian language, he was highly regarded by Elias Kasak, a student of the General Staff course. He saw Baiov's lectures as lively and properly following subject matters whose outlines the lecturer had personally prepared. Baiov probably stood out positively among other Estonian lecturers for his professionalism: the level of Estonian lecturers was very low and failed to fulfil the objectives of the GS courses<sup>102</sup>.

After Baiov's departure from MS, the teaching of the history of the art of war was taken over by Jaan Maide,<sup>103</sup> a future colonel and long-serving chief of the general staff of the Defence League. Evidently, Maide was highly appreciated by his students. Him joining the MS enlivened the academic life because his focus was more on practical activities instead of a theoretical approach; studying became more intense and cadets were required to work harder<sup>104</sup>. At MS, the history of the World War was long taught by Herbert Grabbi<sup>105</sup>, a future colonel, head of MS, and the president's senior adjutant.

One of the most authoritative military history lecturers was August Traksmaa, a long-serving head of division VI of the GS courses, future major general, and the man who put the most effort into researching the history of the War of Independence. The officer candidates perceived Traksmaa as a great authority because his book on the history of the War of Independence was widely read and often discussed among them. The history of the War of Independence was a course that students spoke about most "fondly."<sup>106</sup> Apparently, the lectures of Traksmaa were known for their objectivity: he was not afraid to discuss mistakes made by Estonians and his "positions were at odds with the exalting braggadocio of festive speeches." He stressed the importance of morality in the military and said that a smaller military could defeat the might of a more powerful adversary with a strong *esprit de corps* and great training. This, he felt, had led Estonians to victory in the War of Independence<sup>107</sup>.

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<sup>102</sup> Kasak, pp. 167–168.

<sup>103</sup> Sõjakunsti ajaloo ainekava 1930. ERA 650-1-298, p. 27.

<sup>104</sup> Nõmmik, A. 1975. Mälestuste kilde Sõjakoolist. – Seene, A. (koost.) 2020. Tondipoisid. Vabariigi sõjakoolide kasvandike mälestusi rahu- ja sõjapäevilt (1919–1945). Viimsi: Eesti Sõjamauseum – kindral Laidoneri muuseum, p. 79.

<sup>105</sup> Maailmasõja ajaloo ainekava 1930. ERA 650-1-298, p. 28.

<sup>106</sup> Lindsaar, P. 1962 ... ja sõdurid laulavad. 2. köide. Lund: Eesti Kirjanike Kooperatiiv, p. 161. [Lindsaar 1962]

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 157–158.

The novels written by Lindsaar, an author and former student of MS, lead us to believe that officer candidates trusted their history lecturers and their lectures were convincing and motivating for the candidates. In addition to the lecturer of the history of the War of Independence, Lindsaar also praised the lecturer of the history of the art of war—most likely Major General Richard Tomberg—who, likewise, was said to have provided great examples of how small armies had been able to prevail over larger ones due to their superior morality<sup>108</sup>. In any case, the idea of a patriotic ideological narrative being preferred to military science calculations was, indeed, prominent in Estonian military thinking and cultivated in military education<sup>109</sup>.

In general, the servicemen who taught military history courses were mostly experienced senior officers, most of whom attained the rank of major general. Despite that, many of them were not trained historians. Citing the thesis advanced by Nimmer: the officers who served in the Historical Committee for the War of Independence and had personal acquaintance with military history lacked good career prospects for service<sup>110</sup>. Probably because of this, there were no military historians who were professional officers with an academic degree in history. The situation was probably better when it came to teaching military history as opposed to researching military history because, unlike the Historical Committee for the War of Independence, UMEI employed authoritative senior officers—the military's intellectual elite of that era indeed—as military history lecturers.

The military history teaching staff of UMEI can be considered relatively competent, at least from a military perspective. According to Seene, the fact that a number of lecturers of UMEI had previously obtained the education of a schoolteacher and were, thus, interested in pedagogical education, also played a significant role<sup>111</sup>. Yet, as Seene rightly notes, UMEI suffered from a shortage of teaching staff because the dismissed Russian lecturers could not be replaced with the senior officers who had returned from France. As a result, MS employed only two permanent lecturers in 1928, and the temporary staff were left to organise the provision of education at HMS<sup>112</sup>.

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<sup>108</sup> Lindsaar 1962, pp. 156–158.

<sup>109</sup> Piirimäe 2017b, p. 131.

<sup>110</sup> Nimmer 2013, p. 19.

<sup>111</sup> Seene 2011, p. 45.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.



The temporary teaching staff certainly included acclaimed specialists in their respective fields. For example, in 1934–1936, General Laidoner who was among the temporary teaching staff of HMS personally taught strategy (the political, “high strategy” part). General Reek taught the practical side of strategy, in accordance with Estonian conditions and staff service. He also taught history, more specifically, tactics of forces in the World War. The theoretical part of strategy was taught by General Herbert Brede. Colonel Traksmaa, who had thoroughly researched the subject matter, taught the War of Independence, and for quite a while, the evolution of the art of war was taught by Gen. Tomberg. Major Mart Haber taught at least one course, being himself a fresh graduate of HMS<sup>113</sup>.

In 1936, despite the long-standing practice of using temporary teaching staff, the UMEI administration decided that since temporary lecturers were so overloaded with direct service duties they were unable to properly prepare for lessons. In terms of pedagogy, their lessons were often deficient. Nor could they stick to the HMS schedule, so cancelled classes and relocations became a permanent problem<sup>114</sup>. This leads us to a key conclusion: the noble attempts to enrich the studies with active teaching methods and improving all of military education may actually have been extremely difficult due to a shortage of qualified teaching staff. As we have seen, this problem could not be solved in the mid-1930s.

In 1936, the situation probably improved slightly because MS increased the number of permanent lecturers. At the same time, all military history subjects of MS—the history of the World War, the history of the War of Independence, and the history of the art of war—were taught by a single teacher, Major Vermet<sup>115</sup>. The general trend of having the same teaching staff teach several subjects at more than one UMEI institution had been in place from the early 1920s. This mainly concerned the courses held at MS and MTS<sup>116</sup>.

Sometimes lecturers would be subject to inspections, but only with the permission of the Chief of Staff of the Defence Forces. A specialised committee was assembled to evaluate the work of teachers. The committee would notify a lecturer two days in advance about the upcoming inspection. The lecturer

<sup>113</sup> *Kõrgema Sõjakooli ajutiste õppejõudude nimestik 1934.–1936. a. tasuastmesse liigitamiseks*. ERA 650-1-1706, p. 29.

<sup>114</sup> *Kõrgema Sõjakooli tegevusaruanne*. 01.04.1935–31.03.1936. ERA 650-1-17061934–1936, p. 153.

<sup>115</sup> *Seene* 2011, p. 79.

<sup>116</sup> *Villemson* 2006, pp. 42, 60.

then had to prepare a sample lesson of 45 minutes. During the course of the inspection, the committee would evaluate the content and pedagogical aspects of the lesson. For the content part, the committee would look at whether the lecturer used understandable language and the right terms and definitions. For the pedagogical part, the committee would look at whether the lecturer was able to provide examples, connote between practical and historical examples (in subjects other than history), have clear diction, use grammatically correct language and syntax, and achieve the aims of the lesson. The committee would consist of three members: a UMEI representative (generally the head of UMEI), a representative from a relevant speciality from the staff of the Defence Forces, and a representative of division VI (training) of the staff of the Defence Forces<sup>117</sup>. Unfortunately, we were unable to find any of those evaluation reports in the archives. In any case, it can be presumed that the lecturers' work was treated with full seriousness in the Estonian military.

Finally, we should dedicate a proportion of this discussion to the personality of Vermet to whom his students gave interesting but quite contradictory assessments. Former MS cadet Rudolf Bruus considered Vermet to be one of the best teachers at UMEI. Apparently he had a talent for presenting his knowledge so interestingly that Bruus remembered Vermet's presentation of the battles of Cannae and Marne even decades later<sup>118</sup>. Unfortunately, the opinion of Bruus completely diverged from the assessment of Victor Orav, a student of MTS in the late 1930s, who remembered that Vermet was called "Moltke" for being such a lousy public speaker<sup>119</sup>. Orav said that his manner of presenting the history of the art of war was dry and failed to engage the audience. However, Orav also noted that Vermet did not only discuss historical events but also analysed major battles in the lectures. This was of greater interest to the students<sup>120</sup>. The description and analysis herein lead us to the key conclusion that the teaching of military history often came down to the personality of a lecturer and greatly depended on his ability to pique the interest of his listeners.

Elmar-Johannes Tulviste (father of Peeter Tulviste, future rector of the University of Tartu) who attended the officer candidates' course in 1933 reminisced about how Vermet would always be thoroughly prepared for lectures on

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<sup>117</sup> **Salajane akt SÜÕ lektori tunnivaatluse kohta.** 02.10.1935. ERA 495-12-574, p. 214.

<sup>118</sup> **Lindsaar** 1962, p. 63.

<sup>119</sup> **Orav** 2006, p. 162.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

the history of the World War and had detailed notes at hand. Apparently, Vermet never liked being interrupted with questions. This would sometimes create misunderstandings with students who had tried to write down what the lecturer said but were unable to keep up with his pace<sup>121</sup>. Other former students claim that Vermet was unable to teach officer candidates anything about the War of Independence that they did not already know from secondary school, other than a detailed description of battles<sup>122</sup>. He also never used topographic maps or schemes of battles in the lectures on the history of the War of Independence but simply “recited the names, dates, and battles from his notes,” assuming that each student already had a mental image of the Estonian map<sup>123</sup>.

Vermet’s views on military history and the principles that he followed in teaching it are evident from a textbook that he compiled and a few declarative statements made in its introduction. For example, Vermet saw the art of war as the ability to expediently and purposefully make use of forces in war. He felt that the history of the art of war had to cover and study the manner in which various historic armed forces had been formed, organised, prepared for battle, supplied, and used in battle. In addition, the history of the art of war had to take into account the psychosocial, political, economic, and historical factors that impact war. This is why Vermet, with reference to Svechin, called the history of the art of war a discipline of cultural history<sup>124</sup>. According to an interpretation by Vermet under the influence of Richard Tomberg, the history of the art of war had to discipline a researcher’s intelligence, develop his perception of reality, train him to see the big picture, connote between events and their causes, and teach him to critically approach every military history question<sup>125</sup>.

<sup>121</sup> **Tulviste, E.-J.** 1977. Sõjakoolis aspirantide klassis 1933–1934. – Seene, A. (koost.) 2020. Tondipoisid. Vabariigi sõjakoolide kasvandike mälestusi rahu- ja sõjapäevilt (1919–1945). Viimsi: Eesti Sõjamuuseum – kindral Laidoneri muuseum, p. 145.

<sup>122</sup> **Põld, U.** 2010. Aspirandina Sõjakooli patareis ja Soomusrongirügemendis Tapal 1938–1940. – Seene, A. (koost.) 2020. Tondipoisid. Vabariigi sõjakoolide kasvandike mälestusi rahu- ja sõjapäevilt (1919–1945). Viimsi: Eesti Sõjamuuseum – kindral Laidoneri muuseum, p. 155.

<sup>123</sup> **Loosberg, P.** 2010. Mälestusi Eesti Vabariigi Sõjakoolist. – Seene, A. (koost.) 2020. Tondipoisid. Vabariigi sõjakoolide kasvandike mälestusi rahu- ja sõjapäevilt (1919–1945). Viimsi: Eesti Sõjamuuseum – kindral Laidoneri muuseum, p. 161.

<sup>124</sup> **Vermet, J.** 1939. Sõjakunsti ajalugu. 1. osa: Sõjakunsti areng vanade klassikarahvaste aja-järgust Napoleoni ajajärgu lõpuni. Tallinn: Sõjavägede Staabi VI Osakond, p. XV.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, p. XVI.

## 6. Teaching military history at UMEI

In the early 1920s, the teaching methods used in MS were considered outdated, the method of presentation too theoretical, and the institutional culture old-fashioned and Russian-minded. Lectures held in Russian exhausted students<sup>126</sup>. As mentioned earlier, the Russian émigrés were not taken seriously at MS and cadets joked about them a lot<sup>127</sup>. Let us herein raise a question: did the methodology of teaching military history become more effective after the departure of professor Baiov? Andres Seene believes that, as a result of Reek's reforms, practical assignments became dominant. In particular, he refers to the tours to battlegrounds that the staff made to complement tactics lessons<sup>128</sup>. Yet, it remains unclear how quickly these changes were integrated into military history subjects.

In a programmatic article about the restructuring of military education, Reek writes that the teaching staff had to apply a greater share of active teaching methods in military history courses. In the history of the art of war and, in particular, the history of the World War and the War of Independence, lecturers had to describe in detail the entire chain of events, not merely analyse individual battles. Their analysis had to highlight preparations for battles, leadership in battle, the use of equipment, and cooperation between different branches of the military. Instead of simply giving an oral presentation, the context of events had to be visualised with graphs and tables posted on the walls of the auditorium. In this regard, the teaching of military history at UMEI, and in particular MS, had to be completely reorganised<sup>129</sup>.

In 1927, when Reek's changes were introduced, the syllabuses of cadets' and officer candidates' courses were also slightly modified. The attempt to make the curricula more practical became an independent goal. For that reason, the UMEI administration felt the need to increase the number of practical lessons and decrease the number of theoretical classroom hours. The need for formation training as practical lessons was particularly stressed. Yet, the greatest achievement probably concerns the length of lessons which was shortened from 90 minutes to 50 minutes<sup>130</sup>.

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<sup>126</sup> Seene 2011, pp. 42–44.

<sup>127</sup> Lindsaar, P. 1977. Värskä. Lund: Eesti Kirjanike kooperatiiv, p. 18.

<sup>128</sup> Seene 2011, p. 48.

<sup>129</sup> Reek 2015, p. 391.

<sup>130</sup> SÜÕ ülema seletuskiri Sõjakooli õppekava juurde 1927. ERA 650-1-1077, p. 87. The tendency to increase practical subjects at the cost of theoretical subjects was also pronounced at the NCO school (Seene 2011, pp. 53, 55, 69).

Outlines of lectures and homework preserved by Maksim Graeur, a student of the cadets' class of 1938–1939, allow us to deduce some things about the studies of military history subjects. For example, history of the World War was taught pursuant to the principles advocated for by Reek with a focus on the manoeuvring stages of 1914 and 1918, and illustrated by a number of operations on the Western and Eastern fronts. Based on the outlines of lectures, we can say that, for the primary part, the lecturer Vermet spoke about the course of operations, accurately naming every date, and for the remaining part he gave a comprehensive assessment of the events. Operations were analysed in detail, including data on manoeuvres carried out by units ranging from brigades to the entire army<sup>131</sup>. In the history of the War of Independence, the majority of attention was devoted to analysing battles. Although the course covered a number of battles, analysis of the operations—including the actions of and lessons learned by belligerent sides—allowed cadets to more easily relate this theoretical knowledge with their own service at a platoon and company level<sup>132</sup>.

Recollections from different times reflect on the academic proceedings at UMEI. Although Lindsaar wrote fiction, his work is very important for representing the atmosphere and background of MS at that time<sup>133</sup>. He wrote that the relative importance of lectures was quite considerable. Each lecture required unwavering attention and constant attendance tired the students; many ended up falling asleep on or under the benches. Since the cadets knew the lecturers better than the officer candidates did, they knew exactly whose lectures were safe to sleep in. Lecturers were too proud to reprimand sleeping students, which led to awkward situations in the lecture hall. Despite that, Lindsaar's descriptions leave no doubt that the candidates saw lecturers as undisputed authorities because most of them had fought in the War of Independence<sup>134</sup>.

The subject of history greatly interested the officer candidates. Often times, several questions and counterarguments were discussed among the students after lectures, all based on “public rumours”. For example, the officer candidates would ask a number of follow-up questions about the actions of General Samsonov, commander of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Army, in the Battle of Tannenberg,

<sup>131</sup> Lipnik Maksim Graueri konspekt aines Maailmasõja ajalugu (*sine anno*, 1938. või 1939. aasta). Museum of the Estonian Military Academy (hereafter MEMA), 654-1-1, not paginated.

<sup>132</sup> Lipnik Maksim Graueri konspekt aines Vabadussõja ajalugu, lahingute tulemusi, hindeid ja õpiseid (*sine anno*, 1938. või 1939. aasta). MEMA 654.1.2, not paginated.

<sup>133</sup> Seene 2011, p. 34.

<sup>134</sup> Lindsaar 1962, pp. 16–18, 159–160, 159–160.

**Picture 3.** A caricature illustrating the generational chasm in a history lecture in the 1920s Estonia: a professor is imagining the battles of the Great War but the effort is lost on listeners who just perceive it as a comical performance. Source: *Sõdur*, No. 6–8 [1928], p. 334.



or about the Russian invasion to East Prussia. The Battle of Tannenberg was extremely popular and one of the most thoroughly covered events, taught to both the officer candidates and cadets<sup>135</sup>.

The history of the War of Independence was the most interesting subject for students because many officer candidates and cadets had personal experience and emotions connected to the war, i.e., childhood memories. The officer candidates always tried to support lecturers with personal recollections and shared personal impressions after the lectures. Particularly thorough discussions were held while cleaning rifles when the officer candidates had time to recall moments from the War of Independence, personal experiences, the communist atrocities they witnessed, getting caught in the middle of fighting, or simply some song from back in the day<sup>136</sup>.

<sup>135</sup> Lindsaar 1962, pp. 160–162, 231.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 161.

A common non-formal way of teaching military history was storytelling around the campfire at Petseri Southern Camp. Lindsaar describes one instance when a colonel was recalling his service in the Russian army and participation in WWI, and the officer candidates gathered around and listened attentively<sup>137</sup>. The teaching staff became more approachable to the students like this and probably gained even greater authority.

In *The Life of Soldiers* (Sõdurite elu), a fiction novel published in 1930, the author Karl Ehrmann (Eerme) describes the service of officer candidates at MS in 1928. Similarly to Lindsaar's work, *The Life of Soldiers* is also autobiographical and describes the author's personal experience as a conscript in the Estonian military. As for his service in MS, which he called a "monster hell", he said that this was the most interesting time of his service. Like Lindsaar, he too described the emotions of officer candidates and noted that studies were very well organised. Still, while Ehrmann said that all students were very enthusiastic about their studies when they began the officer candidates' course, after getting accustomed to the new conditions, they quickly learned how to slack off. He noted that the studies were predominantly theoretical and consisted mainly of lectures, which made some of the officer candidates more indifferent and lax. After a while, officer candidates would dismissively wave at the "lecturers' pathetic explanations about how warfare was conducted in Rome" and everything heard in a lecture went "in one ear and out the other"<sup>138</sup>.

Reek's suggestions for change seemed sensible and appropriate compared to the teaching practices of the older generation of Russian teachers. But even though Reek advocated for the use of active teaching methods as early as 1926, the situation had not changed even by 1936 and lectures were still the predominant format of study. Changes in the didactic approach to teaching military history became more noticeable at UMEI during the 1936/1937 academic year: a UMEI activity report pointed out that, for the first time, emphasis in the teaching of military history had shifted to independent research by students and presentation of their knowledge<sup>139</sup>. This probably signifies that studying was becoming student-centred.

Considering this, we can presume that by the second half of the 1930s, something had indeed changed. This makes the recollections of Rudolf Bruus, a student of MS from 1934 to 1938, particularly interesting. Bruus says

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<sup>137</sup> Lindsaar 1962, pp. 245–246.

<sup>138</sup> Ehrmann, K. 1930. Sõdurite elu. Võru: Tähe, p. 245.

<sup>139</sup> Sõjaväe Õppeasutuste tegevusaruanne. 1.4.1936–31.3.1937. ERA 650-1-524, p. 58.

that students called the two-storey outbuilding at Tondi, specifically established for lectures, a “sleep castle.”<sup>140</sup> This probably refers to the fact that the theoretical teaching method was still one-dimensional and that the presentation was dry and unappealing for students. Bruus also acknowledged that the military history subjects—the history of the art of war, the World War, and the War of Independence—were among the most fascinating subjects at MS. As mentioned before, according to Bruus, military history was taught best by lecturers with a strong personality.<sup>141</sup>

One rather interesting practice in the teaching of military history at UMEI is the independent preparations done by students before tackling the course materials. Students entering HMS were required to have a thorough basic theoretical knowledge of military history to lay a factual ground for the subjects. This allowed the teaching staff to focus more on substantive discussions during lectures<sup>142</sup>. What is noteworthy is that in 1930, prospective students were recommended to read at least three books in the field of military history to prepare for entrance exams: *Istorija vojennago iskusstva* by Svechin, *Geschichte der Kriegskunst* by Delbrück, and *Istoria vojennago iskusstva* by Professor Baiov<sup>143</sup>. At the military history entrance exams, candidates were required to know the most important historical events and possess a broad understanding of the importance of individual events and their influence in the general historical context, along with the ability to draw conclusions from history<sup>144</sup>.

In 1934, based on the abovementioned practice and taking into account the heavy subject volume of that time, Grabbi proposed to make the history of the World War more learner-centred at HMS and let the students prepare oral presentations based on the available materials. Grabbi felt that such a teaching method would develop the learning ability and speaking skills of students while also “broadening their knowledge of history”. He thought that the 10 lessons assigned for the second year of study could be furnished with two case studies, and proposed the Battle of the Ardennes in August 1914

<sup>140</sup> Bruus, R. 1996. Mälestusi Eesti Vabariigi sõjakoolist 1934–1938. – Talts, V. (koost.) Mälestusi Eesti Vabariigi sõjakoolist. Tallinn: Eesti Riigikaitse Akadeemia, p. 56.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>142</sup> Grabbi 1934, p. 83.

<sup>143</sup> Raamatuid, milliseid võib kasutada ettevalmistamisel sisseastumise katseteks Kõrgemas Sõjakooli 1934. ERA 650-1-1706, p. 17. [Raamatuid... 1934]

<sup>144</sup> Nõudmised Kõrgemas Sõjakooli sisseastumise katsetel 1934. Eesti Rahvusrhiiv 650-1-1706, p. 18.





**Picture 4.** History of the War of Independence was popular among cadets: here, future officers are preparing for the War of Independence exams at the Officers' School at Tondi, Tallinn, 1936. Courtesy: Museum of the Estonian Military Academy.

and/or the Second Battle of the Masurian Lakes in the winter of 1915. In order to prepare these case studies, Grabbi asked for the teaching staff to be completely freed of other duties<sup>145</sup>. It is evident that such case studies incited lively interest among students. In addition, the abovementioned facts give grounds to presume that the use of active study methods launched by Reek encouraged faster progress at HMS as well as at MS. In any case, it took no less than eight years to realise Reek's vision.

One output of active teaching methods for the students of HMS was to study a specific battle or case study of the World War and prepare a presentation during the second year of studies. For example, the case study of 1934 was the Battle of the Ardennes (21–25 August 1914)<sup>146</sup>. It is not completely clear why this specific battle—part of the so-called *Grenzschlachten*, the Battle of the Frontiers—was chosen<sup>147</sup>. Presumably, it was intended to highlight specific elements of manoeuvre warfare that characterised the first battles of the

<sup>145</sup> Grabbi 1934, p. 83.

<sup>146</sup> Aine Maailmasõda ainekava 1934. Eesti Rahvusarhiiv 650-1-1707, p. 84. [Aine Maailmasõda ainekava 1934]

<sup>147</sup> Rostunov, I. I. 1975. Istorija Pervoi Mirovoi voiny 1914–1918. T. 1. Moskva: Institut voennoi istorii ministerstva oboronõ SSSR, i-vo Nauka, pp. 282–283.

World War. But there were also other examples from the World War where manoeuvres were attempted on both the Western and Eastern fronts. The display of preference on the French experience of warfare likely alludes to the fashion of the second half of the 1920s and the influence of French military education.

The case study was divided into two practical sections. Part A involved thorough analysis of the strategic and operational aspects of the Battle of the Ardennes, and part B focused on the operational and tactical aspects. The case study began with a general description of the battlefield, introducing the belligerent parties and preparations for the operation, and enumerating the high command's directives along with the tasks assigned to the armies and corps. Then, the situation was acted out at the levels of corps, division, and regiment. Battle orders for the events of 22 August were introduced in detail at division and regiment level. The case study was summarised by drawing conclusions about the engagement of the Germans and the reasons for their tactical success<sup>148</sup>. Numerous recollections reveal that the analyses of major battles were of greater interest to students than ordinary theoretical lectures in the 1930s<sup>149</sup>.

An additional outlet for the teaching of military history was a thematic final thesis on military history that students of HMS had to write. UMEI documentation of teaching activities proves that the selection of topics for the final theses and the principles for writing them gained a lot of attention. In 1933, HMS drafted guidelines for writing final theses, personally approved by the Chief of Staff General Tõrvand. Among other things, these state that final theses in military history did not have to include a practical part. Researchers writing on military history were required to compile "a summary of the conclusions and lessons that primarily merit attention from the standpoint of modern warfare in our conditions."<sup>150</sup>

How many final theses were written on military history at HMS? In the first five years of HMS, a total of eight out of 64 graduates wrote on military history (12%). The research matter primarily concerned battles from the Estonian War of Independence and the World War. One of the most popular topics was the art of war. Various aspects of military history were incorporated into nearly all final theses at HMS<sup>151</sup>. The sixth graduating class added

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<sup>148</sup> **Aine Maailmasõda ainekava** 1934, p. 85.

<sup>149</sup> **Orav** 2006, p. 162.

<sup>150</sup> **KS lõputööde koostamise juhend**. ERA 650-1-1706, p. 8.

<sup>151</sup> **KS I, II, III, IV, V lennu väitekirjade nimestik** 1933. ERA 650-1-1706, pp. 1–5.

four more theses on military history (out of a total of 29 final theses that year)<sup>152</sup>. On the one hand, this indicates a low interest in history, but on the other hand, some growth of interest is detectable.

Of the 31 final theses in 1936, as many as 11 were written on military history (35%). All of the topics were related to the lessons learned from the World War and the War of Independence on tactical and operational art, the supply of forces and the use of different types of weaponry<sup>153</sup>. We can presume that the interest of the students of HMS in military history was much higher than it had been in previous years.

In HMS, the research matter of the final theses written at the Latvian military academy was carefully examined. In the early 1930s, these included a noteworthy proportion of history topics (about 30%). Research was intertwined with strategy, operational art, and the sociology and psychology of warfare. It is interesting that the history topics chosen in Estonia were constrained to 20<sup>th</sup> century conflicts, mainly the World War and the War of Independence, while in Latvia, some dissertations concerned 19<sup>th</sup> and even 18<sup>th</sup> century military history. One thesis was even devoted to the cooperation of Estonia and Latvia in the event of a potential conflict with Russia<sup>154</sup>.

Knowledge of military history, primarily experiences obtained from the War of Independence, was used by the officers of HMS to organise tactical excursions to potential future battlefields; as imagined by the high command, these would be near the borders of the Republic of Estonia.<sup>155</sup> For example, in the summer of 1935, HMS organised three tactical staff tours to strategic areas that coincided with the areas where the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division had fought in the War of Independence: Irboska and its vicinity, Laura and its vicinity, and the Vastseliina and Petseri areas<sup>156</sup>. Victor Orav, who became a student of MTS in 1936, mentioned excursions to battlefields in Jõelähtme, Aegviidu, Tapa, Riigiküla and Narva. Unfortunately, he could only recall the entertainment aspect of the military history outings<sup>157</sup>.

<sup>152</sup> **Kõrgema Sõjakooli VI lennu väitekirjade nimestik.** 30.3.1933. ERA 650-1-1706, pp. 6–7.

<sup>153</sup> **Kõrgema Sõjakooli VII lennu lõpetajate väitekirjade teemade nimestik.** 8.2.1936. ERA 650-1-1706, pp. 141–143.

<sup>154</sup> **Kara akademisko kursu diplomdarbu saraksta** (*sine anno*, probably 1933 or 1934). ERA 650-1-1706, pp. 11–15.

<sup>155</sup> **Piirimäe** 2017b, p. 133; **Kõrgema Sõjakooli kirjavahetus.** August 1935. ERA 650-1-1715, p. 291.

<sup>156</sup> **SÜÕ ülem Kaitseväge ülejuhatajale.** 28.6.1935. ERA 495-12-574, p. 781.

<sup>157</sup> **Orav** 2006, pp. 148–154.

UMEI offered to share its experiences in organising these excursions with military units. In 1935, the commander of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division, Colonel Traksmäa (who had been engaged in the study of the War of Independence), proposed to Commander-in-Chief Laidoner that they could use the model of HMS to organise excursions to the War of Independence battlefields for 2<sup>nd</sup> Division units. The objective of these excursions was to get to know the history of military units. The excursions were to take place on weekends, at the expense of the societies and free time of officers and NCOs. These outings had to be attended by the professional cadre of each unit and a few reserve officers. These also included presentations delivered on battlefields. Laidoner wrote “agreed” as his decision on the proposal, apparently supporting Traksmäa in that “military history excursions hold great importance in training the cadre of our Defence Forces.”<sup>158</sup> The geography of the military history excursions proposed by Traksmäa was wide, including locations in the counties of Petseri, Võru, Tartu, and Viru<sup>159</sup>.

## 7. Exams

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the entrance exams of UMEI in the mid-1930s were designed to support subsequent studies. In preparing for these, applicants were required to study military history and obtain the relevant theoretical knowledge independently. The organisation of entrance exams was fixed in 1936 when students were selected for the VIII class of HMS, and the governing board of UMEI pointed out to the Chief of Staff of the Defence Forces that it would be wise to amend the syllabus of the history of the World War and the War of Independence in a manner that would require students to obtain theoretical basic knowledge already for the entrance exams, allowing them to focus on independent research of specific operations during the studies. The only thing left unsettled was which operations to focus on. UMEI did not consider it necessary to distribute the teaching of military history subjects (the evolution of the art of war, the history of the World War, and the history of the War of Independence) over two years<sup>160</sup>. It was probably

<sup>158</sup> 2. diviisi ülem kolonel Traksmäa ülemjuhataja kindral Laidonerile. 3.4.–6.4.1935. ERA 495.12.574, p. 4.

<sup>159</sup> 2. diviisi sõjaajalooliste ekskursioonide kava. 16.4.1935. ERA 495-12-574; 2. diviisi ülem kolonel Traksmäa ülemjuhataja kindral Laidonerile. 3.4.–6.4.1935, p. 5.

<sup>160</sup> KVÜÖA ja Kaitseväe staabi kirjavahetus 1936. Märts. ERA 495-12-574, p. 1311.

at this time when the objective of entrance exams was finally added to the curriculum, making it an official, thought-through, and prepared part of the study process. After this principle was made clear, it raised the next question: to what extent do students have to obtain this knowledge? What distinguished military history entrance exams from final exams?

In 1935, the entrance exams of HMS included an oral examination on three military history subjects: the art of war, the World War, and the War of Independence. Officers assigned to HMS were required to pass both oral and written examinations in general military history that also covered the Franco-Prussian War, the Russo-Japanese War, the World War, and the War of Independence<sup>161</sup>. The governing board of HMS believed that the obligation to obtain knowledge in military history would create a situation where, instead of discussing the basic facts of the World War and the War of Independence, lecturers would be free to adopt a scientific approach to military history<sup>162</sup>.

Looking at the contents of the HMS entrance exams, we can see that at the beginning of the 1930s, there were 27 exam tickets on the history of the art of war, covering a wide range of military history topics from the era of Frederick the Great to the Battle of Mukden. Much attention was given to the Napoleonic Wars (12 tickets), meaning that future students had to be very well aware of the Napoleonic era. Questions concerned, for example, the Battle of Ratisbon (1809), the Battle of Austerlitz, the Battle of Jena-Auerstedt, and the Battle of Leipzig. Examinees had to be able to connote and compare the principles of warfare with the tactical approaches of the Napoleonic era and the Frederick the Great era. Interestingly enough, all this was required from students before the courses even began and was solely based on the knowledge obtained from the cadets' class and independent preparations. Exam questions could also concern the reasons behind the Crimean War, the opposing forces and political situation, and a short overview of operations conducted on the Crimean Peninsula. Examinees could be asked to analyse the Battle of Inkerman. Other examination questions concerned the Second Italian War of Independence (1859), the American Civil War (1861–1865), the Franco-Prussian War (1870–1871), the Russo-Turkish War (1877–1878), and the Second Boer War (1898–1902). Subject matter on recent history included three tickets on the Russo-Japanese War. Examinees were asked about the battle plans of the parties of the Russo-Japanese War, the defence

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<sup>161</sup> *Kõrgemasse Sõjakooli sisseastumise tingimuste muutmise, Kõrgema Sõjakooli tegevusaruanne*. 1.4.1935–31.3.1936. ERA 650-1-1706, pp. 154–155.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 155.

of Port Arthur, and the battles of Liaoyang, Shaho, and Mukden<sup>163</sup>. Evidently, preparing for the entrance exams required serious effort. Keep in mind that the history of the art of war exam was not the only one; there were also the history of the War of Independence and the World War exams.

The War of Independence entrance exam also required thorough preparations. In 1935, Traksmaa, the lecturer of that subject, had prepared 33 exam tickets for the entrance exam, each including three questions: first on the military-political events on the eve of the War of Independence, second on the operational-tactical level of the battles of the War of Independence, and third on the aspects of strategy regarding warfare politics and economics<sup>164</sup>. All questions were related to subject matters analysed later in classes, so they were in complete concordance with the syllabus.

The entrance exam on the subject of the World War (taught by Grabbi) had 15 exam tickets, all in concordance with the topics covered in classes<sup>165</sup>. Interestingly enough, the only mandatory reading material for preparing for the exam was a lecture conspectus of lector Herbert Grabbi published by UMEI in 1932<sup>166</sup>.

The exam on the subject of strategy (taught by Maj. Gen. Brede) included 21 questions, mostly about history. Examinees were required to form connotations between strategy, the history of the art of war, and war theory. For example, they could be asked to explain “concentric manoeuvre” in the example of the Battle of Gönigrätz. The questions could concern a comparison of the manoeuvres of Napoleon and Frederick the Great or the assignments and activities of the general staff in the Franco-Prussian War and the World War. There were a surprising number of questions about military theory; for example, by the end of the course, students had to be familiar with the writings of Napoleon, Jomini, Clausewitz, Moltke, and Karl Wilhelm von Willisen. They were also required to get acquainted with the ideas of George Lloyd and the views of Lewal, Verdy du Vernois, Colmar von der Goltz, Schlichting, Foch, and Schlieffen, and to know the theoretical standpoints of Hans von Seeckt, Basil H. Liddell Hart, and Giulio Douhet<sup>167</sup>.

<sup>163</sup> **Kõrgemasse Sõjakooli sisseastumise katse kava sõjakunsti ajaloos** (*sine anno*, probably the first half of the 1930s). ERA 650-1-1707, p. 19.

<sup>164</sup> **Katsekava aines Vabadussõda** 1935. ERA 650-1-1707, pp. 325–326.

<sup>165</sup> **Katsekava aines Maailmasõda** 1935. ERA 650-1-1707, p. 329.

<sup>166</sup> **Kõrgema Sõjakooli kirjavahetus** 1934–1935. ERA 650-1-1707, pp. 83–84.

<sup>167</sup> **Katsekava aines Strateegia** 1936. ERA 650-1-1707, p. 451.

Despite such extensive requirements, examinees obtained relatively good results in the entrance exams: the average grade was 8 (on a 12-point scale)<sup>168</sup>. In 1936, the HMS entrance exams also included three exams on military history. The final grade was calculated as an arithmetic mean based on all the grades in military history<sup>169</sup>. During the exams, applicants were assessed on a 12-point scale (the threshold being 7) whereas courses were graded as non-satisfactory, satisfactory, good, and excellent<sup>170</sup>. There were no specific criteria for assessment and the final grade was the result of a collective decision of the examination board. The board was usually made up of four senior officers, including a representative of the governing board of UMEI, lecturers, and military historians. For example, in 1936 the head of the military history examination board was Colonel August Kasekamp, commander of UMEI. Members of the board included Richard Tomberg, a former lecturer of military history and chief of staff of the Estonian Air Force, Herbert Grabbi, a teacher of the history of the World War, and Colonel Mihkel Kattai, head of the workgroup of the Historical Committee for the War of Independence<sup>171</sup>. This shows the prestige of military history disciplines in that era.

The academic principles of HMS were similar to those of MS. Officer candidates who aspired to become staff officers were required to achieve an average grade of at least 8 in general military subjects and at least 9 (on a 12-point scale) in classes on manuals and formations. Grades lower than 7 were not acceptable in separate subjects<sup>172</sup>. The MS officer course entrance exam, approved by the Commander in Chief in 1935, required applicants to be familiar with four separate history subjects: general history, Estonian history, the history of the World War, and the history of the War of Independence<sup>173</sup>.

Unlike HMS, the entrance exams for the MS cadets' class were also held in general subjects, including general history and Estonian history. The exams were oral, written, and practical, whereas both history exams were written. General history required knowledge of the history of France, primarily the French revolutions of 1789–1799 and 1830, the Napoleonic era, and the Second French Empire. Applicants were also required to know about

<sup>168</sup> *Kõrgemasse Sõjakooli võistluskatsetega sisse astuda soovijate ohvitseride katsetagajärjed*. ERA 650-1-1718, p. 37.

<sup>169</sup> *Eksamiprotokoll 1936*. September. ERA 650-1-1734, p. 55. [*Eksamiprotokoll 1936*]

<sup>170</sup> *Seene* 2008, pp. 108–109.

<sup>171</sup> *Eksamiprotokoll 1936*, p. 55.

<sup>172</sup> *Juhend aspirantide valikuks ettevalmistamiseks kaadriohvitserideks*. 6.6.1935. ERA 495-12-573, p. 8.

<sup>173</sup> *Sõjakooli ohvitseride klassi sisseastumise katsekava*. 18.11.1935. ERA 495-12-573, p. 60.

the European revolutions of 1848 as well as the development of the USA, England, Russia, Germany, Italy, and Japan from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. They had to be familiar with the World War and answer questions on the Russian Revolution of 1917, the Treaty of Paris, the establishment of new countries, and fascist movements. The knowledge of examinees was tested based on textbooks by Emma Asson and Johannes Adamson<sup>174</sup>. Estonian history required a wide knowledge from the Ice Age to the Treaty of Tartu. Compulsory literature included the textbooks of Johannes Adamson and Hans Kruus<sup>175</sup>. History required precise knowledge of the most important overall historical events, an understanding of the importance and impact of individual events in the context of general history, and the ability to determine the reasons behind historical events and draw relevant conclusions<sup>176</sup>.

The number of exams made the workload of prospective students quite extensive<sup>177</sup>. Just like in HMS, the thorough entrance exams of MS were designed not only to select the best students but also to lay the foundation for successive systematic and thorough studies<sup>178</sup>. At the same time, the examination plan included several subjects that students had already studied in secondary school. In 1937, for the purpose of reducing the capacity of entrance exams, UMEI decided to drop exams on a number of secondary school subjects, for example, chemistry and physics<sup>179</sup>. Interestingly enough, the board of UMEI conducted written entrance exams in three general subjects—Estonian language, history, and geography—because they were considered important for determining the development and intelligence of applicants<sup>180</sup>. This fact, again, confirms that the subject of history was highly appreciated in UMEI.

As of 1936, military commands were obligated to organise and manage the preparation of distinguished officer candidates<sup>181</sup> for the entrance exams

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<sup>174</sup> **Sõjakooli ohvitseride klassi sisseastumise katsekava**. 18.11.1935, pp. 62, 65.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 106.

<sup>178</sup> **Reek Laidonerile**. 15.11.1935. ERA 495-12-573, p. 108.

<sup>179</sup> **Sõjavägede Staabi VI osakonna õiendus** 1937. ERA 495-12-573, p. 109.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>181</sup> A distinguished officer candidate is an officer candidate who graduated from the Military School but continued to serve overtime in a military unit after conscription to complete his service and command practice. Passing the service and command practice was a requirement for studying at the cadets' class at MS.



during their service in military units. In every military unit, the distinguished officer candidate was an officer educated at HMS<sup>182</sup>. In practice, however, preparations were complicated for both the distinguished officer candidates as well as military commands. Distinguished officer candidates have recalled that the study environment of a unit was not always beneficial because service assignments, constant fatigue duties, administrative and economic chores, and narrow barracks (i.e., lack of privacy) prevented them from focusing on studying. Planned supplementary training events in units were often cancelled for various reasons<sup>183</sup>. Most of the preparations had to be done by officer candidates independently with the help of specialised literature, although there was never enough time for independent work<sup>184</sup>. The libraries of units often lacked the necessary textbooks, which is why distinguished officer candidates had to organise the exchange of textbooks among themselves<sup>185</sup>. Even though there were some military units that organised test examinations in different subjects, including history, for distinguished officer candidates, this practice remained an exception rather than the rule. Distinguished officer candidates mostly studied on their own or participated in supplementary training organised for officers and overtime conscripts in their relevant military unit<sup>186</sup>.

In the entrance exams for the cadets' class of MS in 1936, the average grade of the 20 examinees who successfully passed the written history exam was 8.35. As a general score, it fulfilled the requirement, but in individual results, exactly half of the applicants attained a grade lower than 8 that, according to the rules, was supposed to preclude them from being accepted. Nevertheless, they were all accepted by order of the Commander in Chief. In the history of the War of Independence and the history of World War, grades were slightly

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<sup>182</sup> **3. diviisi staabi ülem Kaitsevägede Staabi VI osakonna ülemale** 1936. Veebruar. ERA 495-12-573, p. 190.

<sup>183</sup> **1. suurtükiväegrupi portupeeaspirant R. Taimre seletuskiri täiendkoolituse kohta** 1936. ERA 495-12-547, p. 215.

<sup>184</sup> **1. suurtükiväegrupi portupeeaspirant L. Kolgi seletuskiri täiendkoolituse kohta**. 16.8.1936. ERA 495-12-547, p. 216. As confirmed by a second distinguished officer candidate, free time started at 7 p.m. (ERA 495-12-547, p. 218).

<sup>185</sup> **Võru-Petseri ringkonna ülem Kaitsevägede Staabi VI osakonna ülemale** 1936. Veebruar. ERA 495-12-573, p. 189; **KVÜÕA kirjavahetus** 1936. ERA 495-12-547, p. 205. [**KVÜÕA kirjavahetus** 1936]

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 200, 205–206, 210.

better<sup>187</sup>. However, it can be concluded from the aforementioned novel written by Lindsaar that officer candidates were not subject to extremely strict inquiries in their oral examinations with tickets<sup>188</sup>. MS was probably compensating for the traditionally low interest of young people in military education and made sure that all positions in the cadets' class would get filled.

## 8. Military history study materials

Professor Baiov left a considerable amount of military literature to UMEI; he had compiled several conspectuses on the history of the art of war, strategy, Estonian military geography, and statistics up until 1926. It seems that his conspectuses served as textbooks to Estonian officers until the end of the 1930s and formed a basis for the future academic work of other lecturers<sup>189</sup>. The conspectus of the history of the art of war compiled by Baiov was relatively thorough at over 800 pages<sup>190</sup>. In 1922, Baiov also compiled a conspectus about the experiences of the World War that was used as a pedagogical handbook in the first years that HMS existed.

Baiov's conspectus of the history of the art of war was published in print by UMEI in 1921. It was used as a textbook in Estonian General Staff courses (future Higher Military School), especially in the 1920s. At first glance, this was definitely an outstanding work on military history for that time because it covered the history of the art of war from Ancient Greece to the Russo-Japanese War. It discussed a number of important stages of the history of the art of war, whereas the main focus was on the events of modern history and recent history. Probably under the influence of Michnevich, Baiov devoted a disproportionately large amount of attention—almost half the book—to the history of the Russian art of war<sup>191</sup>. Baiov had limited time and opportunity for compiling the conceptus, so he probably used his own phenomenal seven-volume work on the Russian art of war, published in Saint Petersburg

<sup>187</sup> **Katsete tulemused Sõjakooli ohvitseride klassi sisseastumisel ning ülemjuhataja resolutsioon.** 25.8.1936. ERA 495-12-547, p. 352.

<sup>188</sup> **Lindsaar** 1962, pp. 171–172, 191.

<sup>189</sup> **Kasak**, pp. 161.

<sup>190</sup> **Baiov, A.** 1921. *Istoriija vojnennogo iskusstva ot narodov klassitšeskoj drevnosti do natšala XX st[oletija] vklutšitelno.* Revel: Kaitsevæe Ühendatud Õppeasutused. [Baiov 1921]

<sup>191</sup> Baiov has clearly overestimated the Russian art of war. Even with the example of the military campaigns of Ivan III in the 15th century, the Russian art of war was allegedly superior to that of the West. (*Ibid.*, p. 78)

in 1909–1913, as a basis. It is noteworthy that his book on the Russian art of war ended with the era of Alexander I<sup>192</sup>.

Since Baiov's conspectus lacks citations, it is hard to say which books he used as sources, but its structure and style are somewhat similar to the work of Michnevich<sup>193</sup>. Just like him, Baiov also introduced the stages of the history of the art of war along with their most renowned commanders and rulers. All chapters were essentially divided into two parts: the organisation of the armed forces of an opponent, and a selection of battles described in detail. In general, the analytical part of Baiov's books was probably of great interest to Estonian officers, especially if it concerned recent history—for example, the Russo-Japanese War. On closer inspection, however, it is evident that Baiov plagiarised Michnevich to such an extent that some sections coincide word for word, whereas the original source is never cited<sup>194</sup>. This is probably why Baiov refrained from calling himself an author and modestly preferred to be called compiler; this, however, does not excuse the lack of citations.

Estonian servicemen were probably also very interested in the experiences of the recently ended World War, so under the circumstances, and with the support of UMEL, another Baiov conspectus was published in 1922. It was a comprehensive work on the World War, authored by Baiov himself but with the complementary explanation that the first part of the book was based on the lectures of Professor V. F. Novitsky held in 1919 at the Russian General Staff Academy. It is now certain that the former colleague of Baiov and outstanding military historian Professor Vasily Novitsky had worked at the General Staff Academy of the Red Army since 1919 and published a book in 1920 about military activities on the Western front in 1914<sup>195</sup>. We can conclude that Baiov published Novitsky's work without the approval of the actual author. We should also mention that Baiov only authored the second part of the nearly 300-page book, amounting to just about a couple of dozen

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<sup>192</sup> **Baiov, A. K.** 1909. Kurs istorii russkogo voennogo iskusstva v 7 tomah. SPb: Tipografija Skatškova.

<sup>193</sup> **Mihnevits** 2016.

<sup>194</sup> For example, an extract on the Battle of Kulikovo: **Baiov** 1921, pp. 57–68 vs. **Mihnevits** 1898, pp. 11–12.

<sup>195</sup> **Novitski, V. F.** 1920. Boevöje deistvija v Belgii i Frantsii osenju 1914 goda. Ot natšala voennöh deistvii do ustanovlenija pozitsionnoi voinö. Moskva: Akad.[ademija] Gen. [eralnogo] Štaba. Novitsky and Svechin were the first professors of the General Staff Academy of the Red Army. Both received a high appraisal from Marshal Kirill Mereckov, an outstanding future commander of the Red Army who studied at the Academy in 1918–1919 (**Mereckov** 2003, pp. 65, 74).

pages. There is probably some truth in the statements of former students of Baiov that he compiled the works of other authors, read them in lectures, and added some explanations of his own<sup>196</sup>.

After Baiov had departed, the officers who served as lecturers of military history at UMEI continued to compile conspectuses that were meant to simplify studying. In the second half of the 1920s UMEI published the lecture conspectuses of Jaan Maide about the history of the World War, the War of Independence, and the art of war<sup>197</sup>. Even after Maide had left UMEI, the teaching of the history of the War of Independence was based on the works of Maide published in 1933 and the works of General Jaan Soots published in 1925. These were meant as temporary solutions until a “relevant textbook” about the War of Independence was published<sup>198</sup>. Most likely, this aroused a conflict between Traksmaa, who then commanded division VI of the General Staff, and Maide. As we know, Traksmaa was the descendant of Maide in teaching the history of the War of Independence and began to compile a conspectus on the history of the War of Independence based on his own materials. The popular scientific approach of the workgroup of the Historical Committee for the War of Independence, edited by Traksmaa, was published in 1937–1939 but, obviously, it did not meet the requirements of a textbook.

For studying, students used the lecture conspectuses of Traksmaa, the first version of which was compiled by officer candidate A. (Arseni?) Pauts. In comparison with the syllabus, we see that the titles and contents of lectures

<sup>196</sup> Ganin 2014, p. 374; Šapošnikov 1982, p. 125. Roman Abisogomjan, an Estonian slavist who has studied the literary heritage of Baiov, unfortunately does not cover the value and impact of his works. (Abisogomjan 2007, p. 120).

<sup>197</sup> Sõjakunsti ajalugu. Major Maide loengu järele 1927/28 õppeaastal. 1928. Tallinn: SÜÕ. Ilmasõja ajalugu. Loetud SÜÕ alalisväge ohvitseride kursustel ja kadettide vanemale klassile 1926/27. õ.a. 1927. Tallinn: SÜÕ; Eesti Vabadussõda 1929. Konspekt kolonel-leitnant Maide loenditest Kõrgemas Sõjakoolis, kokku seadnud K. Tallo ja J. Tomson. Tallinn: SÜÕ. After that, division VI of the General Staff got the idea to use the conspectus of Maide on the War of Independence as study material in UMEI. Before the collected work of Traksmaa had been published, they thought that it was important to publish the work of Maide for military history purposes to the Defence Forces and political purposes to general society. The negotiations that lasted for several months were not, unfortunately, successful and the author stopped cooperating with division VI (VI osakonna kirjavahetus 1930. Veebruar. ERA 495-12-531, pp. 17–23). [VI osakonna kirjavahetus 1930] As we now know, the book was published three years later by the Defence League publishing house (Maide, J. 1933. Ülevaade Eesti Vabadussõjast 1918–1920. Tallinn: Kaitseliit).

<sup>198</sup> VI osakonna kirjavahetus 1930, p. 82.

were in complete concordance<sup>199</sup>. The figures and general style of the conspectus is similar to the overview published in 1937–1939 by the workgroup of the Historical Committee for the War of Independence, although the conspectus is significantly thinner. In 1939, a somewhat amended second print of the conspectus of Traksmäa's lectures was published<sup>200</sup>.

Another author who wrote about the history of the World War was Colonel Herbert Grabbi who published his conspectus in 1932<sup>201</sup>. His was one of the first Estonian-language publications to describe the World War without a focus on the syllabus of the history of the World War. He devoted an equal amount of attention to all subjects without preferring single periods of the War over others. Grabbi used the works of the great commanders and military theoreticians of the world as his sources.

The Higher Military School managed to publish different versions of the conspectuses from the evolution of the art of war course taught by Richard Tomberg<sup>202</sup>. We can see from the slightly amended conspectus from 1936 that, similarly to Baio, Tomberg also described the art of war of different nations from ancient history to the Russo-Japanese War, adding a description of the First Balkan War (1912–1913). Unlike Baio, Tomberg made the justified decision to turn less attention to the Russian art of war and not to approach military history from the viewpoint of great commanders<sup>203</sup>.

It is interesting that the military took on an outstanding role as a publicist in the state and society of that time, whereas a significant number of books were published by UMEI<sup>204</sup>. Even though UMEI mostly published conspectuses of lectures, academic approaches, curricula, and even books on military

<sup>199</sup> Pauts, A. (koost.) 1936. Eesti Vabadussõda 1918–1920. Kolonel Traksmäa Sõjakooli loengute konspekt. Tallinn: SÜÕ.

<sup>200</sup> Eesti Vabadussõda 1918–1920. Konspekt 1939. Koostatud kindralmajor August Traksmäa loengute järgi Tartu Ülikoolis ja Sõjakoolis. Tartu.

<sup>201</sup> Grabbi, H. 1932. Maailmasõda. Tallinn: SÜÕ.

<sup>202</sup> Vt nt Sauselg, A; Värnik, J. (koost.) 1928. Sõjakunsti evolutsioon. Konspekt kolonelleitnant Tombergi loenditest Kõrgemas Sõjakoolis 1928/1929 a. Tallinn: SÜÕ; Haber, M. (koost.) 1931. Sõjakunsti evolutsioon. Konspekt kolonelleitnant Tombergi loenditest Kõrgemas Sõjakoolis. Tallinn: SÜÕ; Sõjakunsti evolutsioon. Konspekt kolonelleitnant Tombergi loenditest Kõrgemas Sõjakoolis 1936. Tallinn: SÜÕ [Sõjakunsti evolutsioon 1936]; Sõjakunsti evolutsioon. Konspekt kolonelleitnant Tombergi loenditest Kõrgemas Sõjakoolis 1937. Tallinn: SÜÕ.

<sup>203</sup> Sõjakunsti evolutsioon 1936.

<sup>204</sup> Jaansen, K. 2005. Eesti kaitseväge allasutused kirjastajatena 1918–1940. Bakalaureusetöö. Tallinn: Tallinna Ülikool, p. 43. [Jaansen 2005]

history<sup>205</sup>, no textbooks of military history were published for a long time. Despite the fact that nearly everybody understood the importance of a military history textbook, nobody took action until the end of the 1930s. Major Vermet, a former assistant of Tomberg who became a lecturer of military history for the MS officer courses, saw that a textbook was essential to improve teaching. According to Vermet, it was “difficult and inconvenient for the students to take notes of even the most important ideas presented by the lector, let alone details.”<sup>206</sup> He also saw that it was difficult for students to prepare for the exams of the military history and the history of the art of war in MS as well as HMS because libraries lacked specialised literature. Available books were mostly in foreign languages but the students and officers lacked the time as well as language competency to study them<sup>207</sup>.

The structure of Vermet’s book was similar to that of Baiov’s conspectus but, unlike Baiov, Vermet added a number of citations to the works of other authors. Just like Baiov, Vermet planned to give an overview of topics starting from Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome to the Russo-Japanese War. The first published part ended with the Napoleonic era. For understandable reasons and unlike Baiov, Vermet did not place much focus on the Russian art of war; he mostly ignored that topic. The textbook followed the syllabus and described single wars and events that had had an impact on the development of the art of war<sup>208</sup>. Interestingly enough, the textbook by Vermet was reviewed by a committee assembled specially by the Chief of Staff of the Defence Forces; the committee included Colonel Tomberg, a former lecturer of the art of war course of HMS, and Colonel Mihkel Kattai and Captain Edmund Püss from the workgroup of the Historical Committee for the War of Independence<sup>209</sup>.

An analysis of the sources used by Vermet to compile his textbook reveals that the textbook was strongly influenced by the Russian and German schools of thought. In general, the literature used by Vermet can be divided into three categories: the Russian approach, the German approach, and lecture conspectuses by several authors used in UMEI. The most distinguished citations include the analysis of the art of war by Michnevich, the conspectus of the history of the art of war compiled by Baiov in Estonia, and the works

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<sup>205</sup> Jaansen 2005, pp. 71–76, 94–95, 102, 122–125.

<sup>206</sup> Vermet 1939, p. XIII.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*, p. XIV.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*

of Svechin. Vermet also used the art of war textbooks by Franz Mering and V. Suhhov, commonly used in the Red Army, which had a similar structure. In addition to the Russian authors, the influence of Hans Delbrück is also apparent in the works of Vermet. For some reason, his most preferred Estonian authors were Brede and Tomberg but he completely ignored the conspectuses of Traksmaa and Grabbi<sup>210</sup>. At the same time, the didactic side of Vermet's textbook was weak, resembling more an organised lecture conspectus or an anthology.

## 9. Conclusion

In conclusion, we can say that the teaching of military history has played a significant role in Estonian military education. The foundation for this was laid by Aleksei Baiov, a Russian émigré teacher and a onetime professor at the Russian General Staff Academy. It is also important to mention the changes proposed by Nikolai Reek to the teaching of military history. Thanks to Reek, military history disciplines and their content were reshaped, military history objectives were fixed, and the relationship between military history and other branches of military science were clarified, subjecting military history to the needs of tactical training.

For the purpose of establishing the Estonian military education system, Reek was forced to use Baiov and other Russian émigré teachers because ethnic Estonian specialists of that field were rare. Despite the fact that Reek personally invited Baiov to teach, a conflict between them quickly emerged. Although these two outstanding military figures had a different academic aptitude and calibre, their conflict can be seen as a legacy passed on from the former Nicholas General Staff Academy. Although Baiov stood out in Estonia for his professionalism, he also represented the older generation of Russian military theorists. A positive characteristic of that generation is the systematic research and teaching of military history; a negative aspect is that they were relatively unconnected with modern warfare. It can even be said that Reek played the role of the progressive for the younger generation of Russian military theorists because he saw a fundamental need to modernise military history and its teaching. In Reek's opinion, military history teaching had to focus more on modern armed conflicts, whereas the history of the art of war in earlier times was merely supposed to lay down a context for that knowledge.

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<sup>210</sup> Vermet 1939, pp. 269–270.

One of Reek's progressive decisions was to modernise the teaching of military history with the use of active methods, i.e., engaging more with the audience. He preferred the analysis of military history to mere factual knowledge. However, military history was still taught in lecture format until the mid-1930s because not enough resources were allocated to students' independent and analytical group work. In addition, the teaching of military history depended on the lecturer's individual ability to make the subject attractive to students.

UMEI was very serious about military history subjects because its teachers, especially in HMS, were generally renowned Estonian senior officers who made up the intellectual elite of the Estonian military. Even though some of them had had previous experience in pedagogy, none was a trained historian. This probably made it more complicated to plan and carry out teaching activities, not to mention developing a conception regarding the need for military history. The development of military history competency was, among other things, rendered difficult because, unlike active duty, military history was not considered a promising area for an aspiring officer. Thus, the teaching of military history remained more of a hobby for senior officers.

In general we can conclude that, regardless of the criticism, the volume of military history subjects in UMEI did not change over the years. However, the distribution of military history subjects did change. We now know that the principles of teaching military history were also shaped by Baiov. Although Reek took a stance against Baiov, he did not succeed in changing the principles of teaching military history. The concepts and frameworks developed at the Nicholas General Staff Academy and adopted by Baiov remained generally salient until the destruction of the Estonian military in 1940. One positive outcome of Reek's work can be considered the teaching of the histories of two recent conflicts of that time, the World War and the War of Independence, as separate subjects. Thus, the division of the art of war into three subjects did not change the overall volume of military history in the curriculum but it did increase the proportion of attention devoted to contemporary conflicts.

Future research could focus on the question of the teaching and research of military history in the context of Estonian military planning to better understand the influence it imparted on military planning. Future studies could determine if the problem of teaching military history in Estonian military education during the interwar period was unique compared to other militaries in Europe. A brief digression into the teaching of military history in the Red Army shows that intergenerational conflict was also salient in the 1920s in the neighbouring Soviet Union.



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