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## **The German Influence on the Process of Nation Building in North-Eastern Europe 1914–1919**

Between 1914/15 and 1918, there was no homogeneous German politics, but two different options instead, both represented by different interest groups.

- 1) Annexing Russian territories populated by foreign peoples and repopulating them with Germans: This objective was claimed by the army, the conservative parties, the “Alldeutsche Bewegung” (pan-German movement) and some parts of the national liberals, later the “Vaterlandspartei” (fatherland’s party) as well as by representatives of the heavy industries taking a great interest in an immediate resource exploitation. It has been prepared by the military administration Ober-Ost already during the war.
- 2) Central Europe: This more subtle conception offered the foreign peoples of Russia a status as German satellite states. It sought to conciliate both the imperial interests of Germany as well as the ambition of the German economy for greater areas on the one hand and the foreign peoples’ desire for self-determination on the other. The idea of Central Europe was propagated by Friedrich Naumann and others as being a new form of peoples’ co-existence: weaker states were supposed to lean on the German Reich and to seek close cooperation with it without being impeded in their internal autonomy and self-development. This conception was asserted by government circles, the “Fortschrittliche Volkspartei” (progressive popular party), members of the MSPD (Mehrheits-Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands, Majoritarian Social-Democratic Party of Germany) and the industries having the will to deliver finished products in exchange for raw materials according to classical colonial model. This conception has been realised already in November 1916 through the proclamation of the Kingdom of Poland as well as in March 1918 through the recognition of the Lithuanian state although the latter was obliged to permanent financial and military cooperation with Germany by means of adhesion contracts. In a similar way the status of Latvia and Estonia as satellite states was prepared by constituting a united provincial council with a German majority. Both states were supposed to form a united duchy under the rule of a German prince, where the privileges of the German-Baltic knight-hoods would be maintained. Whereas Finland declared its independence with German support already on December 6, 1917, Germany provided the White Army during the Finnish civil war in winter and spring 1918 and concluded agreements with Finnish representatives in Berlin on March 7, 1918. These agreements tended to subject Finland under German rule. In every mentioned state, the appointment of a German prince to king should additionally ensure the German influence.

After the German defeat in World War I the German troops were withdrawn from the occupied countries and the different agreements lapsed.

In 1919, Estonia and Latvia, and – to some extent, also Lithuania – had to resist to the military intervention of the Red Army respectively Belarussian troops. The Baltic countries were supported by German-Baltic divisions and in Latvia, in addition, by German free corps. The

latters' objective did not correspond to the national Latvian ambitions; the Freikorps even tried to strengthen the German influence in Latvia by means of cooperation with the Belarussian troops (counter-government Niedra). Demanded by the Allied Powers, the Freikorps had to abandon the Baltic States by the end of 1919 – this was the end of the German influence in north-eastern Europe.