

## THE COURLAND CAMPAIGNS 1705–1706

Relatively little is known about the subject of warfare in the Duchy of Courland and Semigallia at the beginning of the Great Northern War. That is why the book by Vladimir Velikanov and Sergey Mekhnev drew our attention to the Courland campaign of 1705–1706 and the battle of Gemauerthof (lat. Mūrmuiža)<sup>1</sup>. It was released in 2016 as part of the series «Warfare» by publishing house Russians Knights.

The authors, while preparing the work under review, collected numerous sources and extensive literature on the subject. Here, we come across both Russian and Swedish language materials. The downside is the reduced use of the work of Latvian researchers. This is particularly evident when describing strong points in Courland and discussing political and military activities. Particularly noteworthy are publications that bring much to the subject of interest to us by the Latvian historian Mārīte Jakovļeva<sup>2</sup>.

The work consists of an introduction, six chapters, ending, footnotes, and annex. In the introduction, the authors describe the Duchy of Courland and Semigallia (further — DCS). As a result, we learn about its history, from its inception to 1700. After this, the authors discussed its fortifications. They wrote that apart from Mitau (lat. Jelgava), the capital of DCS, all of the fortifications were from the Middle Ages. First, all the Courlandian fortifications, including Jelgava, come from this period. Second, Bauske (lat. Bauska) and Goldingen (lat. Kuldīga) also possessed modern works. In the «Introduction» we read about the principality's shape, topography, population, and military potential.

In the first chapter, the authors present Courland at the beginning of the Great Northern War. We read about the causes of the conflict and its beginning. The description of the 1700

<sup>1</sup> Великанов В. С., Мехнев С. Л. Курляндская операция 1705–1706 гг. и сражение при Гемауэртгофе (Серия Ратное дело). Москва: Русские Витязи, 2016. 88 с.

<sup>2</sup> Jakovļeva M. 1) Cīņa par varu Kurzemes hercogistē pēc hercoga Frīdriha Kazimira nāves (1701.–1703. gads) // Latvijas Vēstures Institūta Žurnāls. 2005. Vol. 1. Lp. 48–69; 2) Karadarbība Kurzemes hercogistē un Lietuvas pierobežā (1703. gada vasara – 1705. gads) // Latvijas Vēstures Institūta Žurnāls. 2009. Vol. 3. Lp. 49–70.

campaign details the Battle of Probshtingshof. The problem is that these places are not located near Probshtingshof. The fighting took place in the Latvian town of Ciemupe, wherein the 19<sup>th</sup> century was built a railway station called Pröbstinghof<sup>3</sup>.

After that, we have a description of the effects of the Swedish victory. The next day, Charles XII sent a unit of 2,000 people under the command of General-Major (further — MG) Mörner, who two days later occupied the unprotected capital of Courland — Jelgava. A temporary administration was established on the spot under the leadership of MG Charles Stuart. The king's letters to him are intended to indicate the intention of incorporating the principality into Sweden. This is an exciting hypothesis, especially since the current literature is silent on this subject<sup>4</sup>. The authors describe the Swedish forces left in the Courland, which, after the departure of King Charles XII with the main army, took on the weight of the war on the Courland-Lithuania border. The next part of the chapter is a presentation of warfare, rich in battles and sieges.

In the second chapter, the authors discussed the events preceding the primary title campaign. There, we can read about activities on the Lithuanian-Courland border, as well as Russian and Swedish plans for 1705. Tsar Peter the Great planned to attack Courland in the next campaign.

In the third chapter, the authors describe the march of FM Sheremetev through DCS in July 1705. He tried to surprise the capital of the Courland — Jelgava. On July 12/13/26 (the Julian / the Swedish / the Gregorian calendar), the Russians were able to surprise the Swedes, but they did not capture the Jelgava fortress. In this chapter, we learn about the forces that on July 15/16/26 — just three days after the attack on the Courlandish capital — fought the Battle of Gemauerthof.

The fourth chapter describes the title battle of Gemauerthof. The authors describe the circumstances in which the fight occurred. The Russian army, moving through Courland from northeast to southwest, accidentally found an opponent who had camped about 30 km southwest of Miatu. Lewenhaupt was also surprised because he expected the enemy to come from the east. Opponents figured out their positions on July 14/15/25.

The authors accurately presented the composition and size of both armies. In their opinion, the size of the Swedish army had been underestimated up to now. According to Petré, Lewenhaupt had over 7,000 in the battle soldiers, including 300 Lithuanians<sup>5</sup>. Based on the report of C. A. Sinclair, general quartermaster of MG Lewenhaupt's army, talking about almost 9,000, the authors increase the size of the Swedish army to 8,900 (see Annex 3). This document, kept at the Linköping Diocesan and Country Library in Sweden, dates July 11–21, is credible given the author. Especially that there were mistakes in the narration of Petré that we write in more detail later. Thus, the opponent's forces were almost identical because the army of FM Sheremetev is estimated at 9,500 people (see Annex 4). The Swedes were to have an advantage in the infantry and the Russians in the cavalry.

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<sup>3</sup> *Balcerek M.* Sasi w Inflantach. O książce Grzegorza Szymborskiego // *Zapiski Historyczne*. 2016. T. 81. Z. 3. S. 160. — Probably this error is due to the reading of the book of Aleksander Bepalov, which is not in the bibliography: *Беспалов А. В.* Битвы Великой Северной войны 1700–1721. М., 2005. С. 11–12.

<sup>4</sup> *Jakovļeva M.* Cīņa par varu... Lp. 46–69.

<sup>5</sup> *Petré R.* Fänrik Robert Petrés dagbok 1702–1709 // Quennerstedt, August (ed.). *Karolinska krigares dagböcker jämte andra samtida skrifter*. Vol. 1. Lund: Gleerupska univ. bokhandeln (Hjalmar Möller), 1901. S. 58.

On July 14/15/25, decisions regarding the future battle were made. MG Lewenhaupt originally planned to set up his army facing east. When he realized that the enemy was coming from the northeast, he directed his army more. Theoretically, the opposite side should face the opposite, but the authors presented the formation of the Russian army differently. We see the Russians north of the opponent's position on the plans placed on the inside pages of the cover. In this way, Velikanov and Mekhnev suggest that FM Sheremetev used a diagonal pattern attacking the left wing of the opposing army, which is new compared to earlier findings. Unfortunately, the authors do not explain such a presentation of the issue.

In the drawings depicting the battle in this work, the right wing of the Swedes is not above the swamps, as the anonymous author of the leaflet about the campaign says<sup>6</sup>. As a result, this flank was exposed to attack. Directing the formation of the Swedish army further north would remove this threat and lead the army in front of the enemy coming from this direction.

Staying on the subject of «ordres de bataille», it is worth paying attention to setting up the army of MG Lewenhaupt. The Swede initially wanted to use a two-line array of mixed infantry and cavalry units. However, he changed his intention because eventually, the first one was in the center, and the latter was on both wings. The authors do not explain the change in this decision.

Velikanov and Mekhnev write that the Swedish infantry was divided into 17 battalions; 12 of them stood in the first line, and 5 stood in the second. It is new compared to what the Swedish historian Hugo Uddgren wrote, according to whom there were 18 (respectively 13 and 5)<sup>7</sup>. The authors do not explain it, but the source of their information is most likely the «ordre de bataille» of the formation of the army of MG Lewenhaupt from the era, where we see 17 (respectively 12 and 5)<sup>8</sup>.

According to Velikanov and Mekhnev, every Swedish battalion was to receive a 3-pound gun, but there were only 16 cannons and 17 troops. The authors do not explain this. They also do not indicate which unit was weakened in this way. Looking at those mentioned above «ordre de bataille» from the era, we see a total of 17 guns, of which 13 were in the first line. The third battalion from the right received two cannons. The grenadier battalion at the left-wing was deprived of guns, but the one at the right has two of them.

Similarly, in the second line, the center in the middle has two, the one on the left, and the right one is deprived of them. Such an artillery arrangement shows the desire to strengthen the right flank because it had more firepower, which the authors do not mention. It is an interesting note in the later winging of the Swedish army's left-wing and requires further analysis and discussion.

In the remainder of the chapter, Velikanov and Mekhnev accurately present the course of the fight. In the beginning, we learn about the action of the Swedish colonel (further — Col)

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<sup>6</sup> Warhaffter Bericht, Von der Blutigen Action und glorieusen Victorie, So der Hochwohlgebohrne Herr General-Major und Vice-Gouverneur, Graf Adam Ludwig Lewenhaupt, Wider den Moscovitischen General-Feld- Marschallen Knees Boris Petrovitz Scheremethoff, Bey Gemäuert-Hoff auff der Gräntze von Curland den 16. Julii 1705. Tapffer und Heldenmühtig befochten. s.: s. n. K. 2v.

<sup>7</sup> Uddgren H. E. Karolinen Adam Ludvig Lewenhaupt. Vol. 2. Uddevalla, 1950. S. 64.

<sup>8</sup> Великанов В. С., Мехнев С. Л. Курляндский поход Шереметева и «упущенная виктория» при Мур-мызе (Гемауэртгофе) 26 июля 1705 г. // Военно-исторический журнал «Старый Цейхгауз». 2014. Т. 57. № 1. С. 78.

Stackelberg, who, according to the authors, was to arbitrarily attack the Russians. They cite the diary of a participant in the diary of Petré's events. Ensign writes about the sending of Stackelberg by MG Lewenhaupt for reconnaissance. The latter would later get into the fight<sup>9</sup>. Other sources confirm the first information. The latter is found only in Petré. Based on this, Uddgren carefully approached the warrant officer's account<sup>10</sup>. While the following information is debatable, the initial information is incorrect.

Stackelberg's retreat provoked a Russian attack that began with the initiative of Col Kropotov. This Russian cavalry commander did not wait for the order of the commander-in-chief and attacked the enemy himself, which resulted in the movement of the entire army. This was new compared to previous arrangements. The minus is hidden in the footnote as there is no reference to these events (note 86)<sup>11</sup>. We learn about the independent attack of Kropotov by reading «Военно-походный журнал», which is not in the appropriate footnote<sup>12</sup>.

This is how the fight began on the whole front. The left wing of the Swedish army was flanked, almost leading to its defeat. According to the authors, activities in the second flank of MG Lewenhaupt's army began later. The Russian attack carried out there was to be repelled, and then, a Swedish counterattack was launched. The authors did not see a threat to the army of Lewenhaupt in this episode, which was a derivative of Uddgren's findings. The Swedish historian originally wrote about the breach of the right flank of his countrymen, and this, combined with the catastrophe on the second wing, was to lead to a lap<sup>13</sup>. In a later publication, he withdrew this request in the text but left the picture and signature unchanged, where we can see the lap of the Swedish army<sup>14</sup>.

Later in the chapter, the authors present the spoils and losses of both armies. The Swedes maintained the field, but according to Velikanov and Mekhnev, they achieved a Pyrrhic victory. MG Lewenhaupt and his men were not ready for another battle. The Tsar, however, had the strength to further expand in the DCS. The only thing missing here is the lack of commentary on the reasons for the Swedish victory. Amazingly, we find them only at the beginning of the next chapter, which is where we do not expect it.

In the fifth chapter, (The second Courland campaign and the capture of Jelgava and Bauska (August–September 1705)), we find a description of the capture of the DCS by Russian forces. In the beginning, we get acquainted with the plans of Tsar Peter the Great regarding this task. Lewenhaupt faced a dilemma, whether to defend the principality or keep the field army. After a short reflection, he chose the second option, which allowed him to focus on protecting Swedish Livonia. This decision de facto handed the DCS over to the opponent.

The authors familiarize us with the siege activities conducted by the Russians against two Courland strongholds: Jelgava and Bauska (ger. Bauske). This issue has not yet been in the

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<sup>9</sup> *Petré R. Fänrik Robert Petrés...* S. 47–48.

<sup>10</sup> *Uddgren H. E. Karolinen...* S. 64–65.

<sup>11</sup> *Куракин Б. И. Архив кн. Ф. А. Куракина. Кн. 1.* СПб.: Типография В. С. Балашева, 1890. С. 112.

<sup>12</sup> Военно-походный журнал (с 3 июня 1701 года по 12 сентября 1705 года) генерал-фельдмаршала Бориса Петровича Шереметева, посланного по высочайшему повелению в Новгород и Псков для охранения тех городов и иных тамошних мест от войск шведского короля // *Материалы Военно-Ученого Архива Главного Штаба. Т. I. Ч. III.* СПб.: Печатня В. И. Головина, 1871. К<sup>оп.</sup> 178–179.

<sup>13</sup> *Uddgren H. E. Slaget vid Gemeuerthof // Karolinska Förbundets Årbok. 1912. S. 148–172.*

<sup>14</sup> *Uddgren H. E. Karolinen...* S. 66. Kartskiss Nr 4: Svenska armén kringrand av den ryska.

orbit of interest of researchers, which gives great value to the findings of the authors. We get to know the composition of the garrisons, as well as the number and weight of sections located there. The same applies to the siege forces. The downside is the description of the fortifications. In the case of the capital of the principality, Jelgava, the authors write after Petré about four bastions, while there were five<sup>15</sup>. We can see this correctly in the illustration they posted, which has been reproduced on page 63.

The breakthrough moment in the siege was the arrival of heavy artillery. The authors write about her escorting by the Gagarin regiment of dragons, but in «Военно-походный журнал» we can read additional about two more units: Meshcherski and Dyumant drone regiments<sup>16</sup>. Russian shelling seriously violated the Jelgava citadel's fortifications, forcing the Swedish garrison to negotiate and ultimately surrender. Her conditions were perfect for the besieged. The authors write that according to them, every soldier could take 24 loads. The capitulation act, however, explicitly mentions 36 charges. The same applies to the number of departments. In the book, we read about 12, and in the cited source, we read about 13 cannons and two mortars<sup>17</sup>.

In the sixth and final chapter, «The Courland under Russian control (September 1705–April 1706)», we learn about the situation after the occupation of the principality by the Russians from September 1705 to April 1706, on behalf of the minor Prince Friedrich Wilhelm, in place of the Regent of Prince Ferdinand, who did not want to continue the war. The authors present troops of the Russian army stationed in the Courland, as well as garrisons in Jelgava and Bauska.

Later in the chapter, we learn about the Tsar's plans for the 1706 campaign. They were changed by the sudden appearance of the leading Swedish army of King Charles XII in Lithuania, which also surprised Lewenhaupt in Livonia. As a result, there was no joint Swedish action. Without taking up the defense of the occupied territories, Russian troops quickly retreated east, evacuating all fortresses. A small battle near Olkienniki (lit. Valkininkai) in Lithuania in the winter of 1706 ended with the victory of the Swedes and Sapieha supporters over the Russians and Lithuanian Republicans, and it did not significantly affect the overall situation. Later in the chapter, we learn about the Tsar's plans for the 1706 campaign.

In the first part of the Ending, the authors present the fate of Courland and its fortresses. At the end of the book, we come across Footnotes and an Annex consisting of six attachments. It is a pity that the publisher did not place links at the bottom of the page, which would allow the reader to assimilate the content better. It is also difficult not to tackle the lack of a bibliography, which would show the authors' effort in gathering source materials and topic literature.

In summary, the reviewed book should be evaluated positively. The authors described a little-known fragment of the Great Northern War, which is of great importance in learning about this momentous conflict. Velikanov and Mekhnev worked on Russian and Swedish materials, generally on the firsts. The downside is the lack of Latvian studies, which generates some errors. We analyzed the description of events based on sources and came to different conclusions. It can be the basis for further research. We assessed the work very positively.

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<sup>15</sup> Petré R. Fänrik Robert Petrés... S. 60–61.

<sup>16</sup> Военно-походный журнал... Кол. 190.

<sup>17</sup> Accords-Puncten Von Mitau. Hamburg: [Henrich Heuß], 1705.

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**Заголовок:** The Courland campaigns 1705–1706 [Курляндские походы 1705–1706 гг.]

**Резюме:** Целью данной статьи является представление книги В. С. Великанова и С. Л. Мехнева, которые сосредоточили свое внимание на курляндской кампании 1705–1706 гг. и битве при Гемауэртофе (лат. Мурмуйжа). Авторы рецензируемой работы рассматривают фрагмент Великой Северной войны, который был неизвестен до сих пор.

**Ключевые слова:** Великая Северная война, Курляндское и Семигальское герцогства, битва при Гемауэртофе, царь Петр Великий, Адам Левенгаупт, Борис Шереметев

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Information about the article

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**Title:** The Courland campaigns 1705–1706

**Summary:** This article aims to present a critical book by Vladimir Sergeevich Velikanov, and Sergey Leonidovich Mekhnev caught our attention to the Courland campaign of 1705–1706 and the battle of Gemauerthof (lat. Mürmuiza). The authors of the reviewed work described a fragment of the Great Northern War, which was unknown until now.

**Keywords:** the Great North War, the Duchy of Courland and Semigallia, battle of Gemauerthof, the Tsar Peter the Great, Adam Lewenhaupt, Boris Sheremetev

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