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(eds.)

The Second World War and the Baltic States

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Introduction

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In most Western histories of the Second World War the Baltic states are a virtual *terra incognita*. The affairs of the Baltics are usually presented as a marginal sideshow to the greater developments in other areas of Europe. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are discussed as objects of bargaining in the diplomacy of the Great Powers, so they appear in the context of the Three–Power negotiations in 1939, the Nazi–Soviet Pact of August 1939, the Anglo–Soviet negotiations in May 1942 and the Big Three conference in Teheran in November–December 1943.¹ There is usually a brief note about the destruction of these states by the USSR in 1940, just about the same time as Nazi Germany’s forces entered Paris.² Even interpretations on the role of the smaller states in the war generally exclude Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.³ In military histories the Baltic theatre of operations has been almost universally excluded, although the area was a critical staging ground for Nazi campaigns in the North-West of the Soviet Union and an important link to Finland.⁴ In most textbooks, there is almost nothing about the history of the Baltic states after 1943. For example, in Tony Judt’s extremely rich and detailed monograph about post-war Europe Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania appear, as *dei ex machina*, only in the late 1980s.⁵

This book is the result of the recognition that such an oversight is untenable, and for two reasons. First, the intrinsic importance of the Baltic states in the development

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- 1 A.J.P. Taylor, *The Origins of the Second World War* (London, 1972), pp. 235–9; Donald Cameron Watt, *How War Came: the Immediate Origins of the Second World War, 1938–1939* (London, 1989), pp. 363–9; P.M.H. Bell, *Origins of the Second World War in Europe* (Harlow, 2007), pp. 300–2; Anita Prazmowska, *Eastern Europe and the Origins of the Second World War* (Basingstoke, 2000), pp. 233–5; Victor Rothwell, *The Origins of the Second World War* (Manchester, New York, 2001), pp. 121–2. Steven Merritt Miner, *Between Churchill and Stalin: the Soviet Union, Great Britain, and the Origins of the Grand Alliance* (Chapel Hill, 1988); John Lewis Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941–1947* (New York, 1972), pp. 138–9; Warren F. Kimball, *Forged in War: Churchill, Roosevelt and the Second World War* (London, 1997), pp. 250–1.
 - 2 Martin Gilbert, *Second World War* (London, 2000), p. 94; but not mentioned in John Keegan, *The Second World War* (London, 1989).
 - 3 Neville Wylie (ed.), *European Neutrals and Non-Belligerents during the Second World War* (Cambridge, 2002). The editor has acknowledged the omission and discussed Baltic neutrality briefly in a special annex.
 - 4 John Erickson, *The Road to Stalingrad: Stalin’s War with Germany*, vol. 1 (London, 2000); Chris Bellamy, *Absolute war: Soviet Russia in the Second World War: a Modern History* (London, 2007); John Keegan, *The Second World War* (London, 1989).
 - 5 Tony Judt, *Postwar: a History of Europe since 1945* (New York, 2005), p. 644.

of the Second World War, from the Nazi–Soviet pact to the uneasy peace of May 1945, merits greater attention. The pact of August 1939, which unleashed war in Europe, was largely an agreement about spheres of influence over the Baltic states. In 1941 the take-over of these countries was one of the pillars for Hitler’s plan for the conquest of the Soviet Union, just as the re-occupation of the Baltics figured as one of the basic assumptions in Stalin’s post-war vision. The so-called Baltic question was a matter of contention in the relations of the Big Three Allies and gave an early warning as to how these relations might develop after the defeat of the common enemy. Secondly, since the regaining of the Baltic states’ independence in the late 1980s and early 1990s the histories of these states have progressed from the sphere of ideological contention, speculation and even outright falsification to that of rigorous research. There are first-class analyses that need to be brought to the attention of a wider academic community.

The first starting point for this book is regional – to deal with what we think is still largely a blank spot in the history of Europe. The second starting point is multidisciplinary – we wanted to bring together historians of many historical sub-disciplines, being convinced that historians should learn from their colleagues in other fields. We are happy that we were able to include contributions in fields such as diplomacy, foreign policy, strategy, military operations, intelligence, administration and propaganda. As a result, this book presents not only a rich and multi-layered perspective on a region affected by the Second World War, but also tells us a great deal about the general nature of that conflict. It deals with the views of the Great Powers towards the small states, the widening gap between the military capabilities of the smaller and the larger states, the nature of military operations at the advent of mechanization and close air support, the techniques of population control in the era of ideological regimes, and the problems of guiding public opinion in a democracy. Contributions to these themes add to our understanding of the Second World War as a pivotal event in the history of Europe in the 20th century.

The book is divided into three parts. The first part brings into focus the international background of the Baltic states’ transition from the 1930s to the 1940s, the loss of their independence and the rise of the Baltic question in international politics. Louis Clerc brings the analysis of French involvement in the Baltic affairs to a new level. Finnish historian Kalervo Hovi has studied French policies towards the region immediately after the First World War⁶, but we know very little of French perceptions, attitudes and policies in the rest of the inter-war period and even during the crucial months of the French–British–Soviet negotiations in 1939. Clerc sees the main French objectives as follows: to keep the Baltic open, to appease relations between different actors in the region, and to keep Germany in check. This ‘policy

6 Kalervo Hovi, *Cordon Sanitaire or Barrière de l’Est? The Emergence of the New French Eastern European Alliance Policy, 1917–1919* (Turku, 1975).

of equilibrium', he observes, was practiced in other peripheries of Europe as well. Paris tried a variety of methods to achieve these goals, from fostering cooperation between the small states, working towards stabilization through middle-sized powers (mostly Poland, sometimes Sweden), using the League of Nations, to toying with ideas of a Baltic alliance or Nordic cooperation. The last option, which appeared in 1939, was 'imperial stabilization by a resurgent Russia', which appealed to some commentators who were inclined to view the Baltic states as unstable, unreliable, and as accidents of History. However, Clerc notes, French decision-makers hesitated to condone a Soviet Monroe Doctrine in the Baltic. Indeed, it was the Nazi-Soviet rapprochement in August 1939 that saved Paris from the embarrassment of having to endorse a Soviet sphere of influence in the Baltic.

Thierry Grosbois' article is the first analysis of the Belgian perceptions of the Baltic affairs in the context of the long-established tradition of 'diplomatic reserve' and, since 1936, of strict neutrality vis-à-vis the great powers. Until 1939, Grosbois notes, diplomatic and consular posts in Scandinavia and the Baltics were considered relatively unimportant, although Brussels kept an eye on the development of the policy of neutrality in the region. This had direct implications to Belgium's own hopes at steering clear of alliance politics. In 1939–1941 Scandinavia and the Baltics became an important observation post on the evolution of Nazi and Soviet policies in the region. In June 1941 Belgium became an ally of the USSR and, from that moment, the Belgian government in exile maintained a silence regarding Baltic affairs. As the Baltic states had not been able to create governments in exile, no diplomatic relations existed, even though the Baltic states had diplomats operating in London and Washington. Foreign Minister Paul-Henri Spaak aligned the Belgian diplomatic position with that of Britain, even though the Belgian Foreign Ministry had few illusions as to the nature of the Soviet regime in the Baltic states. The position was maintained until the start of the Cold War in 1948. The Belgian views of the Baltic affairs, well reconstructed on the basis of archival documents, offer an extremely interesting and fresh perspective on the history of the Baltic states in the period.

Pauli Heikkilä's article provides another small-state perspective on the developments in the Baltic. This is essentially a Finnish viewpoint, but it is developed and articulated in the center of power of the Nazi 'New Europe'. Heikkilä focuses on the observations of a seasoned Finnish politician, Taivo Kivimäki, who served as Finnish minister in Berlin from 1941 to 1944. As Heikkilä notes, Finland closely observed the development of Nazi plans for the reorganization of Europe and the fulfillment of Nazi ideology in the occupied territories as these factors could affect the relations between Finland and Germany. Helsinki took particular interest in Nazi policies in the neighboring Estonia. Kivimäki commented that Germany's relatively lenient attitude towards the Estonians could be explained by their desire to reassure their Finnish allies. Kivimäki was disappointed to find by 1942 that the

Nazis lacked a clear blueprint for long term development of East-Central Europe and eventually offered his own vision, which he introduced to the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as to the Finnish President Risto Ryti. As a pre-condition for establishing peace, Kivimäki believed that European nations had to organize a common defense against Russia, the perennial non-European enemy. Thereafter they should all, including Germany, surrender part of their sovereignty and join a European Confederation, the main purpose of which was to avoid further wars on the continent. The methods by which this would be achieved remained vague, as Kivimäki readily acknowledged, but it seemed that he supported armed coercion against violators of peace if necessary. As opposed to resistance groups in occupied Europe, as well as the many organizations studying post-war plans in Allied countries who proceeded from the assumption of a German defeat, Kivimäki tried to adjust his ‘fundamentally liberal plan’ to the assumption of a German victory.

Tina Tamman takes us from Berlin to war-time London, where the representatives of the extinct Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian governments sought to maintain their pre-war status, clinging to the notion of state continuity under international law, and to fight for their nations’ self-determination. Tamman focuses on the thorny financial issues surrounding the Baltic question in British–Soviet relations and on the delicate question of London’s *de facto* recognition of the Soviet annexation. The Soviet claim to Baltic assets in Britain led to proceedings in British courts, where the legal basis of the Soviet claim – the Nationalization Laws of 1940 – was subjected to close scrutiny. The case of the Estonian ship SS *Vapper* stands out as the most important one. As Tamman suggests, the Foreign Office delayed the court hearings until after the end of the war, as it feared harmful publicity if it was required by the judge to provide information as to the official position on the Baltic states. Indeed, HM Government’s opinion that the Baltic states had *de facto* been incorporated into the Soviet Union could have been taken up by Nazi propagandists with the effect of causing embarrassment for the Allies in war time. But this was relatively harmless in 1946. However, the consequences were unfortunate for the Baltic states, Tamman argues, as they had now to face the fact of a British *de facto* recognition of the Soviet annexation. The irony in this was that the Baltic representatives pressed for the case to continue in the court, as they hoped to profit from a favorable verdict.

The history of military operations in the Baltic region in World War II is not well-studied or understood and remains as a serious gap in the narrative of the war. However, progress is being made and in recent years there have been some important works in the subject. A good starting point is the ten volume official German history of World War II produced by the Bundeswehr’s Military History Research Office. The history of the German operations is the product of a first rate group of scholars and is soundly based on documents in the German military archives. For

those interested in Baltic operations one should look to volume 4, *Der Angriff auf die Sowjetunion*, and volume 8, *Die Ostfront 1943/44*.⁷

In the English language one of the most important recent works is Howard Greer's *Hitler, Dönitz and the Baltic Sea: The Third Reich's Last Hope, 1944–1945*.⁸ Greer looks at the role the Baltic region played in Hitler's grand strategy in the last year and a half of the World War. Greer provides a very convincing argument that Hitler gave a high priority on holding Estonia and the Baltic coast as long as possible as a means of turning the war around in Germany's favor. Hitler's naval commander, Grossadmiral Karl Dönitz, needed to hold the Baltic Sea securely in German hands in order to train and prepare a large fleet of the new long range type XXI submarines (equipped with snorkel gear for running their diesel engines underwater) in order to unleash a new U-boat offensive in 1945 that would finally cut American supplies and troops from Britain and Europe. In turn, this would cripple Allied operations in the West and make the Western Allies amenable to a negotiated peace with Germany. Indeed, the Baltic was the last body of water in which the Germans could hope to train their naval forces without Allied interference and for this reason Hitler sent reinforcements to the Narva front and aimed to hold the Estonian coast in order to keep the Soviet fleet bottled up in Leningrad. In addition, the Estonian shale oil fields were one of Germany's last major sources of fuel and that alone also made holding the Baltic coast an important strategic objective. Greer provides some other insights into Hitler's strategy. He argues that when Estonia was finally overrun Hitler insisted on holding on to Courland as the basis for future operations against the Soviet Union in which the Wehrmacht would again take the offensive. Greer's work is based on thorough research of German archival documents and provides some important insights into Hitler's strategy making, the role of the German Navy in Hitler's thinking, and the hopes of using the Baltic coast later for a German counterattack.

Another important work that is essential to understanding military operations in the Baltic region is David Glantz's *The Battle for Leningrad, 1941–1944*.⁹ This is another thoroughly researched book using both the German and Soviet archives and provides a detailed look at all the ground operations from the initial advance of the Wehrmacht to the gates of Leningrad in 1941, the siege of the city from 1941 to early 1944, and the Russian offensive to clear the Germans from the Leningrad region in 1944.

7 See *Das deutsche Reich und der Zweite Weltkrieg*: Band 4; *Der Angriff auf die Sowjetunion*, eds. Horst Boog and Jürgen Förster (Munich, 1983); Band 8, *Die Ostfront 1943/44*, ed. Karl-Heinz Frieser (Munich, 2007).

8 Howard Greer, *Hitler, Dönitz and the Baltic Sea: The Third Reich's Last Hope, 1944–1945* (Annapolis, 2007).

9 David M. Glantz, *The Battle for Leningrad, 1941–1944* (Lawrence, 2002).

Yet after these excellent historical works the history of military operations in the Baltic states becomes very thin. There have been some recent books on the battles on the Narva front from February 1944 to July 1944 describing how the Wehrmacht successfully held the Soviet forces. However, books such as Mansal Denton's *The Battle for Narva 1944*, while well-illustrated and useful for the reader, tend to give only the German side of the battle and do not provide footnotes or archival information.¹⁰ Such works of popular history are largely based on memoirs from Wehrmacht soldiers (and Estonians) who fought on that front. But memoirs, while providing a tactical level view of the war, are no substitute for the actual unit logs and records in determining just how the battles were fought and how the battles fit into the operational and strategic plans. Unfortunately, due to the loss of much of the German military archives through the Allied bombing of Potsdam in 1945, the records from the German side contain big gaps in the material from the army groups, armies, corps and divisions that fought in Estonia in 1944. The operational records of the Luftwaffe units on the Eastern Front in 1944 and 1945 are also extremely thin. This, coupled with a reluctance of the Russians to allow ready and unrestricted access to their World War II archives for Western historians, remains a big problem in writing the operational history of World War II.

There are some major areas of Baltic military operations that provide opportunities for historians. To date there has been very little written about naval operations in the Baltic from 1941 to 1945 and this is an area that should be addressed.¹¹ Although the Baltic never saw any great fleet operations it was still the scene for constant naval operations. The German and Finnish navies, often working closely together (the one case where Germans and Finns did act as allies), carried out naval landings on the Baltic coast and supported ground operations with naval gunfire on many occasions. The Germans and Finns also worked together to mine the Gulf of Finland and patrolled constantly to intercept and engage all the Soviet attempts to break out of Leningrad to the Baltic. Later in the war, when the Soviets were finally able to send ships into the Baltic, the Germans had to conduct anti-submarine operations against the Red Fleet. In terms of archival sources there is plenty of material to work with as most of the German naval records of the Baltic Sea forces (located in the Bundesdarchiv/Militärarchiv in Freiburg) survived the war and offer an enterprising historian of the future with a sound foundation to write a detailed history of the Baltic naval operations.

10 Mansal Denton, *The Battle for Narva, 1944* (Andelfingen, 2010). Another work of this genre is Walter Melzer, *Kampf um die baltischen Inseln 1917–1941–1944* (Neckargemünd, 1960). The latter provides some unit information and a soldier's eye view of the little known 1941 and 1944 battles for the Estonian islands.

11 A brief overview of Baltic naval operations can be found in V.E. Tarrant, *The Last Year of the Kriegsmarine, May 1944–May 1945* (London, 1996).

Another opportunity to fill a major gap in the operational history of the Baltic region is the German defense in Latvia through the summer and fall of 1944. The German divisional, corps and army records for this region and period still exist along with the German maps (in the German Archives in Freiburg). A book on the military operations in Latvia from the Soviet summer offensive to the fall of Riga in October is not only doable, but would fill a big gap in the operational history of the Eastern Front.

In terms of this book, the authors have made some steps in filling some gaps in the operational history of the World War in the Baltic States. We begin with the chapter by Mika Raudvassar on the pre-war Estonian Air Force and air defense doctrine and plans. Although this chapter does not fit into the wartime events that are the focus of the book, it still provides some useful background on the armed forces of the Baltic states as the World War began. This is especially useful as there is very little written in English or German on the Baltic armed forces in the interwar period. Raudvassar points out that although Estonia was limited in resources and people, that country was able to build a fairly capable armed forces in the interwar period. The Estonians had a well-led and well-trained officer corps that was well aware of military doctrine and developments in the rest of the world and adapted the most ideas from larger air forces to develop a comprehensive air defense system. Estonian engineers even developed their own technology for range finding and computing that was highly advanced for the era. This picture of a small Baltic country's armed forces on the eve of World War II brings us to a very interesting question. If the Baltic countries had resisted the Soviet demands for bases and territory in 1939 and, like Finland, made a fight for it, how well could they have done? Although the Baltic states air forces and navies were small and armed with largely obsolete equipment, the Baltic armies of 1939 were fairly well equipped and trained and they were led by officers who were up to date in terms of modern war thinking (as Raudvassar points out in the case of Estonia). The likely answer is that the Baltic states, if they had cooperated and militarily resisted the Soviet Union, might well have held off the Soviet forces for a few weeks. Such a response might not have prevented an eventual Soviet victory, but would have dramatically changed the political and strategic dynamics of the Baltic region.

David Glantz in his chapter has provided an invaluable framework for looking at the operations from 1944 to 1945 as a series of operations that were carried out in the context of the larger war. Colonel Glantz concludes that the Baltics was at times a backwater, but at other times, such as during the German advance in 1941, the Baltic coast had a high priority in strategic terms. With his deep understanding of how the Soviets have studied the World War, David Glantz provides an overview of how the Soviets, and now the Russians, have written about the campaigns in the Baltic. This chapter provides the professional historian with some good advice on which campaigns and phases might be the most productive for future research.

James Corum provides an account of the Luftwaffe's operations in the Baltic region from June to December 1941. For the most part, the Luftwaffe was a highly effective force and played a key role in pushing the very rapid German advance to the gates of Leningrad. In many respects the Luftwaffe was at the height of its powers at this point in the war. It was a battle hardened and highly trained force with excellent equipment and first rate leaders. In 1941 the Luftwaffe was far ahead all other air forces in terms of being able to provide effective close air support for the ground forces. The Soviet Air Force, while large, was no match for the Germans. The Red Air Force had just emerged for the purges with its leadership decimated. Those who survived had little command experience. Training standards were low and most of the equipment was obsolete. Within days the soviet air force was so badly decimated that it was scarcely seen for the next few months. However, Corum also argues that the greatest flaws of the Luftwaffe, its inefficient aircraft production system and the failure to build its training system to meet the personnel demands of a long war showed up dramatically in the Baltic in 1941. Although the Luftwaffe's losses were fairly low, by October the German units were simply "fought out" in the East and were no longer able to provide the necessary support to the German army. This failure was entirely a self-inflicted wound caused by a lack of attention to training and Ernst Udet's mismanagement of production from 1936–1941. Corum argues that with another 2,000 aircraft (three additional air corps and 500 transports for logistics) the Luftwaffe could have helped the army maintain the rate of advance and taken Leningrad and Moscow in 1941.

In Valdis Kuzmin's chapter on the 15th Latvian Division (Latvian Legion) units in combat in 1943–44 we see the kind of excellent analysis that can be produced from the existing records. Mr. Kuzmins has provided us with some important insights into how units performed in battle in the latter half of the war. Some units performed well, some did not. Mr. Kuzmins provides a detailed explanation of what went wrong for the units of the 15th when first committed to combat. This is a valuable contribution not only to our understanding of the realities of combat on the Eastern Front, but also for understanding how the Baltic national units that served in the Wehrmacht were treated by the Germans. We are reminded that much of the war on the Eastern Front consisted of very uncomfortable alliances – of Germans and Finns and Germans with Baltic peoples, not to mention the German alliances with the Romanians, Hungarians and Bulgarians. The German coalition war in the East was based on formal and informal alliances between the Germans, who were neither liked nor trusted by any of their allies due to the German vision ruthlessly exploiting the East. On the other hand, small nations such as Latvia had little choice as the alternative of Soviet dominance was something even worse than German rule, which offered the hope of at least some future autonomy. We can also see with the Latvians another lost German opportunity for, if the Latvian units had

been formed and trained earlier, they would certainly have performed much better in combat in 1943 and 1945.

In Ardi Siilaberg's chapter on the country level operational groups we have a very good picture of Soviet planning for the reoccupation of Estonia. By the middle of the war the Stavka had certainly developed into a capable organization for operational level military planning, but in matters of a lower priority, such the reoccupation of regions of the USSR we see a very disorganized and haphazard process. Indeed, the Soviet government never had an accurate count of just how many Estonian evacuees it had and what their skills were. In the end, some kind of organization to control Estonia was created, but it was badly prepared and poorly organized to do the job. These mistakes help explain why the post-occupation resistance was allowed to flourish. This chapter shows an excellent example of how the soviet war planning could range from the very good to the very bad.

In his chapter on the Swedish military intelligence operations in Estonia during and shortly after the war Lars Wolke reminds us that Sweden was indeed a major player in the Baltic region and provides some insights into how seriously the Swedish government viewed the threat of the USSR. Sweden, although not exactly on the front line of the war, was close to it and for the first half of the war faced a serious threat of invasion from Germany. In the case of a German collapse Stalin might move against Sweden as a target of opportunity. It thus made perfect sense for Sweden to build up its intelligence assets oriented towards the Soviet Union in the latter half of the World War. However, in intelligence vast efforts often yield minimal results, and this appears to be the case of the Swedish attempt to establish a strong human intelligence network inside the Baltic countries. Dr. Wolke lays out the story of how the Military Intelligence Branch tried various means to insert agents into the Baltic countries and to extract intelligence from those who had fled the Baltic countries to Sweden. Due to the incomplete nature of the Swedish intelligence archives we cannot be sure of exactly what information Sweden gained from these operations, but it is likely that some useful intelligence resulted from the effort. The efficiency and ruthlessness of the Soviet counterintelligence service, and the likelihood that some of the Swedish agents were playing a double game, ensured that the attempt to gain human intelligence in the Baltic region failed. Thus, Sweden had to turn to signals intelligence as its primary source on the Soviet military in the Baltics.

The Nazi occupation during World War II from summer 1941 till 1944/45 and the Holocaust of Baltic Jewry were key events in Baltic contemporary history which could be researched after the opening of the former closed Soviet archives on a broader base of sources than ever before.¹² Because of the recent expansion of lit-

12 All three Baltic states established History Commissions in the late 1990s and they published extensively on Nazi and Soviet crimes, the war and especially the Holocaust. The Latvian

erature on the Holocaust and German occupation in the Baltic states,¹³ we decided to concentrate on single topics of the occupation experience and do not cover the annihilation of Baltic Jewry. This does not intend to deny the importance of this theme. For many contemporaries German occupation appeared to be a 'lesser evil' in comparison with Stalinist rule.¹⁴ In fact, ethnic Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians suffered less under the Nazis than under Stalinism. Under the circumstances of German plans in the East and the ongoing war, the restoration of statehood remained a dream. As in other German occupied countries, collaboration and pragmatic cooperation occurred along with passive and active resistance, while for a vast majority an attitude of 'wait and see' prevailed. This led to the need to mobilize the local population for the German effort.

The papers by Kristo Nurmis and Kari Alenius look from different angles on German propaganda in the example of Estonia. Nurmis describes in depth the developments in propaganda until 1942 which aimed at creating desirable behavior among Estonians. Since the war in the East was a war of annihilation fought with the aims to eradicate the ideological enemy and to gain future *Lebensraum*, there could have been no positive political warfare tactics for the occupied Eastern territories, and the local population was left unclear about future plans. Nevertheless, the non-Russians were to be treated in propaganda according to their 'national character'. Tensions between national aspirations, Nazi future designs and the requirements of war had to be smoothed out. The fact that German troops had been greeted as liberators and Estonian partisans had fought on their side could be used

commission, for example, produced more than 25 volumes. The Baltic historians were joined by colleagues from abroad, mostly from Germany.

- 13 Vincas Bartuvičius, Joachim Tauber and Wolfram Wette (eds.), *Holocaust in Litauen: Krieg, Judenmorde und Kollaboration im Jahre 1941* (Cologne, 2003); Ruth Bettina Birn, *Die Sicherheitspolizei in Estland 1941–1944: Eine Studie zur Kollaboration im Osten* (Paderborn, 2006); Christoph Dieckmann, *Deutsche Besatzungspolitik in Litauen 1941–1944*, 2 vols (Göttingen, 2011); Andrew Ezergailis, *The Holocaust in Latvia 1941–1944: The Missing Center* (Riga-Washington D.C., 1996); Björn Felder, *Lettland im Zweiten Weltkrieg: Zwischen sowjetischen und deutschen Besatzern 1940–1946* (Paderborn, 2009); Toomas Hiio, Meelis Maripuu and Indrek Paavle (eds.), *Estonia 1940–1945: Reports of the Estonian International Commission for the Investigation of Crimes Against Humanity* (Tallinn, 2006); Sebastian Lehmann, Robert Bohn and Uwe Danker (eds.), *Reichskommissariat Ostland: Tatort und Erinnerungsobjekt* (Paderborn, 2012); Katrin Reichelt, *Lettland unter deutscher Besatzung: Der lettische Anteil am Holocaust* (Berlin, 2011); Knut Stang, *Kollaboration und Massenmord: Die litauische Hilfspolizei, das Rollkommando Hamann und die Ermordung der litauischen Juden* (Frankfurt, 1996); Wolfram Wette, *Karl Jäger: Mörder der litauischen Juden* (Frankfurt, 2011); Anton Weiss-Wendt, *Murder without Hatred: Estonians and the Holocaust* (Syracuse, 2009).
- 14 On the period of Stalinism see: Elena Zubkova, *Pribaltika i Kreml' 1940–1953* (Moscow, 2008); Olaf Mertelsmann (ed.), *The Sovietization of the Baltic States, 1940–1956* (Tartu, 2003).

extensively in propaganda. German propaganda in the period under consideration was first conducted by Wehrmacht propaganda units and later by the propaganda department of the civilian administration. Nurmis analyzes the functions and the work of those propagandists, who were caught between Nazi aspirations and war dictated pragmatism. In comparison to other occupied territories propaganda was judged to be an efficient tool of governance in Estonia.

Kari Alenius researches the reception of German propaganda in Estonia mainly on the basis of surveillance reports by German Security Police and the Security Service. He agrees with Nurmis that German propaganda was successful to a certain degree, but due to his sources he regards his topic from a different perspective. Alenius is able to distinguish the reaction of different social groups towards propaganda. Some topics were crucial for the audience, such as the final outcome of war, Estonia's future, or larger questions from the economic, social, political or cultural sphere. Alenius demonstrates in detail the evolution of the mood of the population and the reception of propaganda during different phases of the occupation. He concludes that the conditions recognized by the public are the most important framework for propaganda. As long as the Third Reich was successful in the war and the Germans were seen as liberators, there were no problems for the propaganda. When Estonians felt unfairly treated, and the fortunes of war had turned, German propaganda faced much more difficulties.

German occupation policies and practices varied widely not only in Western Europe but also in the East. There were differences even between the situation in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania in the framework of the very same *Reichskommissariat Ostland*. Toomas Hiio's paper analyzes the relationship of military and civilian authorities in Estonia, a country that received more favorable treatment than her Baltic neighbors. Initially Estonia was under the military administration of the Wehrmacht. Meanwhile a local Self-Administration was built up by September 1941. By the end of the year 1941 a German civil administration headed by General Commissioner Karl-Siegmund Litzmann replaced the military authorities, but the commanding general of the Rear Area acquired certain powers due to the proximity to the front. In addition, SS and Police, Navy, Luftwaffe, Organization Todt, and Four Year Plan officials also played important roles. A compromise between different German institutions led to a division of power in occupied Estonia. In many administrative bodies Estonians represented the majority of the employees. Meanwhile, the more important decisions were nearly always made by the German superiors. The relationship between different German institutions was complicated and the balance of power shifted constantly. Nominally General Commissioner Litzmann was in charge, but the concerns of the army always had to be respected and the Police and SS grew more influential over time. In addition, the interests of the Estonians had to be taken into account as their cooperation was needed especially after the situation on the Eastern Front worsened.

Kaarel Piirimäe concentrates on the efforts of the Estonian diplomats in exile to influence British public opinion concerning the question of the Baltic states in the years 1941–1944. Even though the Baltic ministers had been allowed to keep their diplomatic status they were in no position to directly influence the official policy, which was based on building a partnership with the Soviet Union. This policy ran counter to the interests of the Baltic states. The only alternative for the diplomats was to appeal to the British electorate to support national self-determination in the Baltic and to hope that the public would encourage politicians to change direction. However, Baltic actors were faced with an elaborate system of censorship and propaganda that promoted the British–Soviet alliance and effectively curbed efforts to discuss the Baltic affairs in the media. By 1944, when the Soviets re-entered the Baltic states, the British public was largely indifferent towards the fate of the three states and the alliance remained on a steady course, at least for the time being.