

This edited collection is a tribute to the history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Baltic region; an area, which, as the editors say, was ‘visited by practically every calamity the modern era had to offer’ (p. vii). The stated editorial ambition has been to complement the already existing outside perspectives on Baltic history with, as they say, a view ‘from within’ (p. vii); bringing together historians from the three Baltic countries themselves. Whilst this happening is not particularly rare – the *Journal of Baltic Studies* exists, after all – this new volume certainly makes a welcome contribution to historical research on the Baltics.

The articles included are based on the presentations at an international conference held at Stanford University and the Hoover Institution Library in October 2014. Indeed, many of the Baltic scholars included here have well-established connections to Stanford or Hoover Archives; a testimony to successful network-building at both institutions with a focus on Baltic history. Currently, an effort is underway on the initiative of Stanford Libraries to create an even stronger focus on Baltic studies, so more similar publications are perhaps to be expected in the future.

There are fourteen authors in this 307-page book and the articles vary both in length and character. Some of the chapters read like compressed overviews of much larger research projects (which are often also covered in other, longer and more detailed publications), while others present case studies on a broader theme or introduce a topic to an English-speaking audience. The general impression is that of a sample of what is currently on offer in modern, outward-looking historical research in the three Baltic countries, and that is laudable in itself. The individual chapters, if not necessarily the whole book, would be useful for teaching Baltic history in universities abroad, or could serve as introductions to the individual authors’ research interests or their respective fields of research.

In terms of various approaches to historical research, the major contender here is, unsurprisingly, political history, although the history of ideas, memory studies and social history also make an appearance. Period-wise, nothing here focuses exclusively on the pre-independence period. The immediate post-World War I period is covered in two articles. Tomas Balkelis writes about the the continuity of (para)military violence from the Great War to the post-war regional struggles, seeing it as an important part of the early political culture of newly independent Lithuania, while Ēriks Jēkabsons covers the various American humanitarian missions in the hopelessly confused military and administrative situation in Latvia in 1918-1920.

The interwar period following the conclusion of the Wars of Independence is the subject of a few more contributions. In a long and detailed article, Ineta Lipša writes about the development of women’s rights and the representations of masculinity and femininity in different stages of interwar Latvian history. Another topic of interest is the authoritarian coup d’états in Estonia and Latvia in 1934. Aivars Stranga analyses the totalitarian ambitions of the Karlis Ulmanis regime in Latvia of 1934-1940 and Andres Kasekamp covers the role of right-wing radicalism in facilitating the authoritarian turn in Estonia. Another pair of articles discuss the ramping up of international tensions and the loss of Baltic independence in the late 1930s and early 1940s. Magnus Ilmjärv writes about the 1938 Czechoslovak crisis and its spill-over to the Baltic states as a case study of small state behaviour in times of crisis. Artūras Svarauskas gives an overview of the political developments in Lithuania in 1938-1940.

The Second World War proper is only represented by one contribution, Uldis Neiburgs’ overview of the covert cooperation between the Latvian resistance movement, the exile Latvian diplomats in the West, and Western Allied security services during the Nazi German occupation of Latvia. From the perspective of memory studies, Ene Kõresaar writes about the contentious issue of the official and unofficial

commemoration – after 1989 – of the Estonian servicemen who had served in the Nazi German army during World War II. Admirably well-researched and lucidly written, this is certainly one of the more impressive contributions in this volume.

The rest of the chapters are concerned with the Soviet period after World War II. Kristina Burinskaitė writes about how KGB used the pretext of ‘searching for war criminals’ to interfere with the pro-liberation activities of the Lithuanian diaspora in the West. Tõnu Tannberg takes a thorough and nuanced look at the implementation of Lavrenti Beria’s ‘new nationalities policy’ of 1953 in the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic. Aigi Rahi-Tamm discusses the traumatic return of deported Estonians to their homeland after Stalin’s death, their further fate there, and subsequent, generally futile attempts to achieve official rehabilitation. Dania Bleiere gives an overview of the careers of the female members of the Latvian Communist Party Central Committee, and Saulius Grybkauskas introduces the institution of ‘Second Secretaries’ (i.e. representatives of the central Party organisation in Moscow) of the local Communist Party organisations in the republics, using the example of Nikolai Belukha, the Second Secretary of the Central Committee of the Latvian CP in 1963-1978.

As is perhaps inevitable in an edited collection, the feel of the contributions is somewhat uneven, and in many cases it seems like more editorial oversight or a more stringent peer-review process would have been helpful in ensuring the quality of the research outputs. Furthermore, the book’s usefulness is hampered by the fact that the English language check has far too often been conducted superficially (if at all), and there remain some other errors that should have been easy to spot. In one case, a footnote contains placeholders instead of source references; in another, a citation is accompanied by a printed link to Google Books (!). It is needless to embarrass the authors by pointing out further instances of lacking editorial diligence, but more could have been done to ensure that the book is up to the standard expected from a serious English-language academic publication.