

Zitierhinweis

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Behind the Iron Curtain. Soviet Estonia in the Era of the Cold War. Hrsg. von Tõnu Tannberg. (Tartu Historical Studies, Bd. 5.) Peter Lang Edition. Frankfurt am Main 2015. 429 S. ISBN 978-3-631-66849-8. (€ 76,95.)

Collectively and individually, the articles in this strong volume take an institutional approach. The approaches of the authors concur with Karin Veski's and Anu Raudsepp's statement: "social contexts [...] are created in institutions, and reality is continually constructed by different interest groups" (p. 198). Overall this volume sees the Soviet period of Estonian history as primarily influenced by the priorities of central Soviet decision makers, and the primary interest group was Communist Party leaders. In myriad ways the volume shows how, behind the iron curtain, "the process of Sovietizing Estonia" (p. 200) proceeded—sometimes purposively, sometimes only fitfully at best.

The volume is the outcome of a research project begun at the University of Tartu in 2009 on Estonia during the Cold War. The majority of the articles were first published in Estonian.¹ The authors represent the younger generation of historians in Estonia, and most of them are native speakers of Estonian, which contributes to greater access to primary and relevant local secondary sources. The texts read well. Making this work accessible to a broader audience represents a significant achievement by the ed. and the unnamed translators.

The volume's 14 articles together present a wide perspective on how life in Soviet Estonia changed and developed, particularly from the beginning of the second Soviet occupation in 1944 through the 1960s. Examined are diplomacy, high levels of local government, economic priorities and growth, propaganda and imposed national images, the media and propaganda (including the use of publications as KGB "active measures"), and religion. Taken collectively, the authors find that the process of Sovietization was presented and championed, where possible, as a natural, expected development for Estonian society. Often, however, the Soviet state and Communist Party failed to achieve their aims—Sovietization was never complete.

In his opening article volume editor Tõnu Tannberg writes about six Estonians who began training in 1944 to become diplomats in a people's commissariat for defence and foreign affairs created for the Estonian SSR, which together with other Soviet republics was originally projected by Moscow for membership in the United Nations. When the USSR received veto power in the UN, the importance of this commissariat/ministry sharply diminished.

In his contribution Olev Liivik examines ethnicity in the Estonian SSR's highest republic-level government body—the Council of Ministers—in the years 1940–1941 and 1945 through the 1950s. While it was already known that russophone ethnic Estonians who arrived in Soviet Estonia from Soviet Russia or other parts of the Soviet Union were widely placed there in high administrative positions, Liivik argues that there were likely no plans in Moscow to make the Council of Ministers an "international" (non-Estonian), rather than Estonian body. Preference for Estonians from the Soviet Union, however, made the Sovietization of Estonia proceed more easily.

Kaarel Piirimäe and Vahur Made each examine aspects of the tension that existed between Soviet Estonia and the Estonian expatriate community. Piirimäe shows how this struggle was waged through publications and press-based propaganda in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Soviet propaganda was certainly unsuccessful in fostering a positive image of the Estonian SSR among emigres who had already experienced the first year of Soviet rule (June 1940 to July 1941). Made examines the work of three Estonian expatriates in West Germany over the years 1952 to 1988. In their emphasis on West Germany as the "front line" state of the Cold War and its reliance on the United States and NATO, their views

¹ TÕNU TANNBERG (ed.): *Nõukogude Eesti külma sõja ajal* [Soviet Estonia during the Cold War], Tartu 2015.

differed from the foreign policy of interwar Estonia, which sought role models among the major states of Europe.

Olaf Mertelsmann argues that economic development in Soviet Estonia in the 1940s and 1950s was centered on advancing military capabilities. This came through an emphasis on heavy industry, especially the mining and processing of oil shale. He estimates that the resulting slowdown of economic growth in other areas of the economy meant that by the late 1980s GDP and income levels in Estonia were no more than half of what they would have otherwise been.

Meelis Maripuu's long (57-page) article "Cold War Show Trials in Estonia: Justice and Propaganda in the Balance" is much broader than this title indicates, addressing the issue of war crimes trials in not only in Soviet Estonia, but also in post-war Europe in general. Maripuu's information-rich article would be strengthened by an explanation of the distinction between show trials and trials that were influenced—even strongly so—by Cold War politics. This would clarify the differences between the five trials of Estonian accused war criminals in the 1960s examined here and the Nuremberg Trials and the trial of Adolf Eichmann, which the author also discusses.

Veski and Raudsepp in their article examine propagandistic textual character images from school textbooks. Enemies were first seen as internal—Estonian "fascists", bourgeois nationalists, and kulaks—and then later they were found in American imperialists. Heroes were Stalin, Estonians who fought on the Soviet side in the war, and heroes from Russian *byliny* epic narratives. The hero from the Estonian eponymous epic *Kalevipoeg* was Sovietized: in one textbook he was described as a "righteous elder of the people, a brave warrior, a daring seafarer, and a simple workman" (p. 213).

Ivo Juurvee examines the work of a KGB operative in Estonia in the 1960s who published claims that Estonian military intelligence had begun in 1935 to cooperate with German military intelligence—a claim which was used as justification for Soviet occupation. Juurvee's focus is explaining how these publications were examples of "active measures"—disinformation and propaganda used for political ends. Tiit Kreepuu finds that the Communist Party was unable to control entirely the Estonian press. While party leaders sought to use the press for totalitarian goals of societal control, "the Estonian press and journalists continuously fought ideological pressure and managed not just to ignore but also resist its goals" (252).

Oliver Pajel writes of the growth of Finnish tourism in Soviet Estonia from a period of significant restrictions in the 1950s and early 1960s to more open travel beginning in the mid-1960s. Marek Miil writes that in the Estonia of the 1970s, when half of the population was able to watch Finnish television—labelled "bourgeois television" by the Soviet Estonian authorities—and with nearly a quarter of them doing so daily, efforts by the state to draw Estonians away from viewing life in the land of their democratic and capitalist neighbor to the north failed. Atko Remmel gives a thorough overview of the steps taken by the Communist Party in the Estonian SSR to limit religious activity and encourage atheism. He finds that especially effective in nearly entirely dechurching Estonian society by the late 1980s were new secular ceremonies for weddings, "spring days" for children and themed summer activities and sports for youths to replace religious confirmation rites, and other secular ceremonies to mark notable life transitions. The late Indrek Paavle traces the history of controls the Soviet state set over the borders of the Estonian SSR that were also borders of the Soviet Union itself. While these measures were extremely effective (only some 50 people escaped abroad across these borders), Paavle concludes they left behind an unexpected boon: "the decades-long restrictions ended up preserving diverse and undisturbed nature in many areas along Estonia's coast" (p. 429).

Some of the articles ideally would have been further edited, in several cases for length and in others to limit the material not directly germane to the case of Estonia. This caveat aside, it remains only to be hoped that a future volume in this *Tartu Historical Studies* se-

ries will examine the history of Soviet Estonia from the perspective of *Alltagsgeschichte*, which remains understudied.

New Haven

Bradley Woodworth

Die DDR und die Solidarność. Ausgewählte Aspekte einer Beziehung. Hrsg. von Konstantin Hermann. Thelem. Dresden 2013. 253 S., Ill. ISBN 978-3-942411-06-6. (€ 22,80.)

Relations between the German Democratic Republic and the Polish People's Republic are still not a common subject in academic research. The book, edited by Konstantin Hermann, does not pretend to present the whole picture of those relations, but offers a good overview of already researched topics. In his introduction, Hermann points out how difficult and complicated the cooperation between the Polish and East German governments was and how little we already know about this relationship. He also mentions that more research needs to be done in the future on the contact the two societies had with each other. Finally, he accurately underlines that the experience of communism in East Germany is much better known in Western Europe than the Polish experience, giving, as an example, the forgotten role of Solidarność in the collapse of the communist regimes in Eastern and Central Europe due to the dominating media focus on the collapse of the Berlin wall.

The book presents several different aspects of East German-Polish relations: politics and economics, the attitude of the East German secret service toward Solidarność, and culture and media. It begins with a chapter on the East German-Polish border crossing by Krzysztof Ruchniewicz that asks the question: Why did the Polish opposition know so little about their East German counterparts and why were they not interested in the situation in the neighboring country? The chapter is a fitting introduction for the book as a whole and reveals that only very scant serious research has been done on this topic thus far.

The book is divided into five sections. The first one "politics and economics" contains a paper by Hermann and a case study by Daniel Logemann. Hermann investigates the economic situation in Poland and in the GDR and how the economic situation in Poland affected East German thinking about economics and market supply. In contrast, Logemann concentrates on the reaction of the citizens of Leipzig to the situation in Poland in 1980 and how attractive Poland was for GDR citizens. He also analyzes how the political changes and problems between both countries influenced contact between Poles and Germans.

The following section about the reactions of the GDR secret service to Solidarność contains three papers by two Polish authors, Tytus Jaskółkowski and Krzysztof Jagiełło, who present the activities of the East German secret service in Poland concerning different aspects of Polish-East German contact and cooperation. The next section on cultural exchange contains texts written exclusively by German authors. Thomas Günther and Andreas Kötzlin concentrate on the subject of film making and the film industry in the GDR, looking specifically at the problem of censorship, ideology, the organization of cultural events, and international cooperation. The final paper by Wolfgang Nicht, a partially idealized account about the twinning of Wrocław and Dresden, takes a personal rather than an academic perspective.

The section on media contains articles by Dariusz Wojtaszyn that look at the portrayal of Solidarność in the local GDR press through the example of the *Sächsische Tageblatt* (Saxon Journal) and an article by Hermann and Christiane Schmitt-Teichert explores East German propaganda through an analysis of Radio Berlin International broadcasts (1981/82) in Polish. The last section is dedicated to the presentation of the German reunification in the Polish media. Artur Kamiński writes about the *Tygodnik Solidarność* (Solidarnosc Weekly) and *Słowo Polskie* (Polish Word). Mariusz Kozerski con-