Tõnu Tannberg, *Politika Moskvy v respublikakh Baltii v poslevoennye gody (1944–1956). Issledovania i dokumenty* [Политика Москвы в республиках Балтии в послевоенные годы (1944–1956). Исследования и документы], Moscow: ROSSPEN, Fond ‘Prezidentski tsentr B.N. Yeltsina’, 2010, 431 p. ISBN 978-5-8243-1411-3

Since 2008, more than 120 books have appeared in the ‘History of Stalinism’ series, published by the Russian Political Encyclopedia publishing house in Moscow. This series of publications differs noticeably from the avalanche of commercial and pro-Soviet publications about Stalin and Stalinism that have flooded bookshops in the Russian Federation in recent years. The series is scholarly literature, studies based on archival data, revealing the functioning and crimes of the Bolshevik system. In it, there are monographs, works of scholarly conferences, books by renowned older-generation Sovietologists translated into Russian, and the latest books by Russian and foreign scholars devoted to studies of the history of the Stalinist period, as well as problems of historiography. Themes on the history of Lithuania, or the entire Baltic region, in this prestigious series are relatively rare, so they are worth special attention.

The book ‘Moscow’s Policy in the Baltic Republics in the Post-War Years (1944–1956)’ by the Estonian scholar Tõnu Tannberg is the second book in the series to be devoted specifically to the history of the Baltic region¹. This book is not a traditional monograph on some problem: it is a relatively small-scale collection of six articles by the author, published before 2007, supplemented by a comprehensive set of thematic documents. The postwar documents² very eloquently and perfectly reflect the attitude

¹ The first, published in 2008, Elena Zubkova’s *Pribaltika i Kreml, 1940–1953*, due to its relevance, was also translated into the Lithuanian language (E. Zubkova, *Pabaltijys ir Kremlius, 1940–1953* (Vilnius, 2010)); last year, one more book on the Baltic region appeared, a collection of articles in which works by four scholars from the Lithuanian Institute of History are published, *Obraz drugogo. Strany Baltii i Sovetskii Soiuz pered Vtoroi mirovoi voinoi* (Moscow, 2012).

² 32 documents from the 1944–1957 period, basically devoted to an illustration of the processes of the Estonian SSR government and Sovietisation, were published. Nevertheless, attention is drawn to the importance of regional documents, e.g. the totally secret notes of the Estonian SSR minister of the interior about the fight against the armed opposition in 1944–1953 (18–19 documents, pp. 360–371), the data of which reflects the extent of the resistance in Estonia, the measures of its suppression and its victims.

of the Soviet regime to the situation in the recently occupied territories. Apparently, they did not supplement the publication by accident, because the texts of the articles also show that the author tends to let documents, facts and statistical data 'speak for themselves', by narrating them in detail. The published documents supplement and extend the work of the author in a certain way, as they are not directly linked to the articles published in the first part of the book.

In the book, the author covers many important problems in the history of Estonia between 1944 and 1956, paying most attention to a chronologically short, but exceptional, period, the 'new national policy' of Lavrenty Beria, initiated in the spring–summer of 1953. After the war, Beria worked in the highest institutions of the Soviet government and the Party: he held the posts of interior minister (this ministry was united with the MGB, the Ministry of State Security) and of first deputy chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers. He was also a member of the CPSU CC and the CC Political Bureau. Shocking the other top–echelon players after Stalin's death on 5 March 1953, he began wide-ranging reforms that could have transformed and liberalised the regime. He did not have much time to implement this political line independently, as on 26 June that year he was arrested, and, according to official data, executed in December. According to the author, the 'warming' of the 1950s is mistakenly associated with Nikita Khrushchev, but the latter only prolonged the changes begun by Beria (p. 9).

As mentioned, the book analyses six interrelated themes: 1) The mechanisms of the central Soviet government, by which the Estonian SSR (most attention was directed to the Estonian CP(b) Central Committee Bureau, the functions of the Kremlin sent representatives to the republics – the Communist Party CC Second Secretaries, nomenclature lists) was ruled. 2) The actions of the security organs in suppressing the armed resistance in Estonia at the beginning of 1953 are investigated. 3) The efforts of Beria to suppress the armed resistance in the Baltics and Western Ukraine finally in the spring of 1953 (trying to involve resistance leaders and persecuted interwar politicians in the pacification process of the state's borderlands) are discussed. 4) The political changes after Stalin's death: Beria's 'new national policy' in Estonia in the spring and summer of 1953 is investigated. 5) The consequences in the USSR and Estonia of Beria's inspired amnesty in 1953 of deportees and prisoners are analysed. 6) How the situation in the Baltic countries changed after the condemnation of Stalin's personality cult in 1956 is investigated.

The short unfurling of the book's contents shows that, despite its title, the author devotes most attention to the situation in his homeland Estonia. The same principle has determined the selection and publication of the documents: of the 32, just two of them are related to Lithuania, and the same number to Latvia (both from 1944). Thus, the problems of

Latvia and Lithuania in the book are reflected very fragmentally, if broader sources were found (as the author of the book admits in the introduction, 'if possible', p. 5). True, the author uses both Latvian and Lithuanian historiography: he knows some of the works by Arvydas Anušauskas, Nijolė Gaškaitė-Žemaitienė, Vytautas Tininis, as well as the latter's published collections of documents. Similarly, having discovered sources, the author does not shy away from looking into the situation in Ukraine and Moldova. The rather incidental, but broad context of research into some questions provides an opportunity to compare the situation in Estonia and other republics of the USSR with the situation in Lithuania, and is perhaps the greatest advantage of the work.

Most of the issues analysed by Tannberg have gained particular attention in Lithuanian historiography, especially the mechanisms of the Sovietisation of the country, the efforts by the Soviet repressive structures to suppress the armed resistance in 1944–1953³. However, there are also new topics, highlighting Moscow's policy changes in the Baltic countries in 1953–1956. For example, one article is devoted to the amnesty (pp. 126–150) of minor offenders hastily initiated by Beria in March 1953 after the death of Stalin.

The author discusses in detail the consequences of the application of the strict laws of the criminal code throughout the USSR: in March 1953 in the labour camps, colonies and prisons of the state, there were more than 2.5 million people, including nearly half a million women and 400,000 old and incapacitated people, and more than 31,000 minors convicted for petty theft and hooliganism, etc (p. 127). By August, 1.32 million people were freed, so local governments throughout the USSR could hardly cope with the instruction by the Soviet authorities to help the amnestied find employment and to provide housing for them. According to the data of the author, about 9,200 amnestied persons returned to Estonia (p. 150). The problems of the Soviet authorities relating to those returning both in Estonia and Lithuania (here, by July 12 377 had returned⁴) were similar. Despite government pressure on the heads of factories and businesses (e.g. in Kaunas it was proposed to introduce two/three work shifts, to increase

³ The most important monographs are: J. Starkauskas, *Represinių struktūrų ir komunistų partijos bendradarbiavimas įtvirtinant okupacinį režimą Lietuvoje 1944–1953 m.* (Vilnius, 2007); idem, *KGB Lietuvoje: slaptojo veiklos bruožai* (Kaunas, 2008); idem, *Teroras, 1940–1958* (Vilnius, 2012); *Komunistinio režimo nusikaltimai Lietuvoje 1944–1953 m.*, comp. by V. Tininis (Vilnius, 2003); M. Pocius, *Kita mėnulio pusė: Lietuvos partizanų kova su kolaboravimu 1944–1953 metais* (Vilnius, 2009); and others.

⁴ The letter from the Lithuanian SSR MIA (Ministry of Internal Affairs) militia board head Eduardas Kisminas on 31 July 1953 to the head of the LCP CC administrative and commercial–financial bodies department head J. Jurgaitis, LYA LKP DS, f. 1771, ap. 133, b. 50, fo. 96.

production plans), they avoided employing those with a criminal record, even when they were qualified, and the local police refused to register them. As in other Soviet republics, after the amnesty in 1953, crime increased noticeably in Lithuania⁵.

Another interesting topic of Tannberg's work not analysed more broadly in Lithuanian historiography is the approach of the central Soviet authorities to the situation in the Baltic republics in 1956 after Khrushchev denounced Stalin's personality cult and the turmoil that arose in Hungary and Poland at the 20th Congress of the CPSU. The author emphasises that in preparing the report for the congress on the consequences of the personality cult, Khrushchev primarily sought to strengthen his position, and to push out of the political arena the old comrades of Stalin. The Kremlin did not expect such great resonance within the country and abroad, so soon measures were taken to stabilise the situation, and the number of people sentenced for 'counter-revolutionary' activities increased significantly (p. 183). One has to regret that the object of this article's research is only the year 1956, because the de-Stalinisation process in the Soviet Union was quite long and inconsistent. Only on 31 October 1961, after Stalin's remains were secretly removed at night from the mausoleum, were the last symbols of his personality cult finally abandoned (it is not known at what rate de-Stalinisation occurred in Estonia, but that 'last call' was received in Lithuania. Only in November 1961 were the names of the main avenues in Vilnius and Kaunas, and the newspapers and collective farms still with Stalin's name changed, and the monuments to Stalin dismantled).

Lithuanian historians should be interested in the segment of the book about the new methods for suppressing the armed resistance in Western Ukraine and the Baltic countries in 1953. With the help of historiography, the author reveals broadly Beria's widespread efforts through the security organs to establish in Western Ukraine a 'nationalist' organisation, and with its help to take over the leadership of the underground, the links with organisations of expatriates, foreign intelligence services, etc. At the same time, Ukraine's minister of the interior sought to open negotiations with the Ukrainian armed underground leader Vasilij Kuku, in exchange for the cessation of the resistance, offering amnesty, the return from exile of persecuted family members, and so on. According to Tannberg, the regime changed its course: not only to rely on repression, there were attempts to use the opportunity to negotiate with the opposition leadership (pp. 90–98). He saw an analogy with Beria's attempt to draw into the suppression of the armed underground process the Lithuanian partisan leader Jonas Žemaitis-Vytautas and Ferdinand Rei, the brother of the well-known Estonian politician August Rei (pp. 98–101). In Estonia in 1953, the possibility to

⁵ Ibid.; Letter from Lithuanian CP(b) Kaunas city committee secretary Kasnauskaitė on 7 July 1953 to LCP CC secretary A. Sniečkus, *ibid.*, fo. 86, etc.

form a new government was even probed, including in it 'known nationalists' released from the labour camps (pp. 101–102).

Tannberg's book shows that in Estonia, as in Lithuania, scholars researching the Soviet period essentially limit themselves to an analysis of Soviet government policies, and the functioning of the regime. This is understandable: with the opening up of the secret archives of the repressive institutions of the former USSR's central and republic governing bodies, historians are actively exploiting the new data. However, they reflect poorly the behaviour of the sovietised public, and leave open probably the most important question of this period of history: why did the Soviet regime fail to overcome the 'nationalist' mentality of the Baltic nations, and fell apart there so easily at the first real opportunity.

One should note that the reader of Tannberg's work will encounter some editorial flaws, making work with the book more burdensome. It does not have any indexes of personal and place names, so anyone interested in Lithuania and the players in the Lithuanian CP(b) will have to read all the text. The documents are published without comments and explanations, not fixing clear bugs (for example, when Lithuania's national guard [*šauliai*] are named '*pauliai*', p. 203). Since the book consists of separate articles, thus repetitions, identical texts are not avoided. One cannot fail to notice the straightforwardly used vocabulary: for example, the partisans, the 'forest brothers', are also called 'bandits' (without using quotation marks, pp. 70, 71), The 'counter-revolutionary crimes' in 1956 probably also merit quotation marks, as also do the politicians of the interwar period called 'nationalists' in the Soviet era.

Tannberg's book will undoubtedly be interesting and useful to Lithuanian historians, in some respects, allowing a comparison of the situation in the whole region. This well-documented research, relying on a multitude of statistical data, shows once again that the Stalinist regime's policy in the whole Baltic region was analogous, the regime encountered the same problems in administrating political and social life, and achieved similar results.

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