



Tonu Parming and Elmar Jarvesoo (eds.). Foreword by Edward Allworth. **A Case Study of a Soviet Republic: The Estonian SSR.** Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press.

Westview Special Studies on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Published with the cooperation of the Estonian Learned Society in America. Pp. 432. \$25.00.

This volume is without a doubt the single most important analytic and reference work on contemporary Estonia and significantly enriches Baltic and Soviet studies. Each of its thirteen original chapters is based on solid research and has been written by scholars of Estonian descent who are specialists in the areas they have analyzed. Significantly, all but one of them have obtained their doctorates outside Estonia and a majority are younger scholars with North American professional backgrounds.

In contrast to many other collective works, **A Case Study of a Soviet Republic** is a well organized and balanced volume, written in a generally readable way, with only negligible overlapping between individual essays. The editors have obviously been more than mere collators of prepared articles. They initiated the study, selected the contributors and most important, provided vigorous guidelines which required authors "to focus not on how things could or should be, but on how they are and why." One must agree that they have successfully avoided the pitfalls of "politically imbued scholarship" and have thus guaranteed the subject matter a much broader readership, especially among those who could most benefit from a clearer realization that Soviet studies are not synonymous with Russian studies.

A substantial foreword has been written by Professor Edward Allworth, a leading and widely published American specialist on Soviet nationality policy. According to Allworth, many factors augur well for the Estonian nationality in years ahead. However, his optimism about Estonia's present and future trends is not shared by many of the other contributors. The outline of Estonian population changes and processes by Parming describes a very precarious situation indeed. By his estimate, the percentage of Estonians in the republic might diminish to a mere 50 percent by 1990. The statistics offered in this chapter are far from heartening to any Estophile. Estonians form 85 percent of all those over sixty years of age, but only about 63 percent of those between ten and forty-nine years of age. Tallinn, the capital city, was only 56 percent Estonian in 1971 and there are entire districts in the North-East where Russians form the majority of the population. Other demographic patterns also leave little room for future optimism. Birth rates are extremely low. Abortion has become a widely practiced form of birth control and there are about thirty-nine divorces per hundred marriages a year.

Parming's study on the post-war population conditions and trends in Estonia is surprisingly free of jargonized phraseology, and, in spite of the highly statistical nature of the subject matter, is presented in flowing and clear style. His systematic summaries of the various components and contributing factors of demographic changes make his points easy to follow and are a relief from the commonly found obfuscating verbiage of many demographers and social scientists.

Rein Taagepera's chapter on nationalism, collaborationism and new-leftism highlights the fact that the proper path to national and individual salvation or even survival is less than clear and unequivocal. He provides numerous examples to support a contention that, rather than eroding away, Estonian cultural, economic, and political nationalism has become even more assertive during the last decade. As he states, "national culture is stronger and more Western-oriented than it was ten years ago." His treatment of collaboration represents a theoretical exploration of the subject rather than an analysis of actual conditions and practices. Nevertheless, this section is stimulating and rewarding because of its relevance for all subjugated peoples and political movements. The analysis of new-leftism or as Taagepera has dubbed it, "playing their game, only more so," uncovers several intriguing options for Estonian resistance. Unfortunately, much of the survey of actual new leftism in Estonia is impressionistic and based on unconvincing evidence.

Taagepera has presented material which points to vigorous and many faceted intellectual and ideological currents in Estonia. At the same time, he notes a growing pessimism and futility in the aspirations of the Estonian national elite, especially after the invasion of Czechoslovakia when "hope and enthusiasm were replaced by hopelessness and

dejection." At this point, both collaborationism and the attempt to work for national goals within the Soviet legal framework lost its "persuasive and unifying power."

Jaan Pennar has presented a brief but highly comprehensive historical and statistical overview of the Communist party in Estonia and has provided useful background information on Soviet nationality policy and its various phases during the present century. It was a revelation to find that the Red Army's Estonian Rifle Corps, formed in 1942, played such an important role in the post-war reconstruction and reorganization of Estonian society. According to Pennar, these "riflemen" are still prominent today: "a significant number of leaders in the Soviet Estonian elite, not only in the Communist party but also in the arts and professions were at one time or another associated with the Rifle Corps."

The chapter on post-war economic transformation by Emar Jarvesoo could stand as a monograph in its own right. Its sixty pages of detailed and qualitative analysis covering almost all imaginable aspects of the Estonian economic scene will certainly be a prime source of reference for serious Soviet scholars. Jarvesoo has provided an integrated review of Estonia's economy by beginning his analysis with the pre-war and wartime periods. He thus facilitated our understanding of the present-day Communist economic context and of the possible reasons for several major policy choices made by Moscow after the war. It is instructive to realize that Estonia's present status as the Soviet Union's most industrially advanced, and most urbanized republic, which enjoys the highest standard of living, is not very different in relative terms from 1940 when "in a relative sense it already held this position at the outset of the Soviet period."

Overall economic conditions are far less stringent than most people sending aid packages to Estonia commonly assume. While certain products and goods are expensive compared to North American prices, one has also to consider that personal taxes never surpass 13 percent, that housing is cheap although difficult to obtain, and that personal savings are relatively high. By Soviet standards, the Estonians live well. But deprivation is always seen in relative terms. The Estonians compare their lot with neighboring Finland and consider themselves poor cousins, as explained by Jarvesoo: "indeed if one compares the gap between the material standards of living in Estonia and Finland in 1939 with that of the present, it has apparently widened rather than closed."

It has often been claimed that man cannot live by bread alone; he also requires spiritual and intellectual nourishment. Vello Salo's detailed and excellent portrayal of the condition of religion in Estonia is the first of its kind and should be a spur for similar studies in other Soviet republics. In a very succinct and statistically based manner he outlines the past and present positions of the various faiths, their size and their degree of resistance to officially cultivated atheism. His most surprising discovery based on official sources and comments concerns the apparent general upswing of religious observances during the period 1944 to 1957 with apparently successful results.

After reading Reet Nurmburg-Howell's chapter on physical education and sports one can appreciate why it was included under the section of economic and societal processes. While "physical culture" covers physical education and sports, many of these activities are directly tied to overt processes of ideological socialization and the creation of the "new Soviet man." There is also another side to the program which has probably not been wholeheartedly supported by Moscow officials. As Nurmburg-Howell points out, "the simplicity of sport and its emotional appeal have made it one of the best means of expressing nationalism by the Estonians." Russian teams are jeered and non-Russian teams, particularly from Western countries, are cheered. Under the umbrella of physical culture, Estonians have also been able to protect their traditional folk games and even folk dances.

The section on culture includes three chapters. George Kurman summarizes almost four decades of Estonian literature; Mardi Valgema discusses the directions and quality of drama and theater arts and Gustav Rank delves into the extent and record of ethnographic studies. All these chapters are very entertaining and elucidating even to non-specialists. Kurman has done a magnificent job of systematic analysis of the ebb and flow of Estonian poetry and prose. But as in any such summary one is left with a good overview of the skeletal structure but not of the beauty of the subject. Moreover, for anyone unfamiliar with the standard Estonian names in literature, the text at times resembles a confusing bibliographic dictionary.

The remaining chapters on higher education, research and science appear to be very well written but not of a high degree of immediate relevance to Estonia's problems of survival. The overview of the structure of higher education and scientific research by Teodor Kunnapas and Elmar Jarvesoo contains a surprising amount of rarely available data. At the same time, one could have hoped for a more extensive analysis of the subject in terms of nationality and in comparison to other republics.

The overall theme of the book has been the uniqueness of Estonia. The extremely useful summaries of eight factors both by the editors and the author of the introduction explaining why the Estonian SSR is so different from other republics has set the tone for most of the contributors. In addition, the idea of "laboratory republic" raised in several chapters also helps to account for the many differences of Estonia. All of this may be true yet one is left wondering about how much independence in policy Estonia really has. Can it pass laws which are significantly different from all-union laws? Similarly, what effect did Soviet rule have on the cadres policies, on the use of Estonian language at work? What is happening in the realm of mixed marriages? Has Estonian language quantitatively suffered in the media and publications? Obviously no single book can attempt to cover everything about Estonia. The editors themselves suggest areas for future study. Hopefully, given the giant step forward taken here in the analysis of Estonia's development and role, the present volume

will encourage Western sovietologists in their work better to appreciate the importance of other republics besides the Russian in the Soviet Union.

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