

SUMMARY

*“Worse than the Bolshevist deportations”.
On the Situation of Slavic Minorities in
the Baltic Countries During the Time
of German Occupation 1941–1945*

The article draws attention to the Slavic minorities of the Baltic States during the German occupation, who found themselves in a rather ambiguous position. On the one hand, the German war against the Soviet Union has to be characterized as a racial war not only against the Jewish but, also to a large extent, against the Slavic population. On the other hand, the region of the Baltic States was treated by the Germans less violently in comparison to other occupied regions of the Soviet Union.

Taking the German labour policy as an example, the article argues that although the Germans officially treated the civil populations without differentiating between Slavic minorities and the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian populations, in reality there is profound reason to assert that such a difference existed in practice. The reason for such a contradiction, as this article argues, is of a structural nature. Whereas during the early stages of occupation, especially the higher German administration pursued policies influenced by the concept of the “Germanisation” of the so-called “valuable parts” of the population, during the second half of the occupation, the economic German war effort produced a strong demand for men able to work; thus, especially the Slavic population was seen as the solution to this problem.

A crucial role in this process was played by the indigenous local administrations that more often than not turned the German demands against the Slavic minorities, especially in the eastern regions of the Baltic states, where the percentage of Russians (in Estonia and Latvia) and Poles (in Lithuania) was high.