

behörden am konservativsten handelte, während die lettischen und litauischen Parteiführer deutlich weniger Zurückhaltung an den Tag legten.

Die Ereignisse in Polen und Ungarn fanden auch in den drei baltischen Sowjetrepubliken, vor allem aber in Litauen und in Estland eine recht starke Resonanz. Die Reaktionen in Baltikum wurden im Kreml als ernsthafte Gefahr aufgefasst und es besteht kein Zweifel, dass die dortigen Vorfälle die Zentralbehörden dazu angeregt haben, wieder einen repressiveren innenpolitischen Kurs einzuschlagen. Insgesamt war 1956 für das Baltikum jedoch kein besonderes Umbruchsjahr. Allerdings war die gewaltsame Unterdrückung des ungarischen Aufstands auch für die Esten, Letten und Litauer ein Zeichen dafür, dass sie bis auf weiteres mit dem Sowjetregime würden vorlieb nehmen müssen.

SUMMARY

The Baltic Question in the Kremlin in 1956

With reference to the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the year 1956 is one of the most important signposts in Soviet history after the war. In uncovering the personality cult of Stalin during a closed session of the Congress, Nikita Khrushchev did not seek first and foremost to present an honest evaluation of the Stalin era regime, but rather to secure his own position of power. However, it seems to have come as a surprise to the Kremlin authorities that this speech on Stalin's crimes met with such a great response in Soviet society as well as at the international level. This reaction had obviously not been taken into consideration and thus society was to be muzzled again, at least gradually. This led to an exertion of repressions sanctioned by the party during the latter part of the year in domestic affairs. In foreign politics the Kremlin went even further and in early November sent Soviet tanks to violently crush the Hungarians' pursuit of freedom.

1956 is also significant to the Baltic Soviet republics. Surprisingly enough, the principles of so called "new national politics" that had been in their initial stage in 1953 under Beria's short period of leadership still had not been disavowed. Thus, attention toward the local languages and promotion of national cadres to leading positions in the respective republics were still part of actual domestic policy. This seems to indicate that in 1953 Khrushchev himself had been one of the supporters of the "new national politics", although he never admitted it. Unlike in 1953, however, three years later there were no serious measures taken to implement these guidelines, although in a wider perspective only the purges in the Latvian party leadership during 1959 indicated the end of this more reser-

ved attitude of the centre to the national peripheries. A examination of the correspondence of the local party leaders with Moscow demonstrates that Estonian party leader Ivan Kābin was the most conservative in his attitudes, whereas his colleagues in Latvia and Lithuania, Kalnbērziņš and Sniečkus, had not only a lot more to say but displayed also a greater sense of openness concerning political affairs in their respective republics.

The events in Poland and Hungary elicited a wide response in the three Baltic Republics, especially in Lithuania and Estonia, mostly among students and the cultural elites. Moreover, these reactions in the Soviet Baltic societies were considered a serious threat in the Kremlin and led the party leadership to adopt a note "About nationalist and anti-Soviet phenomena in the Baltic republics". There is moreover no doubt that the Baltic reaction motivated the KPSU to exercise even more repressive methods. All in all, 1956 was definitely not a special revolutionary year for the Baltic. All the same, the suppression of the Hungarian uprising was a clear sign to the Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians that Soviet power would remain in force for the time being.