



Summer School of the Estonian Institute of Historical Memory 2022

When: 24–29 July 2022

Where: Tallinn, Estonia

For whom: History and civic studies teachers, educators, youth workers and history graduates

Apply here: <https://forms.gle/B4xQaDFJ7eGbon1UA>

Application period: 17.05–7.06.2022

Participants announced: 10.06.2022

The annual Summer School of the Estonian Institute of Historical Memory started in 2018. Its purpose was to show how totalitarian regimes (regardless to their name) function, how their rhetoric works, and why it may sound tempting to the masses, who are unaware of the consequences of offering simplified solutions to complicated issues. Estonia suffered under both the national socialist and communist occupation. Estonia's case shows how the outcome and aftermath of the Second World War is still affecting everyday life on personal as well as international levels.

On 17 June 1940, approximately 100,000 Soviet Union soldiers crossed the border of the Republic of Estonia. Estonia, as well as Latvia and Lithuania, were occupied. Vyacheslav Molotov, People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Union, and Joachim von Ribbentrop, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Nazi Germany, had decided to designate the Baltic states into the Soviet Union's sphere of influence already before the war on 23 August 1939. By signing the Treaty of Non-Aggression, the two totalitarian states also signed the treaty's Secret Protocol, which defined the spheres of influence in Eastern Europe.

The Soviet occupying regime initially tried to give the impression that what happened in the Baltic states was a domestic political shift and change of government. The parliament was dissolved under military pressure, and unlawful rigged elections were held. The formation of a new cabinet was supervised by Stalin's special envoy Andrei Zhdanov. Leftist intellectuals and collaborators became cabinet members in the new puppet government, based on Zhdanov's pre-approved list.

On 6 August 1940, Estonia's incorporation into the USSR was confirmed in Moscow, and all efforts to imitate independence ended. Formerly independent Estonia was strongly contested and shown in a negative light in all areas by the occupying regime.

Leading politicians, ministers, police officials, officers, leaders of the Defence League, and other figures of the free republic fell under the first wave of repressions. Many of them were

later killed. The terror of the first year of occupation culminated with the deportation of 14 June 1941, when approximately 10,000 people of Estonia's nearly 1 million population were detained. The vast majority of men (3000) were separated from their families and sent to the GULAG concentration camps. Their family members – women, children, and the elderly (7000) – were sent to starve and die in Siberia. Unfortunately, this was only the beginning of nearly 50 years of occupation horrors that followed.

Many people went into forests in order to hide themselves from the Soviet terror. After the war between the Soviet Union and Germany broke out on 22 June 1941, people that had gone into hiding gathered in resistance squads and managed to regain power (despite the scarcity of weapons) in many places across Estonia, before the German forces' arrival in Estonia. Although the Germans were rather seen as liberators in light of Soviet terror, the German occupying regime did not recognise the Estonians' endeavour to restore independence. Despite this, Estonian politicians kept the tradition of national continuity during the German occupation (1941–1944).

After the reoccupation of Estonia by the Soviet Union in 1944, Estonian politicians in exile became the keepers of Estonia's legal continuity. Most Western countries never recognised the occupation of the Baltic states. In several countries, Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian diplomatic missions continued their work, and in their embassies, the laws of the respective countries continued to be in force, their national flags were on display, and passports were issued that other countries accepted as a travel document.

In the Baltic countries, the Soviet occupying regime continued to commit war crimes and crimes against humanity in order to suppress resistance. This included imprisonments, executions, deportations, rapes, expropriation of assets, compulsory collectivisation, etc. The so-called soft repressive methods included the erasure of national historical memory, russification, persecution of intellectuals of the independence period, etc. All this was defined under the umbrella term of fighting against "bourgeois nationalism".

Over nearly half a century, Estonia lost a fifth of its 1 million population due to the Soviet occupation. The culmination of mass terror was yet another deportation in March 1949. More than 20,000 Estonians, mainly women, children, and the elderly, were deported to Siberia. This is a pattern that is repeated today in Ukraine.

On 20 August 1991, Estonia restored its independence. In 30 years, Estonia has become a full member amongst other democratic European nations that respect human rights. On the contrary, Russia has not evolved in that regard since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Not only does the Russian government refuse to condemn the crimes of communism; it also considers itself the legal successor of USSR's empire of terror, and continues the pattern of committing crimes against humanity and violations of international law.

The six-day programme of the Summer School intends to give the international audience an overview (in English) of Estonian 20th century history described above. Through lectures, films, tours, discussions, and workshops, we are also focusing on conflicts between different ideological narratives in history lessons that teachers must cope with.

Participation in the Summer School is free of charge, including food and accommodation (participants are accommodated in twin rooms based on gender). Participants do need to cover their own travel costs.

The application deadline is 7 June 2022. The participants will be announced on 10 June.

For further questions do not hesitate to contact Ms. Eli Pilve, eli.pilve@mnemosyne.ee.