



## The image of the Baltic German elites in twentieth-century Estonian historiography: The 1930s vs. the 1970s

Toivo U. Raun

To cite this article: Toivo U. Raun (1999) The image of the Baltic German elites in twentieth-century Estonian historiography: The 1930s vs. the 1970s, *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 30:4, 338-351, DOI: [10.1080/01629779900000161](https://doi.org/10.1080/01629779900000161)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01629779900000161>



Published online: 28 Feb 2007.



[Submit your article to this journal](#)



Article views: 79



[View related articles](#)



Citing articles: 1 [View citing articles](#)

## THE IMAGE OF THE BALTIC GERMAN ELITES IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY ESTONIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY: THE 1930s VS. THE 1970s

*Toivo U. Raun, Indiana University*

Historiography in the Estonian language, especially as practiced by professional historians, has a relatively short history. In this strict sense it extends no further back than the first period of Estonian independence during the two inter-war decades. To be sure, writing about Estonian history in Estonian -- and produced by individuals who identified themselves as Estonians -- began to appear by the national awakening of the 1860s, but it remained the work of amateur historians who lacked professional training. The quality of these writings certainly improved from the time of Jakob Hurt in the 1860s and 1870s to that of Villem Reiman in the early twentieth century, but they are most appropriately seen as the prologue to the more substantial historiography of the post-World War I era. Tartu (Dorpat) University, already established in 1632 during the period of Swedish rule in Estonia, was a distinguished institution of higher learning, but the study of Estonian language and culture had virtually no place there before 1919. In the nineteenth century, instruction was in German until the 1890s and then in Russian until the end of the tsarist regime. The study of Estonian was only supported by a low-level lectureship, and all attempts to establish one or more professorships in Estonian studies were turned back by the university or tsarist authorities (Raun, "The Role" 140-41). During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the professional investigation of the past in Estonia was dominated by Baltic German historians, much of whose work was at a high level when judged by the standards of the time, but whose output focused rather narrowly on the historical role of the Baltic German elites (Liiv, "Eesti ajaloo uurimise" 300).

As the end of the twentieth century approaches, it seems appropriate to assess the evolution of Estonian historiography during the past seven or eight decades, especially since it is a topic that has not been studied in sufficient depth to date.<sup>1</sup> It is certainly not coincidental that the writing of history in Estonia during this century has mirrored the shifting political tides that the country has been subject to, i.e., two initial decades of independence, followed by war and occupation, full-blown Stalinism, a post-Stalin thaw with strong ideological controls still in place, and finally the restoration of independence in the 1990s. Thus, one finds a considerable amount of discontinuity and fragmentation in

the approaches to the past in the period since the 1920s, although perhaps not as much as might be expected. In order to make a start on exploring this issue, if only on a limited scale, the current article will offer a comparison of the approaches taken by certain leading Estonian historians during two key periods of the twentieth century: (1) the 1930s, by far the most productive years of the inter-war era, and (2) the 1970s, a time when the new postwar generation of historians in Soviet-ruled Estonia was reaching full maturity.

We will focus on studies from both decades that treat the same significant topics in modern Estonian history -- the social unrest of the 1840s, the national movement of the 1860s-1880s, and the period of revolution and emergence of Estonian independence, 1917-1920, and we will use the depiction of the Baltic German elites in these works as a vehicle of comparison. Among the issues to be raised in the discussion are the following: To what extent is there continuity in the approaches or does the hegemonic existence of a nationalist paradigm in the 1930s and a Marxist one in the 1970s preclude this? Traditional Baltic German historiography emphasized the *Kulturträger* role of the German presence in Estonia. To what extent do Estonian historians recognize a positive or constructive role played by the Baltic Germans? How nuanced is the picture of the Baltic German elites that emerges? Are they depicted only in terms of relatively faceless categories, e.g., "large landowners" (*mõisnik*) or the "bourgeoisie," or is a more differentiated view, including the role of specific individuals, offered?

When Tartu University was reestablished in late 1919 by the Republic of Estonia as a national institution with Estonian as the language of instruction, there were no ethnic Estonian historians of sufficient stature to undertake the task of training a body of new scholars in the discipline of history. Although the number of Estonians with higher education had grown rapidly in the waning decades of the tsarist regime, very few had studied history as a major. In 1915, a survey of alumni and current university students identified only thirty-seven historians (fourteen alumni and twenty-three students) among the 1,460 names listed (Kivimäe and Kivimäe, "Estnische Geschichtsforschung" 277-78). In this situation, the Tartu University authorities found a felicitous solution by inviting the highly able Finnish historian Arno Rafael Cederberg (1885-1948) to serve as the first Professor of Estonian and Nordic History. Cederberg, who worked in Tartu in the years 1919-1928, has received nearly universal praise, by Estonian and Baltic German scholars alike, for his role in developing and training the first generation of professional Estonian historians.<sup>2</sup> In addition to the strong analytical skills he imparted to his students, Cederberg is also credited with fostering broad perspectives among Estonian historians and

discouraging a narrowly nationalist approach to the Estonian past (von zur Mühlen 343). Given his background and interests, it is not surprising that Cederberg especially encouraged the study of Estonia's ties with Scandinavia and the period of Swedish rule, i.e., the seventeenth century, in Estonia. It is noteworthy that four of the five PhD dissertations in history defended at Tartu University during the inter-war years dealt with Estonia's Swedish era (Kivimäe and Kivimäe, "Estnische Geschichtsforschung" 292). The opening to Scandinavia also added a new and fresh approach to historical research in Estonia, previously dominated by those practiced in the German and Russian cultural worlds (Liiv, "Eesti ajaloo uurimise" 301).

Under Cederberg's leadership, a firm basis for the professional study of history was established at Tartu University during the 1920s. The Academic Historical Society (*Akadeemiline Ajaloo-Selts*), founded by Cederberg and others at the university already in 1920, served as the central organization for promoting historical research and the creation of a community of scholars, both faculty and students, interested in history as a discipline, especially through its lecture series during the academic year (Kivimäe and Kivimäe, "Estnische Geschichtsforschung" 282-84). Among the various publications supported by the Academic Historical Society, the most important was *Ajalooline Ajakiri* (Historical Journal), published in the years 1922-1940, once again on Cederberg's initiative and clearly modeled on its Finnish forerunner, *Historiallinen Aikakauskirja* (Historical Journal, founded in 1903) and similarly named publications in Scandinavia. A review of the contents of *Ajalooline Ajakiri* during its nearly two decades of existence suggests a successful and professional journal focusing on original research on the history of Estonia with considerable attention paid to the publication of sources, archival issues, and book reviews.<sup>3</sup>

The training of the first generation of Estonian historians obviously required an initial investment of time in the 1920s, but it is striking that thirteen of the sixteen MA degrees in Estonian and Nordic history during the two inter-war decades came in the years 1927-1934 while four of the five PhDs, all in Estonian history, were completed in the first half of the 1930s, including three in 1931 alone. As noted above, the period of Swedish rule in Estonia dominated the topics of study, but medieval and local history were also well represented (Kivimäe and Kivimäe, "Estnische Geschichtsforschung" 290-91). In contrast to the situation in neighbouring Latvia, where the Baltic Germans set up a separate centre of higher learning from the University of Latvia (the Herder-Institut in Riga), in Estonia, both Estonians and Baltic Germans were able to make use of Tartu University as a common institution. Although there was considerable disagreement on approaches to historical study, the

opportunities for dialogue and interaction remained open (von zur Mühlen 340, 350-51).

The completion of the transition to an Estonian-led historical scholarship was symbolized by the naming of Hans Kruus (1891-1976) as Cederberg's successor as Professor of Estonian and Nordic History at Tartu University in 1931 following the successful defense of his doctoral dissertation. Kruus proved to be the most productive scholar working on nineteenth-century Estonian history during the 1930s, publishing two major monographs (Kruus, *Talurahva käärimine*, Kruus, *Eesti Aleksandrikool*) and a series of important articles, mainly in *Ajalooline Ajakiri*, of which he became editor in 1932. He also found time to write a survey of Estonian history that appeared in both German and French (Kruus, *Grundriss*, Kruus, *Histoire*). Perhaps most importantly, he served as editor-in-chief of a projected five-volume history of Estonia, *Eesti ajalugu* (A History of Estonia), of which three volumes appeared in the years 1935-1940, covering the period up to the end of the seventeenth century.<sup>4</sup>

In view of his leadership position in the developing Estonian historical community, it was natural that Kruus would play a formative role in the evolution of a specifically Estonian approach to the past. In an article published in Finland in 1933, Kruus argued that Baltic German historiography had simply ignored the role of the native Baltic peoples, i.e., the Estonians, Latvians, and Livonians, while concentrating almost solely on the Baltic German elites and the history of their institutions. Furthermore, he viewed the continuing emphasis on a Baltic German *Kulturträger* role, i.e., the alleged bringing of civilization and a higher culture to the Baltic region, as nothing more than an apology for previous German hegemony in Estonia (Kruus, "Eestinistoriantutkimuksen" 232-33). Otto Liiv, who defended his dissertation on economic conditions in Estonia in the early seventeenth century (Liiv, *Die wirtschaftliche Lage*) at Tartu University in 1935, offered a similar critique, arguing that not all Estonian cultural advances should be seen as mere borrowings from a German model, although he was also careful to point out that there was no denying the key role of German cultural influence. What was needed was a balance between the two extremes on this issue. Liiv also noted that a national (*rahvuslik*) interpretation of history had become the norm in the Europe of the 1930s, e.g., Germany, Finland, Latvia, and Poland. In Estonia, there was increasing recognition, said Liiv, that Estonian history was above all the history of the Estonian people and the region it occupied, while also taking into account Baltic German contributions (Liiv, "Eesti ajalouurimise" 300, 302-03). It is striking that both Kruus and Liiv called for an aggressive Estonian scholarship (Liiv even used the term "militant" [*võitlev*]) to

combat the prevailing tendentious Baltic German interpretation of the Estonian past (Kruus, "Eestin historiantutkimuksen" 233; Liiv, "Eesti ajalooourimise" 303). Above all, the Estonian people needed to become the subject of history and not merely a sideshow in the larger panorama of historical development.

Let us now turn to an assessment of the image of the Baltic German elites in some leading examples of Estonian historiography in the 1930s. In addition to Kruus's work, we will look at that of two non-historians, Friedebert Tuglas (1886-1971) and Eduard Laaman (1888-1941), both of whom published important monographs during this decade. As noted above, the new generation of professional historians focused heavily on Estonian history before the nineteenth century, and it is thus not surprising that the treatment of the more recent past included useful contributions by "outsiders." Tuglas, who never completed his secondary education because of participation in the Revolution of 1905, became one of the preeminent stylists of the Estonian language, a major literary critic, and the editor of Estonia's leading literary journal, *Looming* (Creation) (O. Kruus 614-16). Born in an Estonian settlement in the Crimea and educated in law at the University of St. Petersburg, Laaman only moved to Estonia in his twenties and pursued a career as a journalist, first with the fledgling Estonian government and later as editor-in-chief of the newspaper *Vaba Maa* (Free Land) in the years 1923-1938. A prolific writer, he published extensively on Estonian foreign policy and domestic affairs (O. Kruus 263; Arens 217-18).

With his doctoral dissertation, *Talurahva käärimine Lõuna-Eestis XIX sajandi 40-ndail aastail* (Ferment Among the Peasantry of Southern Estonia in the 1840s), Hans Kruus broke new ground by asserting that the peasant unrest of this decade, which included widespread conversion to Russian Orthodoxy, was purely a social movement aimed at improving the economic and legal position of the rural population (402). In contrast, the dominant Baltic German interpretation, expressed by Alexander von Tobien, among others, while not denying the causal role of economic factors such as poor harvests, took a conspiratorial view of the conversion movement, arguing that it was artificially created by outside agitation, i.e., by Russian officials, with the political motive of separating the Baltic peasantry from the local German elites (33). In Kruus' view the key factor in explaining the depth of the peasant unrest, which also encompassed northern Latvia (southern Livland), was the mistrust and enmity the peasants felt for the Baltic German nobility and clergy, passed on from generation to generation (48-49, 293, 404). Although he recognizes a division into conservatives and liberals among the nobility with regard to agrarian reform, Kruus also suggests that the noble landowners took a considerably harder line against the peasantry

than did the pastors, some of whom openly sided with the peasant argument that the recent increase in the *corvée* was to blame for much of their troubles. In addition, the lines of communication between the clergy and the peasantry remained more open, and some pastors with close ties to their peasant parishioners were able to sharply limit the Orthodox conversion movement in their local areas (116-17, 236). Kruus concludes by arguing that the conversion movement brought an important new cultural pluralism to Estonia and helped to free the Estonian people from the “reactionary influence” of the Lutheran Church (409).

In two other works from the decade of the 1930s, Kruus, while focusing once again on the Estonian people as the subject of his study, provided additional insights into his views of the Baltic German elites. In both *Eesti Aleksandrikool* (The Estonian Alexander School) (1939) and *Grundriss der Geschichte des estnischen Volkes* (1932), he stresses the cultural gulf between the German nobility and clergy, on the one hand, and the Estonian masses and even their educated representatives, on the other. In the case of the Alexander School movement, a planned secondary school with Estonian as the language of instruction, Kruus argues that the Baltic German pastors found the initiative pointless since they did not believe that an independent Estonian high culture was possible (Kruus 1939, 64). At first, opposition by the German clergy did have a dampening effect on fund-raising efforts for the Alexander School, but eventually the unyieldingly negative German attitude only served to mobilize the Estonian side (62). Indeed, says Kruus, this shortsighted opposition backfired on the Germans since it also destroyed the pro-German attitude of many moderate Estonians (237). In the *Grundriss* the author notes the corporate narrowness of the Baltic German *Ritterschaften* and their desire to maintain political power in the hands of a tiny elite at all costs. In the crisis of the 1840s, the nobility was only goaded into accepting reform by the threat of central government intervention (30-31, 88-90). On a more positive note, Kruus does cite the important role of German critics of serfdom in the Baltic Provinces, including Eisen, Jannau, Merkel, and Petri, who served as pastors and tutors in the region and did much to help spread Enlightenment ideas (50-53).

In 1932, Tuglas published a major monograph on one of the leading institutional initiatives of the nineteenth-century national movement, the Society of Estonian Literati (*Eesti Kirjameeste Selts*), an organization founded in 1871 that promoted the publication of educational literature, the development of the written language, and the collection of Estonian folklore, among other goals. Tuglas' emphasis is on the internal development of the society, especially the rivalries and internecine

warfare that contributed to its demise in 1893. Nevertheless, the Baltic Germans as the hegemonic elites often enter into the picture. The author recognizes the significant role of literary and educational efforts by Baltic German pastors in preparing the ground for the emergence of the Estonian national movement, although few had any idea where their modest promotion of Estonian culture might lead (18). However, his view of the German nobility and clergy during the latter decades of the nineteenth century is distinctly negative, and he agrees with Kruus that they remained unwilling to make any real concessions to the Estonian national movement (84-85). At one point, when criticizing the actions of Jakob Hurt, president of the society in the 1870s, Tuglas refers to the Baltic Germans as the “hereditary enemies” (*põlisvaenlased*) of the Estonians (137). One of the most important contributions of Tuglas’ study is his elucidation of the fateful split in the national movement between moderates, led by Hurt, and radicals, led by Carl Robert Jakobson. Of particular interest is his extensive discussion of the relations between the moderates, whose leaders, like Hurt, tended to be recently ordained pastors (as Estonians finally began to make inroads into the ranks of the clergy), and the well-established Baltic German clergy and church hierarchy.<sup>5</sup> Tuglas argues that Hurt and other moderates failed to provide leadership and stake out their own ideological position that would have clearly distinguished them from both the Estonian radicals and the Baltic German pastors. In his view Hurt deferred to the German clergy and thus acted against the interests of the national movement (36-37, 94-95, 129-30, 137).

Laaman’s *Eesti iseseisvuse sünn* (The Birth of Estonian Independence), published in six parts in 1936-1938, brings us into the twentieth century and the recent past. This massive tome would have benefited from careful editing, but it remains an important chronicle of Estonia’s road to independence in the larger international context. Laaman notes that the Baltic Germans faced the outbreak of World War I with strongly mixed emotions. Although they declared their loyalty to the Russian tsar and state, their sense of identity included a growing dose of German nationalism, especially in the wake of the Revolution of 1905 (58). During the upheavals of 1917-1920, the Baltic Germans appeared most prominently on the historical stage during the Imperial German military occupation of Estonia in February-November 1918, a time when they could openly express their proclivities. In Laaman’s view the Baltic German elites had learned very little in the previous half-century, and as late as 1918 they assumed that they could turn the clock back to the time before the Estonian national awakening. They regarded the Estonians as too immature for political independence, and the region could be quite quickly Germanized with appropriate immigration and

educational policies (192, 263). A Baltic German memorandum of May 1918 still denied the possibility of an Estonian or Latvian *Kultursprache*: “We reject linguistic parity in principle because it places the artificially developed Estonian-Latvian culture alongside the great German world culture” (296). Following the defeat of Germany and the extinguishing of Baltic German hopes for direct political ties to the Reich, the Baltic Germans take on a low profile in Laaman’s narrative until the so-called Landeswehr war in mid-1919 in which Estonian forces defeated Baltic German ones in northern Latvia. As Laaman puts it, “In ten days or so the fate of the Landeswehr as well as that of the Baltic Germans was decided” (549).

With the eclipse of the Republic of Estonia through military occupation and forced annexation to the Soviet Union in 1940, Estonian historians shared the fate of their nation. Perhaps drawing on his past activity as a left-wing socialist (but not communist), Kruus agreed to serve as deputy prime minister in the “people’s government” in 1940-1941 while also acting as rector of Tartu University. Following voluntary exile in the interior of the Soviet Union during 1941-1944, he became foreign minister of the Estonian SSR as well as president of its Academy of Sciences. Nevertheless, he was arrested as a “bourgeois nationalist” in October 1950 and spent the next three years and three months in jail in Moscow’s Lubianka prison (Klaassen x-xii). Rehabilitated in the post-Stalin era, Kruus did write two volumes of memoirs, but his creative period as an historian was over. Despite a left-wing past of his own, including revolutionary activity in 1905 and long years of exile before 1917, Tuglas also fell victim to the repression of the late Stalin era. He was expelled from the Union of Writers in 1950, and his previous works were removed from circulation (O. Kruus 614-15). Most tragically, Laaman was arrested by the Soviet authorities already in February 1941 and executed the same year while in captivity in Russia (O. Kruus 263).

For the historical profession as a whole, World War II brought similar upheavals. A number of leading historians, e.g., Arnold Soom (1900-1977), who received the last history PhD granted at Tartu University in independent Estonia (May 1940) and Evald Blumfeldt (1902-1981), went into exile in the West, while many who remained were subjected to repression, e.g., Peeter Tarvel -- until 1935 Peter Treiberg (1894-1953), who was arrested by both the Germans and the Soviets. The periods of initial Sovietization and German occupation were too short and chaotic to have had any lasting impact on historical research, but in the postwar years, the Soviet Marxist paradigm was applied to the history of Estonia and became the norm for practicing historians. Characteristic of the Stalinist era, however, was the emphasis

on the un-Marxist notion of a “great friendship” between Russians and non-Russians (Helme 146, 150-54; Tillet 86-87; Weiss 135). Nevertheless, the post-Stalin era witnessed the beginnings of a cultural thaw, affording historians as well the opportunity for more serious research. A new postwar generation of historians emerged who learned to pay appropriate respect to the official norms, but also to pursue the agenda of their own research. The strong tradition of agrarian history, begun by Kruus in the interwar era, was continued by such historians as Juhan Kahk (1928-1998), Herbert Ligi (1928-1990), and Enn Tarvel (b. 1932), and able historical demographers such as Heldur Palli (b. 1928) and Sulev Vahtre (b. 1926) produced important studies of population movements in Estonia (Kivimäe, “Re-Writing” 209-10).

Let us now look at the treatment of the Baltic German elites in several key historical works from the second decade of our survey, the 1970s, a time when representatives of the postwar generation of historians were producing some of their most mature works. Unlike the case in the 1930s, in the Soviet context there was no place for amateur historians, and it is not accidental that all three historians discussed below were employed in the Institute of History of the Estonian SSR’s Academy of Sciences, the most prestigious centre for historical research in Estonia at the time. In addition to the work of Kahk, a specialist on the agrarian history of the first half of the nineteenth century, we will also look at that of Ea Jansen (b. 1921) and Karl Siilivask (b. 1927). Jansen became the leading historian in Estonia working on various aspects of the Estonian national movement in the second half of the nineteenth century, while Siilivask was a recognized specialist on the Estonian experience during the period of the Russian Revolution and its aftermath.

Juhan Kahk’s *Murrangulised neljakümnendad* (The Decisive Forties) seeks to explain the moving forces behind the agrarian policy of the 1840s in Estonia, a time of great social upheaval, already documented by Kruus’ 1930 dissertation, which Kahk cites as the best existing work on the subject (20). Thus, much more than for Kruus, who focused on the social history of the peasantry, the Baltic German nobility plays a central role in Kahk’s study. The author finds a yawning social gap between lord and peasant that is clearly unbridgeable since the nobility regarded the Estonian peasantry as coarse, inherently lazy, and worthy of disdain (84, 127, 174). Kahk suggests that the Baltic German landowners acted rationally to further their own class interests, making, for example, clever use of the tsarist regime’s fear of revolution in the 1840s to limit the scope of the impending agrarian reform (201), but like Kruus, he argues that the nobility had to be forced into even minor concessions by pressure from the central government (139-40). Kahk

also seeks to debunk the standard Baltic German view of Hamilkar von Fölkersahm as the heroic leader of agrarian reform in this period, suggesting that Fölkersahm remained throughout a stout defender of the class interests of the nobility and that under his leadership the new Livland agrarian law of the late 1840s took a form least favourable to the peasantry, i.e., one that required no regulation of peasant obligations to the large landowners (88, 150). On the other hand, although the author clearly finds a reactionary majority among the Baltic German nobility, he also notes the existence of minority views that were quite progressive. For example, some landowners did understand that economic factors and legal restrictions contributed to the peasant unrest, and others were well aware of agrarian legislation elsewhere in Europe and sought to apply this experience for the benefit of the nobility and the peasantry alike (61-62, 143).

Ea Jansen's *C. R. Jakobsoni "Sakala"* is a thorough study of Jakobson's newspaper (*Sakala* is the traditional name of the region around Viljandi in southern Estonia), which appeared under his editorship in the years 1878-1882 as the first consciously political publication in the history of the Estonian press. His agenda, including above all a call for the introduction of *zemstvo* institutions into the Baltic Provinces with equal representation for the Germans and Estonians, seemed especially audacious to the Baltic German establishment, and Jansen highlights the wide-ranging attacks on Jakobson by both the clergy, who were incensed by his anticlericalism, and the nobility (83, 85, 92-93). In her discussion of the Baltic German elites, Jansen also mentions the bourgeoisie in passing, but the *Ritterschaften* remained the most powerful political force in the land and "held fast to its medieval power with unbelievable stubbornness" (17, 321). The Lutheran pastors were subordinate to the nobility and served as tools for the maintenance of their privileged class position (155). Interestingly, Jansen argues that Estonians of all classes and strata suffered "national oppression" from "the nobility and large bourgeoisie of a foreign nationality" (16). Thus, she stresses that research on the Estonian national movement in the latter part of the nineteenth century is not "nationalistic-sentimental rummaging" in the past, but a necessary inquiry into the historical stage of capitalism when nations and classes were intertwined in a complex manner (7).

Karl Siilivask's *Veebruarist oktoobrini 1917* (From February to October 1917), the published version of his doctoral dissertation, focuses on "how the Estonian working class under the leadership of the Bolshevik Party went from the bourgeois-democratic revolution to the socialist one" (6). As such, it crosses the great divide in Soviet historiography, i.e., the period since the Russian Revolution of 1917,

where the presence of strong ideological baggage is obligatory. In contrast to Laaman's study, the role of the Baltic German elites in Siilivask's volume is especially peripheral since they presumably entered the "dustbin of history" already in February 1917. For example, with regard to the issue of local government reform after the fall of the tsar, Siilivask notes that the organs of self-government of the Baltic German nobility were so reactionary that their further use, even if reformed, could not be considered (126). The Baltic German burghers are discussed in the context of new municipal elections in 1917, but because of the new democratic franchise, their role is very minor. Like Jansen, Siilivask argues that the entire Estonian people were under "national pressure" from the Baltic Germans, but he also claims that the Estonian bourgeoisie put its class interests first and sought cooperation with the Russian bourgeoisie and the Baltic German nobility (47-48).

In conclusion, it remains to offer some comparative remarks on the treatment of the Baltic German elites in the historiography of the 1930s and the 1970s. Despite the paradigmatic shift from an organizing principle based on the nation to one based on class struggle, there is a striking amount of continuity in the image of the Baltic Germans in the historical literature of these two decades. For all authors, the Baltic German elites represent the reactionary status quo in the region and are seen as the "enemy" of the rising Estonians, regardless of whether the focus in a given work is on the national or the social struggle. Virtually all the historians discussed stress that from the 1840s to the establishment of Estonian independence, the nobility -- the preeminent political force in the land -- maintained an unyielding grip on power and refused to make any significant concessions. If anything, the *Ritterschaften* are seen as increasingly intractable as the Russian Revolution approached. Some authors (Kruus, Kahk, Jansen) emphasize the social gap between lord and peasant, based on centuries of unequal relations, while others (Laaman, Kruus) also note the cultural gulf, i.e., the Baltic German view that Estonian cultural achievements could never rise above a peasant level, thus rendering improbable any notion of partnership or cooperation as equals.

There is some acknowledgement of Baltic German contributions to Estonian development, especially the impact of the clergy as critics of serfdom (Kruus) and supporters of vernacular literature and education (Tuglas). Nevertheless, any sort of *Kulturträger* role is greatly scaled down in comparison to the image projected in traditional Baltic German historiography. In most cases, since the Baltic Germans are not the primary concern of these authors, they tend to be depicted in an undifferentiated manner. Only Kahk, who deals extensively with the issue of agrarian policy, provides a relatively nuanced view of various

members of the landowning nobility. It is also noteworthy that despite its well-known role as a powerful urban patriciate, the Baltic German bourgeoisie is only mentioned in passing by historians from either of the decades under review here.

Although it is beyond the scope of this article, it can be briefly noted in closing that the *glasnost*' era and especially the post-communist decade of the 1990s have witnessed the beginning of a fundamental shift in the treatment of the Baltic German elites in Estonian historiography. No longer seen as the "enemy," their forced departure from Estonia in 1939 has been viewed with sympathy and understanding (Kivimäe, "Raske lahkumine"), and Tiit Rosenberg has suggested that the traditional view of the Baltic baron as the merciless exploiter of the Estonian and Latvian peasantry is now obsolete. Instead, he calls for a new approach that would seek to appreciate the Baltic German nobility in all its variety and to develop an appropriately differentiated picture of this complex social group (12).

#### Notes

1. Occasional overviews appeared in the 1930s, e.g., Taube, "Estnische Geschichtsschreibung;" Kruus, "Eestin historiantutkimuksen;" Liiv, "Eesti ajalooourimise;" and Taube, "Estnische Geschichtsforschung." For the first half of the Soviet era, as well as some treatment of earlier historiography, see the volume edited by Laul. In the 1990s there has been a revival of interest in historiographical questions; see, e.g., Helme, Kivimäe and Kivimäe, "Hans Kruus;" Jansen, "Hajamõtteid;" and Kivimäe, "Re-Writing"
2. See, for example, Liiv, "Eesti ajalooourimise" 301; Kivimäe and Kivimäe, "Estnische Geschichtsforschung" 280; Kruus, "Eestin historiantutkimuksen" 234-35; von zur Mühlen 343; and Taube, "Estnische Geschichtsschreibung" 155. Tartu University also invited several other Finnish scholars to hold professorships in various aspects of Estonian studies since the same problem of lack of trained personnel existed in other disciplines as well.
3. A thorough thematic index of *Ajalooline Ajakiri* is available at the home page of the Department of History at Tartu University: <<http://www.history.ee>>
4. Hans Kruus, ed., *Eesti ajalugu*, 3 vols. (Tartu: Eesti Kirjanduse Selts, 1935-1940). A competing attempt at a comprehensive history of Estonia -- Juhan Libe, August Oinas, Hendrik Sepp, and Juhan Vasar, eds., *Eesti rahva ajalugu* (A History of the Estonian People), 3 vols. (Tartu: Loodus, 1932-1937) -- also remained unfinished, although its coverage extended to the mid-nineteenth century. Both contemporary and later observers agree that Kruus' history was more scholarly and balanced. See, for example, Taube, *Estnische Geschichtsschreibung* 55-56; Helme 143-44.

5. As late as 1909, Estonians comprised only 13 percent of the Lutheran pastors in Estland and 29 percent of those in northern Livland (Raun, *Estonia* 94).

### Works Cited

- Arens, Olavi. "Eduard Laaman as a Historian." *Baltic History*. Eds. Arvids Ziedonis, Jr., William L. Winter, and Mardi Valgemäe. Columbus, Ohio: Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies, 1974. 217-26.
- Helme, Rein. "Die estnische Historiographie." *Zwischen Konfrontation und Kompromiss*. Ed. Michael Garleff. Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1995. 139-54.
- Jansen, Ea. *C.R. Jakobsoni "Sakala"*. Tallinn: Eesti Raamat, 1971.
- . "Hajamõtteid Eesti ajaloo uurimisest." *Kleio* 1 (1997): 35-41.
- Kahk, Juhan. *Murrangulised neljakümnendad*. Tallinn: Eesti Raamat, 1978.
- Kivimäe, Jüri. "Raske lahkumine." *Looming* 9 (1989): 1242-50.
- . "Re-Writing Estonian History?" *National History and Identity*. Ed. Michael Branch. Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 1999. 205-12.
- Kivimäe, Jüri, and Sirje Kivimäe. "Estnische Geschichtsforschung an der Universität Tartu (1920-1940)." *Die Universitäten Dorpat/Tartu, Riga und Wilna/Vilnius 1579-1979*. Eds. Gert von Pistohlkors, Toivo U. Raun, and Paul Kaegbein. Cologne: Böhlau, 1987. 277-92.
- . "Hans Kruus und die deutsch-estnische Kontroverse." *Zwischen Konfrontation und Kompromiss*. Ed. Michael Garleff. Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1995. 155-70.
- Klaassen, A., ed. *Hans Kruus: Personaalnimestik*. Tallinn: Eesti NSV Teaduste Akadeemia Teaduslik Raamatukogu, 1988.
- Kruus, Hans. *Talurahva käärimine Lõuna-Eestis XIX sajandi 40-ndail aastail*. Tartu: Eesti Kirjanduse Selts, 1930.
- . *Grundriss der Geschichte des estnischen Volkes*. Tartu: Akadeemiline Kooperatiiv, 1932.
- . "Eestin historiantutkimuksen kehitys ja nykyinen tila." *Historiallinen Aikakauskirja* 31 (1933): 232-43.
- . *Histoire de l'Estonie*. Paris: Payot, 1935.
- , ed. *Eesti ajalugu*. 3 vols. Tartu: Eesti Kirjanduse Selts, 1935-1940.
- . *Eesti Aleksandrikool*. Tartu: Noor-Eesti, 1939.
- Kruus, Oskar, ed. *Eesti kirjarahva leksikon*. Tallinn: Eesti Raamat, 1995.
- Laaman, Eduard. *Eesti iseseisvuse süünd*. Stockholm: Vaba Eesti, 1964; first published, 1936-1938.
- Laul, Endel, ed. *Leninlik etapp eesti ajalooteaduses*. Tallinn: Eesti Raamat, 1970.
- Libe, Juhan, and August Oinas, Hendrik Sepp, and Juhan Vasar, eds. *Eesti rahva ajalugu*. 3 vols. Tartu: Loodus, 1932-1937.

- Liiv, Otto. *Die wirtschaftliche Lage des estnischen Gebietes am Ausgang des XVII Jahrhunderts, I: Allgemeine Überblick, Getreideproduktion und Getreidehandel*. Tartu: Õpetatud Eesti Selts, 1935.
- . "Eesti ajaloo uurimise sihist ja sisust." *Akadeemia* 2 (1938): 299-303.
- Raun, Toivo U. "The Role of Tartu University in Estonian Society and Culture, 1860-1914." *Die Universitäten Dorpat/Tartu, Riga und Wilna/Vilnius 1579-1979*. Eds. Gert von Pistohlkors, Toivo U. Raun, and Paul Kaegbein. Köln: Böhlau, 1987. 123-42.
- . *Estonia and the Estonians*. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1991.
- Rosenberg, Tiit. "Liphartid Liivimaa mõisnikena, I." *Kleio* 9 (1994): 12-15.
- Siilivask, Karl. *Veebruarist oktoobrini 1917*. Tallinn: Eesti Raamat, 1972.
- Taube, Arved. "Die estnische Geschichtsschreibung an der Universität Dorpat (Tartu) in den Jahren 1930-1932." *Baltische Monatshefte* (1933): 26-41, 148-56.
- . "Estnische Geschichtsforschung und Geschichtsschreibung." *Jomsburg* 2 (1938): 45-61.
- Tillett, Lowell. *The Great Friendship: Soviet Historians on the Non-Russian Nationalities*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969.
- Tuglas, Friedebert. *Eesti Kirjameeste Selts*. Tallinn: Eesti Riiklik Kirjastus, 1958; first published, 1932.
- von zur Mühlen, Heinz. "Die deutschbaltische Geschichtsschreibung 1918-1939/45 in Estland." *Geschichte der deutschbaltischen Geschichtsschreibung*. Ed. Georg von Rauch. Cologne: Böhlau, 1986. 339-69.
- Weiss, Hellmuth. "Zum Geschichtsbewusstsein in den baltischen Ländern." *Geschichtsbewusstsein in Ostmitteleuropa*. Eds. Ernst Birke and Eugen Lemberg. Marburg a.d. Lahn: N.G. Elwert, 1961. 131-38.