

Matthias Schröder, *Deutschbaltische SS-Führer und Andrej Vlasov, 1942–1945*, Paderborn 2001, Ferdinand Schöningh, 256 pp.

The book deals with questions closely connected with Poland's history, with World War II and Nazi policy in the East. This is a doctoral dissertation presented at the University of Münster in 2000 and written under the guidance of Professor Wolfgang Jacobmeyer, a specialist in Poland's contemporary history. The dissertation presents the leaders of the *Baltendeutsche* (mainly from Riga) active in the service of national socialism and the Third Reich. The two main leaders of the Baltic Germans' Nazi movement were Erhard Kroeger (1905–1987) and Friedrich Buchardt (1909–1982). After the outbreak of the war Kroeger, who started working in the SS even before the war, became leader (*Landesleiter*) of the Baltic Germans, this time in the Reich, where the Baltic Germans were to be transferred in accordance with Hitler's 1939 agreement with Moscow. He was active mainly in the annexed Polish territories, Warthegau and Pomerania, where some *Baltendeutsche* were settled in places left by the expelled Poles, an operation which he tried to justify in public even twenty years after the war. After the attack on the USSR, Kroeger, as a member of the *Einsatzgruppe C*, committed many murders and carried out mass executions all along the route from Dobromil and Lviv to Dniepropetrovsk and Krivoi Rog. He may have taken part in the ill-famed execution of Jews in Babi Yar. Buchardt settled in Germany in 1934; he worked in Königsberg and in the Wannsee Institut in Berlin which was engaged in Eastern studies. From 1939 he was engaged in the eviction of Poles and Jews from the Warthegau and the settlement of the Baltic Germans there. In June 1941 Buchardt took part in the genocidal activities of *Einsatzgruppen*, in the murders and robberies in Smolensk and in the neighbourhood of Moscow, where he was to work after the expected capture of the Soviet capital; in 1943–44 he commanded *Einsatzkommando 9* in Minsk and Vitebsk. He then worked as an *Ostspecialist* in Himmler's office, RSHA (Central Office for the Security of the Reich).

The second part of the book deals with the two "heroes'" further activities: their attempts to use Andrei Vlasov and his army for military and political purposes in the Third Reich's war against the USSR. Andrei Vlasov and his activity come to the fore in this part of the book. Unlike Hitler and Himmler, the former leaders of the *Baltendeutsche*, employed as "Eastern experts", regarded Vlasov not only as a useful tool for propaganda; they suggested that he and his army should be made use of as the basic military force against Stalin's Russia. This would have meant a change in German policy towards the eastern *Untermenschen* from the USSR but not towards the Poles. Buchardt objected to the idea of using General Bór-Komorowski as "a Polish Vlasov" after the Warsaw Uprising. But the rulers of the Third Reich decided to increase recruitment into the Vlasov army when it was already too late for Nazi Germany to be saved with his help; besides, until the end Hitler refused to treat Vlasov as a full-fledged ally. *Rußland kann nur von Russen besiegt werden*, wrote Kroeger and Buchardt (these words are the subtitle of the book), but racial policy and the future Great German Empire up to the Urals were for Hitler the most important aims, in accordance with the principles laid down in the *Generalplan Ost*.

The postwar fate of the two Baltic leaders gives food for thought. After the war they both passed over to the American (partly also British) intelligence service and under its umbrella could, like tens of thousands of their colleagues, survive the difficult period; when the cold war came, all serious investigations into the activities of former Nazis were forgotten. Most of the documents concerning this period have not yet been made accessible to historians. However, in the 1960s Kroeger was brought up before a court in Tübingen and sentenced to three years in prison for his participation in 90 murders in Dobromil (a small fraction of his "achievements"). Until the end the two Baltic leaders did not change their Nazi views, which did not handicap their life in West German society.

The inquisitiveness of the younger generation of German historians who expose the shameful Nazi past of German society and foreign minority groups such as the *Baltendeutsche* deserves full respect, for research work of this kind seems to be frequently treated in Germany, as well as in Poland, as anachronous and untimely. The postwar fate of Kroeger, Buchardt and thousands of their colleagues shows that circumstances, political interests and the world balance of power can radically change the evaluation of even to the worst crimes.

Let us add that Schröder's book is based on rich German, American and (to a small extent) also Polish archival materials, on materials from many collections of documents, typescripts, manuscripts and photocopies, on an extremely large amount of printed sources and rich literature, mainly in German and English.

*Janusz Żarnowski*