

The Baltic Defence College with the Estonian War Museum —
General Laidoner Museum calls for papers and panel proposals to



ANNUAL BALTIC MILITARY HISTORY CONFERENCE 2021:

War Summer 1941 in the Baltic Countries:
Objectives, Strategies and Operations of
the Opposing Sides, Results and Consequences

on 21st and 22nd September 2021 at the University of Tartu Library



In June 2021, 80 years will have passed since the beginning of military action of the WW II on the territories of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. The time frames of the warfare in the Baltics stretch from 22 June 1941 when Germany started offensive operations, to 21 October 1941 when the Wehrmacht 61st Infantry Division took the Island of Hiiumaa. In the context of the war at sea, it can be stretched to early December when the Soviet Baltic Fleet evacuated the naval bases of Osmussaar and Hanko to Kronstadt and Leningrad.

The actual beginning of the war for Lithuanians, Latvians and Estonians is the autumn of 1939. On 23 August 1939, Germany and the Soviet Union signed a non-aggression pact including a secret protocol for dividing Eastern Europe into spheres of influence. In September Poland was crushed and by the end of the month, the USSR forced treaties of mutual assistance on the Baltic states. Red Army and Baltic Fleet bases were built in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia and the USSR took the Baltic coast from the border of East Prussia to Narva River under its control. After the Finnish Winter War, the whole of the Gulf of Finland was under USSR control — a Baltic Fleet base was built on the Peninsula of Hanko. In June 1940 the USSR threatened the Baltic states with military invasion and the governments of the three countries submitted to its ultimatum. The Soviet Union occupied and annexed the Baltic states and incorporated them in August of the same year as the republics of the union.

World War II on the Eastern Front, including the territories of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania saw the collision of the two superpowers, two totalitarian ideological dictatorships which deprived the smaller nations between them, who were forced into war, the opportunities to defend their national interests. In the last 30 years Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia have focused their historical debates on their attempts and efforts to re-establish independence and on the crimes against humanity that were committed on the territories of the Baltic states during and after World War II. These also reflect the realignment of the general approach to the history of World War II in the Baltics. Warfare as such, has moved to the background and a preference for the individual over the general could have caused inaccurate opinions about the capabilities and opportunities and even the prospects for the future.

The aim of the conference is to study the warfare that took place 80 years ago on the territories of three Baltic states, both from the point of view of strategy and tactics. We would like to discuss the following topics in more detail:

1. The impact of the geopolitical situation on the strategies of the opposing parties on the territories of the Baltic states: goals, opportunities, obstacles and outcome.
2. The role and impact of political and military leadership during the summer campaign 1941 and German occupation.
3. Operational art and operations: the Wehrmacht offensive and the withdrawal of the Red Army and the Baltic Fleet; The Baltic Sea and the Gulf of Finland as war zones in 1941.
4. The role and cooperation of the combat arms and services in defence and offensive operations: roles of air force and navy, land forces.
5. Role of the Forest Brothers and irregular warfare during 1941 in the Baltics.
6. Propaganda and contemporary memory: winning hearts and minds next to war propaganda and terror, Weltanschauungskrieg (The war of worldviews).
7. Social impact of the war: mobilization, the evacuation of human and material resources to the Soviet rear area.

Please send an abstract of up to 4,000 characters and a brief, one-page CV in English by 15 June 2021 to conference@esm.ee or/and milhist@baltdefcol.org. The length of presentations will be 20 minutes plus discussion. Articles based on presentations will be published in the Estonian Yearbook of Military History of 2021. This conference is the 11th annual Conference on Baltic Military History of the Baltic Defence College, and the 12th international military history conference of the Estonian War Museum — General Laidoner Museum.

Information about Covid-19: The organizers are aware of the challenges ahead and will monitor the situation as it progresses. We hope to have passed the pandemic by the time of our Conference. If any challenges occur the organizers will do their best to cope with them in an efficient and timely manner. Additional measures will be taken as per guidance of the host nation government and leading up to the conference the participants will be given an overview of the situation in Estonia (and Tartu). Contingency plan will be in place and there is a possibility to make Online conference presentation.

