



Bad Baltic Takes @BadBalticTakes Thu Mar 09 05:59:24 +0000 2023

79 years ago today, Tallinn was devastated by Soviet bombs that primarily & deliberately targeted homes & cultural landmarks.

Let's talk about what happened (with then & now pics) ...and why it strengthened Estonia's determination to rebuild its independent nation. ■ <https://t.co/5cBhucCQnD>



If you visit Tallinn today, the scale of the devastation is difficult to imagine while strolling the mostly postcard-perfect Old Town.

But take a look below your feet. Those seemingly odd pavement patterns are actually where buildings stood until 9 March 1944. <https://t.co/dtDk1xF52S>



Around a quarter of Tallinn was destroyed, almost overnight. Up to 300 Red Army aircraft were involved and their primary targets were residential districts, as well as cultural landmarks, including the national theatre, a church and a synagogue, hospitals, cinemas and hotels. <https://t.co/R404bsd0ZE>



Flares were dropped first to ensure these targets were clearly visible to bombers. To ensure maximum devastation, Soviet saboteurs on the ground had already snuck in early to blow up the water pumping stations needed by fire brigades. <https://t.co/5TLCdPd3v2>



More than 600 civilians were killed, around the same number were injured, more than 20,000 became instantly homeless – and a mass exodus from the country to escape further attacks would begin.

The Estonia Theatre was a key symbol of Estonian culture and where the first Estonian parliament had convened after the country declared independence in 1918. It was utterly destroyed. <https://t.co/JfZxTGlvVh>



As the attack began, the first Estonian ballet, “Kratt” – based on old Estonian mythology – was on stage. Actors run out into the street, still in their devilish costumes while the city burned around them. The spectacle would be seared into Estonia’s collective memory. <https://t.co/28j9jLUgsk>



Bombs also hit the iconic St. Nicholas' Church, obliterating almost everything inside, including its ornate pews, pulpit, balconies and epitaphs. <https://t.co/nNXXjfAhSi>



The tragedy really began in August 1939 when Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union together signed what they called their “non-aggression pact”. Yet it contained a secret protocol to aggressively tear up international law and divide sovereign European nations between them, beginning... <https://twitter.com/i/web/status/1633713475590422529>

The Estonian town of Narva was the first to face mass Soviet bombings in February. The entirety of the town was near totally destroyed.

After the Nazi retreat, Estonians raised their own flag once again and re-affirmed their independence in the hope that the world war would eventually end with the restoration of all pre-war territorial integrity. However, the Soviets continued bombing. <https://t.co/wdEadioClq>

Ready to Die for Liberty

Tiny Estonia to Declare War on U. S. S. R. as Well as on Reich

By NAT A. BARROWS

(Exclusive to the Boston Globe)

STOCKHOLM, July 31 (CDN)—

One of the strangest dramas in all the war is about to unfold in the tiny Baltic country of Estonia, as Soviet troops relentlessly smash against two trapped German armies.

Estonian patriots in the "underground parliament" have formally and impartially declared war against both Germany and Russia. Imbued with a fierce and unquenchable desire for independence they are willing to die in an attempt to restore Estonia to the status of a free republic such as this northernmost Baltic state enjoyed between 1918 and 1939.

The formal announcement of this complicated declaration of war will be made Monday night in Stockholm by Estonian Minister to Sweden Heinrici Laretei on behalf of the "National Committee for the Salvation of Estonia," now already holding sessions somewhere in the forest of Estonia across from Finland.

It will be explained at conference in the Strand Hotel that free Estonians will fight Russians and Germans alike as a supreme gesture of their love of liberty. They are prepared to die rather than submit to incorporation again into the Soviet Union, or into any other nation.

This underground parliament,

which is made up of selected officials active in the capital city of Tallinn until 1939, claims to have the support of two divisions of Estonian Nationalist troops estimated at between 30,000 and 40,000 men, now fighting the Red Army push into Estonia and also the support of a large number of Partisans of the "Green Guard" at present harrying the Germans behind the lines, especially Nazi efforts to carry off Estonian literary and art treasures.

These free Estonians know that it is a futile move. They know that nothing will halt the Russian advance into Estonia and the other two Baltic states of Latvia and Lithuania. They know that it is a quick way to suicide.

But their hatred of the Germans is equal to their fear of Russian intentions. They are willing to die or at least court death as a way of dramatizing their attempt to revive the status of independence which Estonia lost when the Soviet Union incorporated the country into the Russian political scene five years ago.

Your correspondent learns in Stockholm that both Latvia and Lithuania are contemplating moves similar to the National Committee for the Salvation of Estonia, operating through committees already established in those countries.

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The advancing Soviets tore down flags of Estonia and would continue their brutal occupation of the Baltic countries – as originally agreed with the Nazis – for nearly half a century more, unleashing more repression against civilians, including scaling up its mass deportations. <https://t.co/OykG84XLvV>



While the Soviets initially dropped leaflets after their bombs to justify the destruction, they fell immediately silent on the topic after their own occupation resumed.

Any talk of the bombings was heavily censored. Even the dead weren't left to rest. At Liiva cemetery, the...
<https://twitter.com/i/web/status/1633714555057471488>

Below, a woman in 1944 stands amid ruins looking up the street at what was left of St. Nicholas' Church. Behind her are the ruins of houses, which would be left empty for decades until that spot was rebuilt as the Estonian Writer's Union, which would also serve as a home to... <https://twitter.com/i/web/status/1633714913913761792>
<https://t.co/4UUjS4vfpW>



Kross focused on themes of state censorship and repression. On the surface, his stories often focused on the historical relationship between Estonians and their feudal overlords, but Estonians knew that it could also be read as a critique of ongoing historical oppression, such as... <https://twitter.com/i/web/status/1633715180080095234>
<https://t.co/dRYVoVZKg2>



Mythologies grew up around the March bombings, mostly centred on the Estonia Theatre. When it was rebuilt, trees were planted around it, and the people of Tallinn began to whisper that when the trees would reach full life then Estonia would be liberated from Soviet occupation.

One aspect of the tragedy was unknown to Estonians at the time of the bombings, however. While Estonians opposed both Soviet and Nazi occupations, the fact that both powers had originally colluded together to agree the Soviet occupation was kept hidden for decades. After the... <https://twitter.com/i/web/status/1633715788317065216>
<https://t.co/Z3ibFGMjiq>



The same tactics are failing today in Ukraine where civilian bombings – and even the return of mass deportations – have strengthened Ukraine’s determination to resist as a unified independent nation. As Estonia has shown, that sentiment won’t diminish even generations later.

Tallinn is illuminated with fire again every 9 March as night falls, but the flames these days are from hundreds of candles placed where buildings once stood and families once lived, ensuring they will never be forgotten.
<https://t.co/xQFGG9GmEU>

