

Foreword

Most Americans remember the Second World War as the good war. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, and the German declaration of war against the United States that followed a few days later served to unify Americans around the need to defeat Japanese militarism and Nazi aggression. Americans made many sacrifices and more than 400,000 would be killed in this war, but the continental United States would be spared a direct enemy attack. A nation gripped by a decade of Depression emerged as a veritable arsenal of democracy for the Allied cause. The war produced a full-employment economy, allowing the bottom half of the U.S. population to gain a greater share of the national wealth. The United States together with her Allies forced both Japan and Germany to surrender unconditionally.

For Latvia, the good war narrative simply will not work. As Val Lumanns documents in *Latvia in World War II*, the Second World War devastated this small Baltic nation. Even before the war began, Latvia's republic gave way in 1934 to a dictatorship vainly struggling to maintain the country's autonomy in the face of the growing power of the Soviet Union and Germany. Under the terms of the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact of 1939, Hitler gave his blessings to Stalin's plans to annex Latvia and her sister republics, Lithuania and Estonia, into the Soviet Union. In 1940, Soviet troops marched into Latvia and the other Baltic republics, meeting little resistance. In order to stifle any resistance and purge bourgeois elements, Stalin's secret police rounded up scores of Latvians for execution or imprisonment. When Hitler attacked the Soviet Union in June 1941, Latvia was quickly conquered by German troops. Many Latvians suffered grievously under German rule, especially the Jewish communities, which were almost entirely obliterated by the Nazi Holocaust. Moreover, the Second World War spawned deep divisions among Latvians. Some Latvians gladly collaborated with the German occupation even by helping round up and killing Jews for their Nazi overlords. Others linked their

fortunes and fought bravely for the Soviet Union. Liberation by the Soviet Union in 1945 remained an ambiguous affair as many Latvian nationalists found their hopes for independence dashed and a wave of repression aimed at collaborators and opponents of Stalin's rule. Even after V-E Day the fighting in Latvia did not completely stop as scattered bands of anti-Communists continued to attack Soviet troops into the early 1950s. Not until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 would Latvia regain independence.

Valdis Lumans's study is long overdue, especially given the flowering of historical writing that occurred in Latvia in the 1990s. This book will be the first comprehensive account of the political, economic, social, diplomatic, and military history of Latvia in the Second World War. For scholars, especially those who study the Baltic States and Eastern Europe in the Second World War, it will provide an invaluable synthesis of the existing scholarship for Latvia. For the general reader, *Latvia in World War II* will contribute to better understanding the global history of this conflict and offer a sobering perspective of the Second World War.

Latvia in World War II will be the first in a series of monographs published by Fordham University Press examining the impact of the Second World War on the countries engulfed by the conflict. In the case of some countries like Latvia, much of the relevant scholarship is not in English and is inaccessible to all but a small circle of scholars. Next to appear in the series will be Thomas Christofferson's account of France during the Second World War. Christofferson's work is a sorely needed addition to the literature and will offer a new and exciting synthesis of France. Much like Latvia, France would also be conquered by Germany, but France's story would be far different, especially after 1945. Christofferson's study promises to overturn some well-worn myths about France, especially the degree of French collaboration with the Nazis. Christofferson's study and comprehensive histories planned for Hungary, Brazil, and Germany will fill an important gap in the scholarship of the Second World War.

Given the global nature of the Second World War, we anticipate it will take at least a decade to commission and publish works dealing with the more than eighty countries affected by this conflict. We anticipate bringing out comprehensive accounts of all the countries engaged at war—as well as such neutral nations as Portugal, Switzerland, and Sweden. Along with publishing works dealing with nations at war, Fordham's series is committed to including a broad range of monographs, as well as mem-

oirs, autobiographies, and other works dealing with the global, human, and ethical dimension of the Second World War.

G. Kurt Piehler

Series Editor

World War II: The Global, Human, and Ethical
Dimension