Abstract
I plan to compare and contrast the policies of Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union towards the indigenous inhabitants of the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. During the reign of Emperor Alexander II and his successors, the Baltic region underwent a period of administrative, cultural, and linguistic Russification, driven by often inconsistent policy decisions. Following a brief and turbulent period of independence from 1918 to 1940, the Baltic states were occupied by the Soviet Union, whose nationalities policy both encouraged ethnic particularism and harshly punished “bourgeois” nationalism. The seemingly contradictory approaches taken by Imperial Russia and the USSR help explain the course of Baltic independence.