The Baltic Sea Region: Northern Dimensions – European Perspectives
Die Ostseeregion: Nördliche Dimensionen – Europäische Perspektiven

Born into a Dream

EuroFaculty and the Council of the Baltic Sea States

Gustav N. Kristensen

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INTRODUCTORY REMARK

The Baltic Sea Region: Northern Dimensions – European Perspectives is an academic publication series devoted to the publishing of scholarly anthologies and monographs which present research results mostly from political/social sciences and history. Seen against this background the book you hold in your hands is in a certain way an exception from that rule.

The series editor and sub-editor of this series have found Gustav Kristensen's semi-autobiographical book on the history of the EuroFaculty to be not only highly readable but also to be a primary source of most original character. Only seldom do actors involved in transnational academic co-operation provide such a multifaceted insight into their own work – we found it hard to think of a text that could be compared to Kristensen's. Furthermore, it does not reach the public decades after the events, but while the author's and the readers' memories of the time covered here still are rather fresh. Without over-stretching the aims of the author and while avoiding to overestimate what one can »learn from history«, it is our conviction that Gustav Kristensen's book offers a lot of thoughts and hints from which anyone involved in academic co-operation across between (former) East and West and engaged in collaboration in the Baltic states and in the Baltic Sea Region can draw valuable consequences.

BERND HENNINGSEN · JAN HECKER-STAMPEHL
Berlin, March 2010

Foreword

Freedom for the Baltic states was a widespread dream for millions of people in Northern Europe and Northern America from the end of the Second World War. When freedom came to the Baltic states, it was like a miracle, and the willingness to help the Baltic states in their first difficult years was great

This book describes the difficult fight in the Baltic states for the double goal of democracy and market economy, and the progresses made.

A lot of help came from abroad, and the outcome was very successful. This book, however, also reveals the weaknesses in the ability among western democratic countries to cooperate multinationally on a voluntary basis, even when they wanted to cooperate.

The weaknesses were related to two organizational structures. The old, and in many ways outdated, European system of Ministries of Foreign Affairs and the immaturity of the emerging new European Union system.

At the suggestion of the German Minister of Foreign Affairs Hans-Dietrich Genscher the newly established Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) decided to establish a »Euro-faculty« to reform the Baltic universities.

The EuroFaculty successfully attracted a large number of outstanding students to its programs and made a significant impact on the Baltic university system. This happened in the turmoil of newly regained freedom.

Thus, this book tells the history of the EuroFaculty within this complex of the colorful Baltic history 1990–2005.

In the pell-mell battle of the EuroFaculty nothing was as prescribed in the textbooks. Theoretical training can sharpen our judgment; but apart from this we cannot learn anything new from theory, only from life. EuroFaculty was life.

The successes and the respect the EuroFaculty won were created in a process mixed with failures, embarrassment, and even despair. The disappointments of missed opportunities – many obviously so near and so easy to grasp – gave wounds on the soul and times best forgotten.

However, the reasons to remember are that marvelous joy of victory that follows the overcoming of great difficulties, the pleasure of looking back on the powerful streams that leaded you, and finally the excitement of seeing the great lines of progress without bothering about the details.

Part 1 in this book tells about the dreams of freedom and the perception of a rich historical and cultural inheritance of the Baltic Sea area.

It tells about how freedom was obtained in the Baltic states and the dangers derived from the rapid transition with deep economic crises, crimes, freezing cold winters, epidemic diseases, and a growing chilly awareness of the lack of the most severely needed institutions to survive as a democratic nation based on a market economy.

Part 1 also tells about Franz Peter Küpper from the European Commission, a noble-minded idealist, who saved the idea about creating a »Euro-faculty«, and who guided the EuroFaculty to its EU support in the first years.

Part 2 tells the story about how the robust Estonian-Canadian Professor Toivo Miljan started the EuroFaculty from the very bottom, and how he ended up being forced away by the European Commission because of his anti-bureaucratic attitude.

New waves changed the rules, and the idea that the EU would support the EuroFaculty in line with the Baltic Sea donor countries was subsequently derailed, and the search for EU support was stepwise turned into a Kafkan process.

Part 3 is the story about his successor, the conscientious Norwegian Professor Arild Saether.

During his time as director real academic progress became visible as the EuroFaculty students performed brilliantly and the EuroFaculty was gaining increasing prestige.

However, Arild Saether was hooked up on a Sisyphus fight with the many-headed donor corps composed of national states, which, good in will, but weak in action, made his job feel impossible to cope with and to implement.

In Part 4, the EuroFaculty had been recognized as the strongest institution for substantial pan-Baltic cooperation. It was my fortune, as director of a mature and successful EuroFaculty, to see the fruits of what good people systematically had build up during many years.

It was likewise my fortune to experience the awakening genius of the Baltic people. Visible for me of course in the successes of the EuroFaculty graduates internationally and at home, but visible for everybody who saw the rise of the Baltic cities from dilapidation to new beauties, a wonder which became the most wonderful symphony ever played in the Baltic states

The moral of this history of the Council of the Baltic Sea States and the EuroFaculty is that it is our shared dreams, more than anything else, which manage international cooperation and determine its success.

GUSTAV N. KRISTENSEN
Odense, April 2010

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Finally I have enjoyed the pleasant and comprehensive cooperation with my sharp minded colleagues Lene Holbæk and Mona Andersen in forming the language.

For all errors and opinions expressed in this book I take the full responsibility.

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Introduction

On a sunny Sunday afternoon when I was five years old, I was reading a children's book together with my mother. The book showed wonderful pictures of people wearing traditional national costumes from different countries.

Deeply fascinated by the beautiful people I remember asking:

»Mother are Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania real countries?«

»Yes,« she answered.

My father looked up from his newspaper, and they started a discussion.

I did not understand what they were talking about, but I did not care. I was dreaming about those beautiful people in the book.

* * *

When I started to write this book, about regained freedom, the working title was: *Managing International Cooperation*. However, over time I realized that management was not what did the trick. Each actor in this book had so short a period »on stage« that the effect of the individual effort became negligible in the entire process.

Gradually I became more and more convinced that the successful recovery of the Baltic states as well as the success of the EuroFaculty were not based on well-organized international cooperation or on rational management of a common plan, but on a common dream shared by thousands of nameless people.

Dreams manage our will. Dreams manage policy. Dreams are the driving force behind history. Dreams, when they collide with the realities of life, create history which again inspires, encourages, and creates new dreams.

Our dreams are what build bridges, opera houses, castles. Re-erect fallen towns and nations. Dreams even decide the color of our banner.

Human nature has the inherent inclination to dream about all that is good: love, beauty, wisdom, truth, faithfulness, strength, tolerance, and freedom. Over

time, our dreams of justice form the laws, divide the power, and create understanding of human rights.

Therefore, our dreams – in spite of declines during some decades – nevertheless furnish the good development of history over centuries.

Thousands of people like me dreamed of seeing the Baltic states flourish by the genius of its people in freedom and prosperity.

Even if we did not know each other, even if we did not communicate in advance, we were, nevertheless, all born into the same dream, which became our great organizer and finally led us to the achievement of that wonderful goal.

That is what it means to be born into a dream.

Part 1.
Changing Winds

Chapter 1. Freedom

It all began when the leader of the Lithuanian Communist Party Algirdas Mykolas Brazauskas, a political talent and great statesman, in December 1989 declared the Lithuanian Communist Party independent of Moscow, and consequently declared that he would start a political process which was to lead to the independence of Lithuania from the Soviet Union.

FREE ELECTIONS

Lithuania

On February 24, 1990, Lithuania had its first democratic election since the Sovjet occupation started in 1940. For 50 years Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania had been under heavy psychological pressure from the Communist Party which got its power from the Soviet military.

At that time, the independence movement »the People's Front«, *Sajudis*, under the leadership of the music professor Vytautas Landsbergis, had started its political activities. It was broadly composed of different political groupings and supported independent candidates as well as candidates from all parties that supported independence including the reformed Communist Party.

Only the small Moscow-oriented communist party that materialized when the bulk of the Communist Party reformed itself was against independence.

Almost all independent candidates and about half of the communist candidates were actually supported by Sajudis. Sajudis won, and Algimantas Cekuolis, a leading member of the Communist Party and a Sajudis-supporter, called the outcome a landslide victory for Sajudis.

Vytautas Landsbergis was elected Chairman of the Supreme Council (de facto president), in competition with Algirdas Mykolas Brazauskas.

Just before the election day, Brazauskas had said that he would start negotiations with Moscow on the republic's exit from the Soviet Union. However, he would use a stepwise procedure, and many Sajudis-supporters feared that he »was not firm enough« in his support of independence and he thereby lost their support. As the leader of the reformed communists Brazauskas formed and headed the Democratic Labor Party.

The symbols were changed in Lithuania. The banner and national song from Lithuania's time as an independent state (1918–1940) were reintroduced. Vilnius' main-street was renamed from Lenin avenue to Gedimino prospect – after an ancient Lithuanian duke.

On March 11, 1990, the 141 member big parliament confirmed the law that was first passed on February 16, 1918, and in which Lithuania was declared independent. The Lithuanian annexation by the Soviet Union in 1940 was declared illegal.

Likewise, the parliament reintroduced the constitution of 1938, which had been suspended as a result of the Soviet occupation.

Kazimiera Prunskiene, a professor in economics who stood behind the plan for Lithuania's transition to economic autonomy (actually initiated from January 1, 1990), was appointed Prime Minister. She was a member of the independent Lithuanian Communist Party's leadership.

Algirdas Saudargas was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs.

In Germany the conservative-liberal government headed by Bundeskanzler Helmut Kohl and Minister of Foreign Affairs Hans-Dietrich Genscher took a cautious position in relation to the Baltic independence process. The Berlin wall had fallen but Germany was not yet reunited.

The Swedish Council for Foreign Policy stated that Sweden had a long-established practice for the recognition of states: »The state shall have a bordered territory and a population controlled by the government. The government shall be in control of its territory.« As this was not the case for Lithuania, Sweden could not recognize Lithuania as an independent state.

In 1990 Denmark was ruled by a conservative-liberal government headed by Prime Minister Poul Schlüter and Minister of Foreign Affairs Uffe Ellemann-Jensen. Uffe Ellemann-Jensen had replaced Henning Christophersen as chairman of the Liberal Party, as Henning Christophersen had become the Danish EU-commissioner.

The conservative-liberal coalition did not have the 90 seats in the Parliament necessary for a majority, so the opposition was occasionally nicknamed »the ruling opposition«. The stability of the Schlüter – Ellemann-Jensen government was to a large extent based on Schlüter's personal friendship with Niels Helveg Petersen, the leader of the small social-liberal party, which was in opposition.

Uffe Ellemann-Jensen had started his career as a pert TV journalist. His frank and open-minded style had made him both a colorful and popular leader of his

party and brought him a couple of parliamentary reprimands (»noses« as they were called in public) from the ruling opposition.

Members of the opposition encouraged the conservative-liberal government to open a Danish embassy or consulate in Lithuania, after the newly elected Lithuanian parliament had endorsed the declaration that re-established the independence of Lithuania.

However, Uffe Ellemann-Jensen wanted to wait. »Denmark has always recognized Lithuania as an independent state and we welcome the process of democratization in the Baltic republics,« he stated. »Denmark recognized Lithuania as independent state in 1921. Denmark has never legally recognized the annexation of Lithuania by the Soviet Union in 1940.«

For Norway and Iceland the situation was the same.

As Denmark, Norway and Iceland are small states who can act more freely in the international diplomacy than bigger nations, and as they never had recognized the Soviet annexation of the Baltic states, they were in a unique situation to support the Baltic independence movement.

Latvia

The Republic of Latvia existed as an independent state from November 18, 1918 until June 17, 1940, when Soviet troops invaded the country. On July 21, 1940, Latvia was occupied by the Soviet Union and annexed under the name: The Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR).

At the Soviet occupation, 77% of the population in Latvia were Latvians. In 1990 this number had declined to 50%. In the capital, Riga, Latvians made up only about 33% of the population.

Anatolijs Gorbunovs was elected »President of the Supreme Council of Latvia« in 1988, as the leader of the Latvian Communist Party, which shortly after severed its links with Moscow. Unilateral independence, subject to a transition period, was likewise declared, and alternative political parties were permitted in Latvia from the beginning of 1990.

In Latvia the independence movement was organized in the Latvian Popular Front (Latvijas Tautas Fronts) with Dainis Ivans as chairman.

On March 18, 1990 free elections to Latvia's parliament were held. The hope for independence was widespread in Latvia but mixed with great uncertainty. The

winner was the independence party, the Latvian Popular Front which won 108 seats of the parliaments 201 seats.

Anatolijs Gorbunovs was elected President of Latvia for a four year period, while Dainis Ivans became Vice-President. The economist and physicist Ivars Godmanis, a leading member of the Latvian Popular Front, was elected Prime Minister.

The Latvian communist party was now divided into an independent and a pro-Moscow line.

Janis Jurkans, former English teacher at the University of Latvia and an outspoken anti-communist from the Latvian Popular Front, was appointed Minister for Foreign Affairs in Godmanis' government. As a conscientious left wing politician he was closely connected to the Russian speaking minority. He was devoted to independence but, on the other hand, acutely aware of the immense problems it involved and highly concerned about maintaining good relations with the Soviet Union.

Sandra Kalniete a lovable woman was appointed Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs. She was born in Siberia where her family was deported from Latvia during the Soviet occupation. Returned to Latvia she became a successful student of art, and in 1988 she joined policy and became Vice-Chair in the Latvian Popular Front.

The national red-white-red banner of Latvia was re-adopted on February 27, 1990, and the main street in Riga was renamed from Lenin avenue to Brivibas iela (Freedom Street).

On May 4, 1990 the Latvian parliament declared Latvia to be an independent and democratic state with the name Republic of Latvia, and the constitution from the interwar period was reintroduced.

Moscow, however, declared the decision illegal.

Estonia

Estonia like Latvia held free elections on March 18, 1990 with the Estonian People's Front as the winner.

Arnold Rüütel, a reform communist, was elected President. The chairman of the People's Front and former Minister of Economics, Edgar Savisaar a controversial politician often associated with using Machiavellian politics and deals to achieve his goals, was elected new Prime Minister.

Lennart Meri was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs.

In March 1990, the Estonian Communist Party was divided into a nationally oriented section with 20 members of parliament and a Moscow-oriented section with 26 members.

Unlike Lithuania and Latvia, Estonia did not (formally) declare itself independent immediately. On March 30, however, the Estonian parliament adopted two declarations which cancelled the Soviet sovereignty over Estonian territory.

»The Supreme Council (the Estonian parliament) does not recognize the authority of the USSR over Estonian territory,« was the declaration from the Estonian parliament, where 73 of 105 Members of Parliament voted in favour of the declaration.

The parliamentary majority furthermore declared the beginning of »a transitory period which shall result in full independence for Estonia«.

The Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev immediately ordered that the two declarations be cancelled and demanded that the Estonian parliament should respect the Soviet constitution, and wait for the approval of a new law regulating the right of individual republics to leave the Soviet Union.

To this Arnold Rüütel answered that the Soviet constitution did not commit Estonia as the country had never joined the Soviet Union but was occupied.

On May 8, the Estonian parliament decided by a large majority to change the name of the republic from the Estonian SSR (Soviet Socialist Republic) to the Republic of Estonia. Likewise, the old Estonian symbols were reintroduced: the blue-black-white banner, and the coat of arms with three lions on a golden background.

In April the Soviet pressure on the Lithuanian leadership increased. Gorbachev warned Lithuania that if it did not change its politics and recalled its declarations of independence it would have »serious consequences for all of us«. On April 18, the Soviet Union stopped its oil deliveries to Lithuania's large oil refinery Mazeikiai.

The Soviet Republics

Meanwhile a similar process towards democracy took place in the Soviet republics. Actually it was the democratic development in the Soviet republics which in the end would secure the independence of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. On March 4, 1990, democratic elections were held in Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine, with participation of candidates from different reform groups. Where the candidates

did not get 50% in the first round, a second ballot was held on March 18. The reformists won many seats.

The democratic process in the Soviet republics opened up to an emerging national identity increasingly expressed by the local parliaments.

In March the Soviet People's Congress legalized the pluralist party system.

On May 29, the charismatic and outspoken Boris Yeltsin was (after three election rounds in the parliament) elected president of the Russian Soviet Republic. Yeltsin started a process of establishing direct contact to other Soviet republics. This »foreign policy«, in reality started the process which would turn Russia into an independent state. He promised Landsbergis supplies of oil gas and other necessities and thus entered into opposition to Gorbachev and the Soviet Union.

The years under communism had separated people from their past. But a dream to be reconnected (reunited) with its history had been awaken among the people. In June members of the Leningrad city council began demanding the (its original) name St. Petersburg back as the city's name, and unofficially people began using Peter the Great's white-blue-red banner, which had been forbidden since the Russian revolution in 1917.

THE »DUPLICATED« STATES

In the summer of 1990, the weakness of the administrative systems in the Baltics brought about by the emerging independence became obvious.

Following their independence, the Baltic states had to create and operate entirely new systems politically as well as economically. The new systems could be created with external assistance; however, operating the systems demanded a whole new staff of civil servants.

When independence was declared there was no Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Lennart Meri, Janis Jurkans, and Algirdas Saudargas had to run their Ministries of Foreign Affairs with just a handful of inexperienced people; they had no archives and no tradition to build on.

There was no National Bank, no national currency, and the banking system was not suited to deal with market economy.

The ownership of real estate property was unclear due to the many people who had been forced away from their property since the occupation.