History of the Baltic States: From Independence to Independence – the 20ᵗʰ century
Part II

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First Soviet Year

- <u>In August 1940</u> Baltic republics were formally incorporated to Soviet Union.

- Stalinistic red terror: systematic persecution and physical destruction of political, cultural and military elite of the nations.

- <u>Peak of the terror in 14.06.1941</u> - mass deportation:
  - Estonia 10 000, Latvia 15 000, Lithuania 35 000 were deported to Siberia
  - Taking account proportions of population: in French context it would have meant deportation of 500 000 Frenchmen, in USA's case 3 millions.

- Industry and enterprises were nationalized.

- The consequences: Latvians and Estonians historical hatred against Germans turned against Russians.

German occupation

- <u>In summer 1941</u> Germans conquered the region
- At first Germans troops were greeted as liberators from Soviet oppression. Germans not interested in restoring independence of the Baltic States.
- <u>Different attitudes towards local nations</u>:
  - Lithuanians were treated like Poles (*untermenschen*),
  - Latvians and Estonians were considered to be a part of the Nordic race.
- German occupation in <u>Lithuania</u> harsher and partisan movement more active.
- Occupation in <u>Latvia and Estonia</u> milder (Germans murdered 7000 Estonians) and resistance was not so active (Latvian resistance more extensive).
- <u>Holocaust</u>. Before war: Latvia 70 000, Lithuania 160 000 – only 10% survived. Estonia 4000 - 100%

Baltic States in Word War II

- <u>Baltic nations</u> had to choose between two opportu-nities: fighting with Germans or with Russians

- Retreating Russians in 1941 tried to recruit Baltic nations to the Red Army (especially in Estonia).

- <u>German authorities</u> organized also volunteer recruitment campaigns to German army, what were not very successful at first. In 1944 when Red army was already close to Latvian and Estonian borders a lot of Estonians and Latvians joined with German army. Why?
  - To prevent new Soviet occupation
  - Weakened Germany and Western powers would maybe restore the independence of the BS…

- In 1944 Red Army re-conquered Estonia and Latvia (except Courland). In January rest of 1945 Lithuania

Casualties in Word War II

- In Word War II Estonia and Latvia lost 1/5 of its population (Beside Poland nations what suffered most in Europe).

- Beside red and brown terror and casualties in war:
  - 120 000 Latvians (8%),
  - 70 000 Estonians (6%)
  - and 3% of Lithuanians exiled to the West before Red Army "liberated" the country

  Afraid new deportations and red terror

Stalinistic period

- After reinstallation of Soviet rule terror continued
- <u>Second great mass deportation</u>
  - Agriculture was not yet collectivized.
  - At first communists tried to establish collective farms in voluntary basis, but failed.
  - Moscow decided to use fear and terror: in March 1949 the deportation: 20 000 Estonians, 42 000 Latvians. 40 000 Lithuanians = 100 000.
- <u>Total:</u> 50 000 Estonians, 120 000 Latvians, 200 000 – 300 000 Lithuanians were deported or murdered by communists. Lithuania suffered the most: 1940-1953 lost 1/3 of its population.
- 10% of Gulag's prisoners had Baltic origins.
- Resistance/partisan movement (Forest Brothers). Very active 1944-1950. Especially in Lithuania

Soviet rule 1953 -1980

- Death of Stalin 1953 marked the end of mass terror. Deported people were allowed to came back

- "Khrushchev thaw" 1956-64 (actually to 1968)– ideological pressure relaxed, economy was more decentralized, national cadres became more powerful in Comm. Parties (especially in Lithuania!)

- In the 1960's slow adoption with Soviet system, however feeling of national oppression was passed to younger generation. In 1960's living standard was rising - legitimized Soviet power a little bit.

- After 1953 small-scale dissident movement, not open violent resistance. In Latvia and Estonia was lead by local intellectuals, Lithuania by church

- 1970's Brezhnev's period– centralization, ideological pressure became stronger again.

Soviet rule - immigration

- Mechanism of immigration:
  - Authorities tried to carry on large scale industrialization in the Baltic States.
  - New industries were built not for meeting economic necessities of the Baltic States but Soviet economy.
  - Industries demanded for new workforce. Baltic States hadn't it sufficiently - need to bring it from Russia
- Latvia and Estonia had better industrial infrastructure - easier to carry on extensive industrialization. Especially in Latvia.
- Lithuania was not so industrialized, so demanded more investments and also had more their own free workforce in rural districts
- Result: Lithuania effectively prevented extensive Russian immigration, Latvia and Estonia couldn't.

Soviet rule – immigration II

- <u>In 1939</u>: Latvians in Latvia 75%, Lithuanians in Lithuania 70%, Estonians in Estonia 88%.

- <u>After the war</u> (and elimination of several historic minorities) Baltic nations comprised over 90% of population.

- <u>In 1989</u>: Latvians in Latvia – 52%, Estonians in Estonia 62%, Lithuanians in Lithuania 81%.

- Any other nation in Europe haven't experienced so large-scale immigration during the 20th century!

Social movements

- Movements and interest groups – the main linkage between government and the people
- Social movements pursue some kind of change in politics, society or even culture. Movements - non-elite groups and basing on grassroots participation. Alternatives to the party politics.
- Difference from parties: narrower agenda and scope – dealing with specific problems; don't want to gain the power – only influencing decisions
- Old social movements – workers, national movements. Materialist, class based, centralized
- New social movements – greens, feminists, racial movement, anti-war movement. Identity based, self-expression, post-materialist values.

Independence movement 1987-88

- In the beginning of the 1980's Russification campaign:
  - Russian language compulsory from first grade, official and public sphere should function in Russian, etc.
  - The campaign failed – resistance of intellectuals and students. Showed that national culture is threatened.
- 1987 Gorbachev *prestroika* - democratization.
- Started in Latvia. 1986 demonstrations against the hydroelectric dam on Daugava. On June 1987 a small demonstration at Riga's Statue of Liberty
- 1986-87 mainly lead by Green movements: Latvia – dam, Estonia – new phosphorite quarries, Lithuania – expanding nuclear plant.
- Later: Creative Unions – in Latvia and Estonia. Estonian Heritage Society. Political movements?

Popular fronts

- <u>1988 - Singing Revolution</u>. High mass mobilization.
- 1988 spring-autumn founding congresses of <u>Popular Fronts</u>. Start in Estonia (April). Lithuania - *Sajudis*
- <u>Lithuania</u> – *Sajudis* had two fractions:
  - moderate group – Vilnius, liberal, Western-orientated, moderate with Moscow;
  - radical group – Kaunas, nationalist, radical with Moscow, anti-democratic, church influenced. Radical wing got more influential 1989-1990. Lead by Landsbergis.
- Beside Sajudis <u>strong Communist Party</u> – lead by reform communists (Brazauskas).
- The essential conflict in Lithuanian politics: mode-rate, Russian friendly left wing *versus* nationalist, anti-Russian, church influenced right wing

National fronts and Congresses

- <u>Lithuania</u> – moderate-radical conflict inside Sajudis.
- <u>Latvia and Estonia</u> nationalist radicals formed their own semi-parliaments – Congresses. Supported restoration of inter-war republics → legitimate ground to declare all Soviet immigrants non-citizens
- <u>Latvia</u>:
  - Popular Front more unified (1 million members).
  - Latvian Congress quite weak.
  - Strong pro-Soviet Inter-movement.
- <u>Estonia</u>:
  - Popular Front strong, but since 1990 Estonian Congress offered strong counterbalance.
  - National Front – Soviet time specialists, reform comm.;
  - Congress – dissidents and national radicals. Congress became more influential in 1991.

Independence movement 1989-91

- <u>1988-1989</u> independence seemed too unrealistic. Rather autonomy and economy was in agenda.
- 1990 first (semi)dem. elections to Supreme Soviets
- <u>1989-90</u> independence arose to agenda.
- Lithuania declared independence restored 11.03.1990. Moscow - trade embargos and bloc-kade. Estonia did same 30.03.1990, Latvia 04.05.
- <u>Januar 1991</u> Moscow decided to use force in Lithuania and later Latvia. It failed: International reaction and internal opposition in Russia (Yeltsin)
- 1991 February-March independence referendums
- <u>1991 August putsch</u> in Moscow. 19.08 Lithuania, 20.08 Estonia, 21.08 Latvia declared independence restored.

Main conflicts in Baltic politics

- <u>Movements</u> – Popular Fronts similar to parties with comprehensive programs, participated in elections.

- Main conflicts and cleavages in the Baltic politics have their roots in independence movement. Social cleavages and class conflicts are important, but are not sufficient to explain today's Baltic politics.

  - <u>Estonia – personal dimension</u>. Personal conflicts and tensions between Congress and Popular Front and inside Popular Front

  - <u>Latvia – ethnic cleavages</u>. Conflict between Russian minority and Latvians. Latvian politicians who support more moderate ethnic policy versus Latvian nationalists. Transformation in the 2000's – conflicts in economic elite

  - <u>Lithuania – ideological – left wing vs right wing</u>. nationalist and church influenced right wing (basing on Sajudis radicals) versus more Russian friendly, former communist based left wing.

Conclusions: 20th century

- The crucial importance of the inter-war independence
- <u>Interwar independence</u> - different paths, different failures of democracy, not much similarities between individual countries
- <u>Soviet legacy</u> – similar, but at same time quite different country by country
- Substantial differences between <u>independence movements</u> 1988-91 – the roots of today's politics

Conclusion: Periods in the Baltic history

- I. Ancient independence to the 13th century (Lithuania to the 15th century)
- II. Under foreign powers: 13th (15th) century – 1918.
  - Under the Western powers 13th – 18th century: Germans, Swedes, Danes, Poles (Latvia and Estonia); Poles (Lithuania).
  - Under Russia from the18th century to 1918.
- III. Time of independence 1918 – 1940
- IV. Soviet occupation 1940-1991
- V. Independence restored since 1991

Exercises I

- Search for additional literature about the period 1917 – 1920 in the Baltic States! Compare the roads towards the independence 1917 - 1920 in tree Baltic countries – what was different what was similar?

- Search for additional literature about the Baltic States during the inter-war period. Compare the politics, economy and the failures of democracy (dictatorships) in three Baltic countries! What was different what was similar?

Exercise II

- Compare the experiences of World War II in your home country with the Baltic countries!

- If you analyze today's foreign policy of the Baltic States, in what way it has been affected by the experiences of the Word War II?

- Search for additional literature about the Baltic States at Soviet period (1945 – 1991). Compare the Soviet period in three Baltic countries - what was similar, what was different?

- Search for additional literature about the independence movements in the Baltic States (1987 – 1991)! Compare the independence movements in the Baltic States! What where the most remarkable differences or similarities between three countries ?

Suggested reading

Books:

- Misiunas, R & Taagepera, R. (1983). *Baltic States: The Years of Dependence, 1940-80*. New York: C Hurst & Co Publishers
- Rauch, von G. (1996). *Baltic States: The Years of Independence: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, 1917-1940*. New York: St. Martin's Press
- O'Connor, K. (2003). *History of the Baltic States*. Greenwood Press
- Smith, D, J; Pabriks, A; Purs, A; Lane, T. (2002). *The Baltic States. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania*. Routledge, London and New York.

Useful links about history and country:

Lithuania:

http://lietuva.lt/en/history

http://www.lietuva.lt/

Latvia:

http://www.am.gov.lv/en/latvia/history/

http://www.li.lv/en/

Estonia:

http://www.estonica.org/eng/teema.html?kateg=43

http://www.estonica.org/