

ABSTRACT

The world of the Cold War was a simple one: two superpowers, competing with each other, have dominated the political scene. Like Athens and Sparta in the Antiquity, the two superpowers commanded the allegiance of lesser powers within their sphere of influence. Each of the two blocks supported a social and economic system of its own: capitalism in the West, socialism in the East. To younger generations, born during the Cold War, this stalemate between two political and ideological adversaries seemed the norm of life. The image of the two challengers looking for dealing the decisive blow to each other overshadowed the complexity of life. Far in the north erratic states, combining the best of socialism with the best of capitalism, were among the few reminders of the fact that there was not a single easy approach to economic success and social fairness.

However, the communist system imploded and the Cold War ended abruptly. Like a dormant volcano, for long considered extinct, the complexity of life erupted into the apparently clear sky of post-Cold War Europe. National self-determination, state-building, nationalism, economic and social changes, democratization spread from Poland, Czechoslovakia and the Baltic states and reached all East-Central Europe. Amazingly, the political space of the area acknowledged profound changes, and the Baltic states resurfaced on the political map of Europe. Their rebirth closely monitored the deep meaning of this 'wave of change' (after a popular song sang by Scorpions band in Moscow) affecting until disappearance the communist bloc and its patron, the Soviet Union.

As one of those young people taking to the streets in 1989, understanding the whole meaning of these changes was for me a matter of self-awareness, even of identity. Therefore, the less I knew about a region involved in this process, the more I became interested in the history, culture and realities of that area. In addition, honestly speaking, as many other easterners and westerners alike, I knew nothing about the Baltic states. The result of my introspection was the decision to study the Baltic Sea area.

The project of this book came to my mind five years ago while researching the history of the Romanian - Baltic inter-war relationship. During my researches, I came to realize how little attention the historiography paid to the past of this region, despite its cultural and political diversity and richness. Romania did not make a difference in that. Except for a booklet published some 75 years ago by the Romanian greatest historian, Nicolae Iorga, more a traveler's notes than a book, and a more recent book published by Ioan Hurdubeiu and focused on the history of Sweden, no one else attempted to unveil the apparent mystery surrounding the history of the peoples of the region. No Romanian author approached the history of the Baltic states with the notable exception of my colleague of generation, the young historian Florin Anghel. As Professor Calafeteanu states in the 'Foreword'

of the first volume of this book, a project by Romanian Institute of Historical and Social-Political Studies to frame the main features of the inter-war history of the Baltic states was called off by the Romanian communist authorities. They realized the striking similarities between Ceau escu's own dictatorial regime and the authoritarian regimes of Konstantin Päts, Karlis Ulmanis and Antanas Smetona.

This book is born in order to be filling the gap of Romanian research and the scarcity of European and world research on the history of Nordic and Baltic Europe. The research for writing this book was favored by several stages of research pursued in Estonia, Finland and Britain between 2001 and 2005 and the relatively rich treasure of diplomatic reports discovered in the Romanian archives since 1997.

The first volume of this book, 'A History of Nordic and Baltic Europe. From the age of nationalism to the Cold War', deals with the ancient, mediaeval and modern history of the Nordic and Baltic societies up to the Cold War. Though analyzing the beginnings of Nordic and Baltic human societies, the volume focuses on the modern period from the first traces of nationalism in the area to the end of the World War II. The first chapter, 'The North - Past and Development', approaches the formation of the human communities in the region, and the first state formulae up until the 18th century. The chapter insists on the Middle Age and pre-Modern enduring legacy passed down to the Modern Nordic societies. The adoption of the Lutheran religion by the Nordic societies and by the Estonians, Latvians and Germans and the preservation of Catholicism by the Lithuanians is a case in point. The legacy of the Nordic Great War of 1700-1721 for the political order in the area is another.

The second chapter ('the history of Baltic Europe during the Modern Age) approaches the history of the Baltic nations (Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians) and the Finns from the beginning of the 19th century until the closing phase of the Great World. During this period, the Baltic nations and Finland formed a part of the Russian Empire. Finland was an autonomous Great Duchy, while Russia held a tighter grip on its Baltic provinces. The birth of the national sentiments in the Baltic provinces and Finland closely monitored the European contemporary developments. The emergence of the temperance and feminist movements as well as the creation of the first newspapers and magazines also correlated the cultural processes of the region with those taking place in wider Europe. The beginnings of the nationalist elite of the Baltic nations and Finland met the Slavophil and imperialistic reactions of the Russian elites. Added to the security concerns of Russia facing with the emergence of Germany as a great naval power in the Baltic Sea, they created the background of a prolonged and stressful clash in the eastern Baltic Sea area by the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century.

Looking to the general lines of Scandinavian history until 1918 is the subject of the third chapter ('a short history of Scandinavia to the Contemporary Age'). European major events as the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars had a deep impact on Scandinavia. The new nationalist fashion of the 19th century,

too. Thus, the nascent Norwegian nationalism nurtured powerful anti-Swedish feelings. They resulted in the secession of Norway from Sweden in 1905. Despite the success of the Scandinavian states in remaining neutral during the World War I, the conflict resulted in by no means unimportant effects on the situation in Scandinavia. For the first time in the 20th century, the neutrality of Scandinavia made these nations look erratic among the struggling European peoples.

The state building in the Baltic region followed the nation building of the 19th Century. I analyzed this process in the fifth chapter of the first volume of the book ('State Building in Baltic Europe'). The born of the independent states of Finland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania represented one of the most complex developments following the Russian democratic revolution of February 1917. The subsequent Bolshevik coup d'état of October 1917 and the dramatic and contradictory changes following Lenin's bid for power in and world communist revolution outside Russia, as well as Germany's last efforts for winning the war both in the east and west marked the destiny of the Baltic peoples. In the end, both Russia and Germany collapsed in the aftermath of the war and the Baltic nationalists managed to proclaim and uphold their first independent republics. These was not done without having to fight the Russian and domestic left-wing revolutionaries.

The erratic behavior of the Scandinavians partly continued during the inter-war period. This is not to say that these nations did not join the League of Nations or did not have to cross the troubled economic world crisis. The Scandinavian societies had also to face the mounting corruption born in the wake of the temperance laws, though this resembled rather the United States' features than Europe's. However, the Scandinavians managed to reach more stable administrations with the compromise between the workers and peasants' interests. The advance of either extreme right or extreme left in Scandinavian politics met the successful opposition of the existing political parties. Paradoxically, the Scandinavians disarmed themselves just as the other nations began to rearm in order to be prepared for fighting a new general war. The fifth chapter of the book introduces into the frame of analysis the history of Iceland, Greenland and Faeroe Islands.

During the inter-war period, the Baltic states managed to achieve a level of economic prosperity undreamed of in 1918. These achievements were even more significant if seen against the background of the loss of the huge Russian market for their products and of the important benefits drawn from the Russian trade with the European states. The Baltic nations also underwent generous agrarian reforms, which created a new class of small landowners. The reforms served not only a social purpose, but had a deep political impact as well, immunizing the peasantry against the social radical ideas spread out from neighboring Russia. The sixth chapter of this volume explores the outcome of these reforms and transformations. It also approaches more sensitive issues such as the roots and nature of authoritarianism in the Baltic states or the disputes over Vilna and Memel regions.

“Society and politics in inter-war Finland” is the title of the next chapter dealing with the many important transformations the Finnish society experienced during the inter-war period. The domestic policy of Finland bore the wounds of the Civil War well into mid-30s. The results of 1936 parliamentary and 1937 presidential elections played a fortunate role in healing these wounds. They made it possible the formation of a coalition government in which both social democrats and agrarians participated. In order to reverse the worsening of the Finnish-Soviet relations, this government attempted to reinitiate a dialogue with the Soviet Union. During the inter-war period, a combination of frequent border tensions, mutual accusations and ideological mistrust negatively affected the relationship between the two neighbors. The new Finnish government managed to obtain a temporary *détente*. This was not a lasting solution as security fears and paranoia of Stalin's regime reached a new level at the end of 1930s. This chapter analyzes other important domestic and foreign policy developments. Among them, I will quote the role of the extreme left and extreme right in the political life of the country or Finnish relations with both great and lesser powers.

The Second World War was not welcomed in both Nordic and Baltic Europe. Nothing good could come out of a war for these peaceful small powers. Neither the Nordic states, nor the Baltic nations played a role in bringing it about. For Norway and Denmark, it meant a German occupation regime enjoying the support of local right wing activists. For Sweden, it resulted in the country being subjected to great pressure from Nazi Germany, a fact that diminished the neutrality proclaimed by Stockholm from the very beginning of the conflict. However, the most tragic fate awaited Finland and the Baltic states. All these countries were divided into spheres of influence between Germany and Soviet Union on August 23rd, 1939. They acknowledged the strong diplomatic and military pressure of their mighty neighbor, the USSR. Luckier, Finland, after paying a large tribute of blood and energy in two wars against its overwhelming enemy, managed to end the war as a country with its territory reduced but free of foreign troops. This made possible for the nation to preserve its sovereignty and social fabric. This was not the case with the Baltic states. They twice chose to submit to foreign ultimatums and had their countries occupied by the Soviet Union in 1940 and 1944. In the meantime, the Germans were the masters of their fate. Eventually, the three small nations experienced the Soviet domination for about a half of century. The first volume of the book ends with an analysis of the history of Königsberg (later, Kaliningrad) and its contemporary statute. This is another controversial legacy of the World War II and, interestingly, it seems the most delicate outcome of that conflict affecting the Baltic Sea region.

The second volume of the book approaches the period starting with 1945 until present. It cuts the main lines of the political, cultural, economical and social history of the Nordic and Baltic Europe. In the first 45 years following the end of the World War II, the Nordic and Baltic regions experienced a significantly different fate. The Nordic nations preserved their social system and continued to democratize themselves and to reform their societies and economies. This was not,

of course, an ever-progressive trend. It met resistances and had to face failures. Nonetheless, the political system was a democratic one, with the political class answering to people's concerns and priorities. This was the case even in Kekkonen's Finland, despite the semi-authoritarian style of leadership of the agrarian leader. Nothing like that happened in Soviet Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania where the above-mentioned nations experienced a political system that infringed on people's most basic freedoms and rights.

The history of the Baltic nations during the Stalinist regime is therefore significant as to what the Soviet system meant in practice. The first chapter of this volume studies the impact of Stalinism on these nations. In order to impose a totalitarian system on them and to defeat their initial resolute resistance, Stalin made use of deportations, arrests, summary executions, industrialization, migrations and the presence of numerous K.G.B. troops in the area. All these measures ensured the imposition of the Soviet regimes in the former Baltic states. In general, in the new political elite dominant were Moscow's trusted men and women, made up of citizens born or educated most of their life in the Soviet Union. Most of them were unable to speak the language of the natives.

Though the regime proved unable to profoundly reform, the Thaw meant a briefing interval in which the locals were to be integrated into the new environment. They were to be persuaded to end their resistance against the regime. A larger space for local concerns, for national cultures and the integration of the Baltic republics into the forefront of economic reform served these purposes. In the republics' communist elite natives joined the newcomers. Brezhnev was a different style of leader who reintroduced a stricter political regime with negative consequences for the local population and affecting their allegiance to the Soviet state. The Stagnation corresponded with the European integration process in Western Europe and with the growth of economic and social prosperity in Scandinavia and Finland. International developments such as the Helsinki process also played a role in diminishing the loyalty of the Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians toward the USSR.

It is therefore no surprise that the heritage of the inter-war republics was increasingly emphasized as opposed to the Soviet slavery. National concerns as the danger of the Estonians or Latvians becoming minorities in their own countries or ecological concerns especially regarding the danger of nuclear accidents contributed to bring the Baltic nations among the most ardent supporters of Gorbachev's policies of Perestroika and Glasnost. This second chapter of the book studies the post-Stalinist history of the Baltic nations and the road to statehood and independence pursued by them. Analyzing the impacts of politics, media, memory, nationalistic and environment concerns it tries to recreate the atmosphere that made possible the collapse of the Soviet Union and the communist system. Within Soviet Union, the Baltic nations seem to have played the role of an Achilles heel. This shows how dangerous the imperialism could be, even to the imperialists themselves.

The third chapter of the second volume deals with the history of Finland from 1945 until 2004. Domestic and foreign policies of the country in parallel with Soviet Union's calculations explain the peculiar destiny of Finland following the Second World War. Although not a supporter of President Kekkonen and his style of leadership, I paralleled the post-war development of Finland and Romania to find out the positive meaning of Finlandization by comparison with the concept of communization or annexation. The end of Kekkonen era, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the integration into the EU represented the most significant events marking the Finnish history of the last quarter of century. They bore profound meanings and had a powerful impact on the Finnish society and economy, which are subjects of examination in this chapter. The increased Europeanization of the Finnish foreign policy is also scrutinized.

Among the creative nations of the world, Scandinavians enjoyed a special status after World War II. They developed a genuine and innovative social system, the so-called 'welfare state'. How this system emerged into being and its present perspectives are both among the most important topics of the fourth chapter. In this respect, it continues the analysis started in the first volume of the book. The political, economic and social developments registered in the annals of Scandinavian history in the 20th century and the beginning of our century also captured our attention. Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Iceland, Faeroe Islands, Greenland all had their peculiar national developments as well as regional common concerns. Some of these states integrated into N.A.T.O., some of them into the E.U. All of them evolved into a climate of domestic freedom and resolved the delicate issues through compromise. Interestingly enough, they represented an odd reality in a bipolar world, sharing with one part the belief into the virtues of free market and with the other into the virtues of social redistribution, while differing from both parts into the majority of these nations' belief into factual neutrality.

The last chapter of the volume approaches the history of the Baltic independent republics since 1991 to present day. These nations managed the outstanding success of constructing national states, building a free-market society, having their security insured by integrating into N.A.T.O. and their future enlightened by the integration into the E.U. When looking back to the history of the Baltic nations is amazing to see the pace of the transformations. This might obscure the difficulties met on this road, the initial decline of production and social status of the majority of the people, the brakes slammed by the supporters of the old regime to the emergence of a new society based on new values. Nevertheless, the majority of these peoples did not have second thoughts and went ahead courageously in order to fulfill the ideals of their singing revolutions. This chapter also includes an analysis of the so-called Vilnius Group and the role it played to the integration of the Baltic states and Romania, for instance, into N.A.T.O.

The volume ends with significant documents and parts of documents reflecting the programs of political parties of Scandinavia.

Both volumes represent an integral discourse analyzing the most significant trends in the history of Nordic and Baltic Europe. The approach is not

hindered by scrutinizing the history of so many peoples and states. On contrary, this affords me to discern the regional, European developments from the national peculiarities. This kind of approach is further enlarged by comparing the Baltic and Nordic developments with the European and sometimes the extra-European ones. In the end, it results a history of one of the many little Europes that are merging into the formula of United Europe, a continent of both unity and diversity, of cultural and religious richness. In this continent searching for its unity, its lesser or more peripheral parts does not necessarily imply a less significant human experience brought forth on the altar of European heritage.