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The fall of communism in the Baltic States

The story of an eye witness – text and photo by Bertil Persson



The destroyed Lenin monument in Vilnius.

It started with a conference and ended with the downfall of communism. This tale by Bertil Persson's constitutes a piece of fascinating contemporary history.

Newsletter 8/2009| "Baltic Freedom and the new Europe - on The Blue Ribbon Day" was the theme set for a conference arranged by the Soviet states in 1991. Between the 21th – 23d of August, the meeting was moved in sequence from Tallinn through Riga to Vilnius. Representatives from twelve parliaments were invited, among those the Swedish and the US' parliaments.

1989 was the year the Berlin wall fell and thus a turning point in European history. However, the Soviet Union remained until December 31, 1991. On the 19th of August, two days prior to the conference, the communist junta attempted a coup d'état in Moscow. The world waited tensely.

Gertrud Sigurdson from the Social Democrats

and I had been appointed to be the Swedish participants and our host insisted that the conference were to be held – despite the daily political events. Bearing in mind that a friend in need – is a friend indeed, the two of us leaved Sweden as planned in August 20. Prior to the departure, the speaker of the parliament delightfully informed us that he had raised our life insurances with €100 000 each.

At the SAS flight from Helsinki to Tallinn we found ourselves, not surprisingly, to be the only passengers. The Swedish consul met us at the airport and on our way to the Estonian parliament, our car ended up in between fifty Russian light tanks. Upon arrival, we realized that we were the only two conference participants – the others did not arrive until the junta had fallen on August 22nd.

The square of Vabaduse Valjak was crowded with activists - crying out for freedom, as well as Estonian flags. The streets leading up the Toompea towards the parliamentary building were blocked

by huge blocks of stone and heavy trucks filled with stone. At a courtyard close to the parliament we could see a platoon of forty Russian paratroopers. At the main station, the Russians had prepared seventy wagons – the usual sign of an imminent deportation to Siberia. Yet, in the Parliamentary building, the atmosphere remained calm and dedicated.

“We have only one task in our lives – to declare Estonia’s independence” our Estonian colleagues fiercely argued. Inside was the battle field of the “fax-war”.

Although the Russians had stroked down on media, radio and television, they had forgot the fax machines.

Through those we stayed fully connected to all kind of information about the logistics of the tanks, the grouping of the military and their imminent scarcity of useful maps – those were available to high ranked officers only.

Two hundred tanks

were stationed around Tallinn, one of them just at the foot of the Toompea. Twenty tanks moved towards the TV-tower. We even got information that the military which, at that very moment protected Yeltsin and the Parliament in Moscow, had forgotten to bring ammunition – it worked out anyway.

All MPs from the Russian group of citizens had abstained – all but three. They demanded to know how Russians were to be treated in the event of an Estonian independence. President Rütel promised that everyone without military ties would be offered a citizenship. That night, on August 20, at 10:15 pm, the Parliament declared Estonia independent.

Gertrud and I walked home to hotel Olümpia through a calm and quite Tallinn. At the Hotel, we celebrated the Declaration of Independence with a three course dinner and Russian “champagne” – at the decent price of SEK 4:56. The ruble wasn’t worth much at that time.

The next morning, we headed to Riga – in governmental cars escorted by police. At that time, all cars driving in the opposite direction were forced to stop to pave the way for the vehicles of the nomenclature – a slightly discomforting experience.

Also in Riga, all streets to the Parliament were blocked by armed guards and road blocks. The newspaper building next to it was captured by militia. As the Declaration of Independence was to be made, the Omon troupes (the dreaded black berets of the Ministry for Domestic Affairs) headed towards the parliamentary building – side by side with a group of tanks – shooting in the

air. For that reason, the Declaration was a quick ten minutes affair. Afterwards, President Gorbunovs said to us: “We have been called heroes – but we had to be here. It is different with you who voluntarily came here to support us.”

The following day – on August 22 – the Moscow junta fell. The tensions eased. We went in the Prime Minister’s limousine to Joniskis, Lithuania and were received by a cheering mayor, music, choirs, bread and cheese. Each of us planted a cross at the Cross

Hill in Kaunas, which had been desecrated by the Russians at multiple occasions, but which had each morning yet been covered with new crucifixes.

Lithuania had already declared its independence and several of the other conference participants had dared to come to Vilnius. The conference started but it had only been opened by President Landsbergis when it was interrupted by a

man, rushing in and handing

over the red banner which had previously been raised at the house of the Central Committee of the newly forbidden Communist party.

Also in Vilnius, the parliament was closed of and the windows were protected by huge stone plates. We followed the President to his manifestation for freedom at the steps of the National Library for some 50.000 cheering people. We then took part in tearing down the Lenin statue and visited the TV-building, completely destroyed by the military, and the abandoned cars of the hunger striking TV-journalists.

That night, we flew back to Tallinn in the Estonian governmental plane. In every city and village of the new Baltic States, bonfires had been lit to celebrate that freedom and democracy had prevailed. That is a sight never to be forgotten.

On our last day, we were able to witness the tear down of the Lenin statue also in Tallinn. On the ferry NordEstonia sailing back to Stockholm, we were accompanied by the three foreign ministers of the new Baltic States, led by Lennart Meri. The Baltic state had at that time been recognized by Iceland. Estline and SAS had promised to grant the foreign ministers a trip to the island. What none of them was aware of, however, was that Queen Margarethe of Denmark, at her own initiative, would fetch them at the stop-over at Kastrup. The journey continued with limousine to the castle of Fredensborg where they were celebrated with a brass orchestra and midnight drinks. On September 17, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania became members of the United Nations. ■



President Landsbergis on the steps of the National Library.

High ranked politicians discussing Eastern Europe

Newsletter 8/2009| *Foreign Minister Carl Bildt does not hesitate when asked what he appreciates with the yearly conferences arranged by the Jarl Hjalmarson Foundation, on developments in Eastern Europe. "It is the informal exchange of ideas between politicians and analysts," he claims. Each autumn the Conferences on Eastern Europe take place in Visby. Yet another recipe for success is the selection of participants who come from a geographical area with "lots of interesting events and where major future challenges are to be expected".*

"It's not only the sessions, but also the discussions during breaks and dinners" Dag Hartelius explains. The Swedish Ambassador to Warsaw who joined the seminar for the fifth time was one of the almost 50 participants.

Several participants emphasized the importance of the network which has been built up during previous conferences. The presence of Andrius Kubilius and Rasa Juknevičienė, both returning visitors to the conference, though this time as the Lithuanian Prime Minister and Minister for Defence, was considered as a positive sign by several participants.

This year, the list of participants included several ambassadors, party chairmen and ministers from Austria, Belarus, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Russia, Ukraine, the US and Sweden.

The visit of the newly appointed Ukrainian minister for Foreign Affairs to the Visby seminar marked a historical event. Arriving in Visby, Petro Poroshenko had held office for a mere seven days. Due to the general instability and the conflicts between President Viktor Yushenko and Prime Minister Yuliya Tymoshenko, his seat had previously been vacant for eight straight months.

Mr Poroshenko's position on energy policy, one of the topics discussed during the Visby conference, was quite clear: based on a memorandum



Petro Poroshenko, Minister for Foreign Affairs.

dating March 23 2009, Ukraine should be included in EU energy policy. The remark refers to an energy agreement between the European Parliament and the EU members seeking more efficient energy markets. Such an increased efficiency would be of utmost importance for Ukraine. The aim is to significantly reduce demand for energy, Petro Poroshenko explains. In essence, this could mean complete energy independence for Ukraine.

The participants shared great concern in regards to Russia's relation to its neighbours. Ambassador Alexander Vershbow, Deputy Defence Minister, responsible for international security, joined the conference from Washington DC. While recognizing the concerns of Russia's surrounding countries, he assured that the Obama administration has Europe – all of Europe – on its mind.

Q & A regarding Elections in Honduras

Newsletter 9-10/2009| Being the only Swedes, and two of very few Europeans, the MPs Christian Holm and Oskar Öholm from Moderaterna, participated in a delegation of international election observers in the election in Honduras at the end of November. An election that, by large, followed democratic standards.

What was the result?

Porfirio "Pepe" Lobo won - chairman of the National Party, which is a member of the International Democrat Union (IDU) and a sister party of Moderaterna. In the election of 2005, Lobo was defeated by Zelaya. The turn out rate was about 60 percent and Lobo gained

slightly less than 56 percent of the votes, despite Zelaya's plea for a boycott of the elections. However, the most important was not the winner but that the elections were conducted in a free and fair manner.

You want the election to be recognized by Sweden and the EU. Why?

Recognizing the election strengthens the Hondurian government's possibilities to lead the country and to deal with relevant problems. This is important, not least for the poorest citizens. The US has recognized the elections, while countries such as Venezuela object, explained Christian Holm

Make-over Needed for Delevelopment Aid

Newsletter 9-10/2009| *"As newly appointed Minister for Development Cooperation, I had a vision on development cooperation promoting change and encouraging new ideas," Gunilla Carlsson, writes. "During my years in Government, I have decreased the number of partner countries. I have aimed for stronger governance and I have asked Sida to increase its presence abroad while decreasing it at home." However, she adds in this article, more are to be done to achieve "new ways to further increase transparency, to create measurable targets and to reach real results".*

I have strived to focus our assistance in fewer sectors. I have made clear prioritizations. I have strengthened the agenda of freedom and brought new life to the politics of global development. I have strived for an open discussion. I have done everything to fulfill the demands on Sweden, posed by international evaluation teams and through other agreements. These reforms were asked for already some years before my appointment, but had not been dealt with.

However, these efforts are not enough. We have in the previous three years achieved more in regard to transforming the development aid than had been done for the last forty years. While having taken huge steps, there is, as I see it, still need for further efforts in several areas. Despite doing my utmost to create the necessary conditions for a development yielding results, I still don't know if such results are to be found. For the first time in forty years, the government presented the parliament with a document on the results of aid. However lengthy, it did not account for any general results. While giving several good examples where aid has accounted for a difference in the lives of the receiving individuals, the document also showed that we have a long way to go to reach an aid which could be systematically linked to long time results. Although this seemed a concern to no one, it has given me reason to further contemplate on the present state of the Swedish development assistance.

My principals are both poor people, far away in an African village, as well as the Swedish taxpayer spending 24 minutes of his or her time to contribute a share of our aid budget. My goal is that poor people will cease to be poor, that the oppressed shall be set free and that the Swedish taxpayer should know that the Swedish Development Aid is worth those 24



Gunilla Carlsson, Minister for Development Cooperation.

minutes.

The problem is that neither the poor, nor the Swedish taxpayer, me as Minister for Development Cooperation, or anyone else for that matter, are, at date, able to find out who, where, to whom and why money has been transferred – and to which aim. While the knowledge could theoretically exist somewhere, there is, at date, no general overview. Journalists and researchers have asked for documentation, posed control questions and checked samples. The Swedish National Audit Office has investigated. The evaluation agency Sadev has found facts to support their reports, though not even they have been able to study and evaluate the entire development assistance.

At date, we know only how the 34 billion Swedish kronor development cooperation are divided between general budgetary posts, as put forward in the government proposal for the yearly budget. We are also able to sum up the numbers for the strategy, decided on by the government, for each partner country and add the amounts for multilateral organizations.

Little we know about how much of the development aid that was really disbursed, when and why. There is no way to follow the money down to an activity level. Even less are we able to know the results of these activities. While the usual explanation is that aid is complex, this is simply not good enough. Even if we did accept the premise of aid being difficult to measure, it should still be possible to know to what purpose money has been used so that conclusions may be drawn. Therefore, I have initiated a process in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and in Sida, to systemize documentation, statistics and data

on the Swedish Development Assistance. The goal of this process is to create conditions for real transparency in the development aid. I will also suggest that Sida, in particular, accounts for how much it works with information- and communication technology within the development aid, especially with focus on our thematic focus of democracy and human rights.

The targeted aid initiative for democracy and freedom of speech, launched by the Alliance government, will increase in next year with 120 million SEK (approximately 12 million Euro). Within this framework there is room for innovative projects aiming for an increased possibility to spread and receive information and views which may lead to democratization. The initiative is an answer to the plea for the government to increase political and financial support to actors for change, which challenges corrupt leaders. However, if we are not sure of how 34 billion SEK disbursed to poor countries will improve wealth as measured in increased income, decrease unemployment, improved public health and a greater freedom, then we must either change the goal of development assistance, or our ways of measuring, to reach it. I sincerely believe the goal to be sufficient while the measures are in great need to be changed. The aid of today is not effective enough and it doesn't reach its targets.

In light of this, I have asked some Swedish development economists to present research over views targeting three specific issues.

1. What is needed to achieve real change in developing countries and what may help them prosper?
2. What kind of aid has been the most effective?
3. How would it be possible to form a budgetary process which facilitates predictability?

These research reports will pose an important base to the document on implementation of the "Politics of Global Development" which the government will put forward to Parliament next year. I have for a long time talked about shared accountability in development aid. I am responsible both to the African girl and to the Swedish taxpayer. That is why I have initiated "open up aid" where I look for new ways to increase transparency, create accountable targets and reach real results. Then we will be able to move forward to erase poverty.

*Gunilla Carlsson
Minister for Development Cooperation*

Sweden and the EU promote Free Trade

Newsletter 9-10/2009| *Minister of (Free) Trade, Ewa Björling is happy with the EU initiative Aid for Trade. Starting next year 2 billion euro will be invested in educating countries, primarily in Africa, in how to generate a successful trade. She is however less pleased with the new American administration, which she accuses for not having been clear about free trade issues.*

Critics say fair trade is more important than free trade?

"Free trade constitutes the foundation of increased wealth. However, fair trade may very well be a component of free trade. One example is how



Ewa Björling, Minister for Free Trade.

companies work with CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility). This area, where Swedish companies are world leading, applies to combating corruption, human rights, environmental concerns and so on."

"In the last few years, Africa has mostly been submitted to aid, which has not meant escaping poverty.

Instead, we need to help these countries to build the capacity to trade." When surveying the occurrence of wealth increases during the last few years, it is evident that there is a clear link between economic growth and openness to trade and investments. The fastest development during the last decades has been in countries that opened up their markets, attracted FDI's and increased exports, primarily countries in Asia.

Keeping this in mind, the Aid for Trade- initiative is crucial, according to the Minister. In addition, Sweden increased its trade oriented aid with 30 percent between 2006 and 2007 thereby reaching a level of 320 million at an annual basis, Ewa Björling explains.

As an example of what may be done to increase the possibility for poor countries on the global markets, Ewa Björling mentioned an institute in Tanzania, founded in parts by Sweden. The institute educates participants in trade policy. They learn building trade capacity and the functioning of trade – at a local, regional and global level. ■

The Jarl Hjalmarson Foundation in 2009

Seminars

At the Gothenburg Book Fair, the Hjalmarson Foundation had a stand and arranged three well attended seminars. Two of the seminars were based on brand new books published by JHS and launched at the Book Fair: “Triumph of Democracy – 20 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall” and “Red Tornado”. The third seminar, covering the crimes of communism, included the prior Prime Minister of Estonia, Mart Laar as speaker.

In 2009, the Foundation has arranged appreciated seminars on Belarus, Azerbaijan and Zimbabwe. In connection to the latter, where Minister for development aid Gunilla Carlsson was the main speaker, the report “Zimbabwe – Granary turned into a Powder Keg” was presented by its author Benjamin Katzeff Silberstein.

The foundation took part in the Moderaterna conference for local and regional politicians in Örebro and held a stand with information material at the party congress in Västerås.

Elections to European Parliament

During the campaign for the election to the European Parliament, the Hjalmarson Foundation arranged visitors programs with some fifty guests from possible future member countries, such as Turkey, Ukraine, Belarus, Albania, Croatia, Macedonia, Bosnia, Serbia and Norway. While some of the participants joined campaign busses and where able to get first hand experience of an election campaign to the European Union, further activities included various components such as early campaign meeting to lectures presenting inside information from Brussels.



Andrej Lepavcov, Advisor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs in Macedonia, at a campaign meeting with Carl Bildt, Minister for Foreign Affairs.



Dr. Nigel Ashford discussing ideology with young people from Eastern Europe and Caucasus during Summer School at Muskö, Sweden.

EU Reports

Prior to the Swedish chairmanship in the EU, the foundation issued two reports. The first is written by Walburga Habsburg Douglas, MP and deals with EU enlargement while the second, written by Christian Holm, MP, treats EU aid policy. In autumn, the report A force of good in the world – the EU after the Lisbon Treaty, was added to the series. The report, which is written by Göran Lennmarker, chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs, was presented in connection to the referendum on the Lisbon Treaty in Ireland. It has also been translated into English.

Activities in Sweden

Each year, the Hjalmarson foundation arranges four Schools on the Principles for a Free Society at Muskö in the Stockholm Archipelago. The purpose of the seminars, which target young politicians, is to give an overview of the founding Principles of a Free Society, such as the Rule of Law, Freedom, Market Economy, Human Rights and Democracy.

The Spring School of 2009 was arranged on May 8-11, targeting youth from Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Georgia and Belarus. The Summer Schools were held in August 12-15 targeting Serbia, Macedonia, Bosnia Herzegovina, Croatia and Albania and August 16-19 targeting the Caucasus and Easter Europe. In November 27- December 1 it was once again time for the youth of the Balkans to discuss the principles at the yearly Winter School.

During the year “Principles for a Free Society” has been translated into Turkish. At the moment, the book is available in seven languages.

The Hjalmarson Foundation arranges courses for writers with an interest in foreign policy. East

course consists of three parts, two weekends and a workday in Stockholm, and runs over a year. At the courses, theory is mixed with practical exercises in writing. Invited guest speakers frequently contribute their analyses on foreign policy and share their experience with the participants.

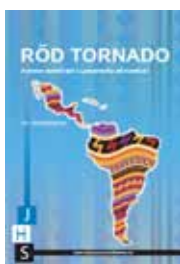


Publications

20 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Jarl Hjalmarson Foundation presented an anthology with personally flavoured essays on the development of Europe and how democracy conquered communism.

“The Triumph of Democracy” has been recommended by the editorials of both Svenska Dagbladet and Sydsvenskan. It features introduction by Foreign Minister Carl Bildt and will soon be available in English.

Through five individuals from five countries, telling about the development of their region, this book tells the tale of a how a red tornado is sweeping thorough Latin America. Hugo Chávez is spreading his own edition of Socialism. The political development is described through interviews with Javier Loaiza, Armando Caldeón Sol, Azalia Avilés, Lourdes Flores Nano and Alfredo Keller.



Latin America

In Latin America, the foundation has run activities in, among others, the Dominican Republic, Paraguay and Panama. In August, Eva Gustavsson, the Managing Director of the Foundation, visited the newly elected president of Panama, Ricardo Martinelli. Heading the Alianza por el Cambio, a centre right alliance formed prior to the election, Martinelli won a strategically important victory in May this year. Eva Gustavsson has during the previous year been granted honorary citizenships both in Asunción, Paraguay and Santiago de los Caballeros, Dominican Republic. Both the Foundation and Mrs Gustavsson herself have dedicated significant effort to activities in Latin America, among other things through the regional political organization UPLA (The Union of Latin American Parties)



Javier Loaiza from Colombia teaching at a JHS seminar in the Dominican Republic.



Participants at a youth conference on the subject of ideology in Ankara, Turkey.

Turkey

In cooperation with the Turkish think tank the Association for Liberal Thinking, (ALT), the JHF has in 2009 arranged conferences for young politically active students in Ankara, Istanbul and Konya.

A delegation from the foundation has visited the AK Party women’s squad. During the meeting, Eva Gustavsson emphasized that the Foundation’s operations are to promote participation of women and youth politicians in Parliament. The Hjalmarson Foundation cooperation with AK Party started in 2002.

Africa

The annual Winter School on the Principles for a Free Society of 2009 was situated in Abidjan, Ivory Coast. The participants of the conference were young politicians from the member parties of Democrat Union of Africa in Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Mozambique, Namibia, Tanzania and Uganda.

In March, the Hjalmarson Foundation invited a group of women politicians from our sister parties in Uganda, Tanzania and the Seychelles. During their days in Stockholm, the group met with several members of Parliament.

Balkans

Last spring, Gjorgje Ivanov, nominated by the Hjalmarson Foundation partner party VMRO-DPMNE, was elected President of Macedonia. Prior to the election, the foundations arranged a counseling session to Macedonia. In connection to the event, Ulrika Karlsson, MP, held a speech attended by 8000 people at an election meeting. The foundation has also arranged multiple conferences and educational seminars in Croa- ▶



Women from Tanzania, Uganda and the Seychelles visiting Stockholm in March 2009.



At a seminar about Azerbaijan. Oppositions politicians from NIPA visited Sweden. Gustav Blix, MP, moderated the event.

► tia, Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Several of these events have covered political campaign and political communications. November 6-7 another cycle of the three step program was launched, targeting youth, on the theme of Croatia and the EU. The conferences aim at giving young politicians the skills necessary once Croatia has joined the EU. The concept has been previously tried out with successful results.

Eastern Europe

In 2009, the Hjalmarson Foundation has arranged a series of conferences in Ukraine named Political School. Together with the Youth of Our Ukraine, the Foundation has educated young political activists in leadership, campaigning, media management, etc.

In addition JHS has arranged multiple youth conferences in Belarus and participated in a Coordinating conference together with other organizations working with Belarusian political parties. In September, a Belarusian delegation visited



Walburga Habsburg Douglas (to the right), MP and member of the JHS Board, and Eva Gustavsson, Managing Director JHS, visited Albania to meet with Prime Minister Salih Berisha.

Sweden. Oppositional politicians and leaders of organizations from the civil society met with Minister for Foreign Affairs, Carl Bildt, Minister for Development Aid, Gunilla Carlsson and Minister for EU-affairs Cecilia Malmström. Among the delegates were Anatoly Lebedko and Alaksej Yanukevich, leaders of the JHS partner parties UCP and BPF.

Caucasus

The JHS activities in Caucasus are centered to Georgia and Azerbaijan. Gaining independence in 1991, the former Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan is still controlled by an authoritarian presidential rule with dynastic tendencies. This was the topic for a seminar in Stockholm in October where our representatives of the National Independence Party of Azerbaijan (NIPA) participated.

In March, a conference was held in Stockholm targeting young politicians from the United National Movement in Georgia. ■

New at the Foundation



Diana Gil Eskils,
Assistant to the
Managing Director



Jessica Helin,
Project Manager
Ukraine



Henrik Sundbom,
Project Assistant



Jessica Larsson,
Project Assistant