

MODERNISATION OF THE NATIONAL PUBLIC SPHERE IN THE BALTIC STATES IN THE FIRST PERIOD OF INDEPENDENCE

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This article will address the shaping of the national public sphere of the Baltic nations. Some comparisons with the parallels existent in some other small states is made. Research into the public sphere of Baltic nations is intended to contribute to understanding the fate of democracy in the first period of independence. Universal aspects of the public sphere such as its rationality and openness are perceived as the most relevant for the discussion on the role of the public sphere in the Baltic history. The main focus of this paper is on the modernisation of the media. The overall task of this article is to map the civic conditions of regime change.

PUBLIC SPHERE – WHY SHOULD IT INTEREST US?

This article will first address the public sphere in the Baltic nations of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and then make a comparison with the parallels existent in Finland. Structuring patterns of the similarities and differences makes the Baltic States an exclusively interesting region of research in sociological terms.

Modernisation is traditionally treated as a total transformation of a pre-capitalist society into the types of technology and associated social organisations that characterises the advanced, economically dynamic and sophisticated nations of the West. The processes related to modernisation are treated as the main explanatory schema for understanding the past century. The tension intensified by modernisation, the discrepancies between economic, political and social modernisation, can be seen as the main source of trouble for the Baltic States in their nation building efforts at the turn of the 19th–20th century.¹

Modernisation is used as a fundamental category for designating the ensemble of culture-neutral processes, institutions and practices that constitute the frame-

¹ Blinkhorn, M. *Fascism and the Right in Europe 1919–1945*. London, 2000.

work for the procedural and discursive community.² This institutionally focused historical reconstruction marginalizes any study of relationship between the two strands of modernity – societal modernisation and cultural modernisation. The historical-cultural tensions of the Baltic nations have an impact on the modernisation of their societies. These societies followed different trajectories in their political development although simultaneously subjected to the similar model of economic development of the free market economy.

This study is intended to develop my earlier attempt to give insight from a social perspective into the societal fabric of the Baltic States.³ This approach makes it obvious that the internal resources of the citizens (literacy, education, experience of democracy) and the external resources of political culture (capacity of self-organisation of society) supplied the Baltic societies with quite different democratic potentials. The sizeable differences in modernisation that can be measured, in terms of ‘a-cultural’ or ‘civilisational’ progress, between the Baltic States suggested that research into the changes in the structure of public sphere would benefit our understanding of the deficiencies of the modernisation in Baltic States.

The use of ideas related to public sphere help us to go beyond the limits of traditional regime study approach. The concept of the public sphere insists that features beyond those that formally enable democratic participation should define an ideal democratic polity; for as Schudson declares: “It is not only the fact of political involvement, but it is quality that the concept of public sphere evokes”.⁴ The idea has been suggested “historians should examine as a central question of political history the rise or fall, expansion and contraction of a public sphere or, more generally what the conditions have been in different periods that encourage or discourage public participation in the politics and political involvement in rational-critical discussion of politics”.⁵ The public sphere is an active element in the construction of social order. It represents, according to Habermas, an operationalisation of society’s capacity for self-organisation to alter its own condition of existence; this is achieved by means of a rational and critical discourse of reason *on* and *to* power, yet not *by* power, but by the society itself.⁶ In these terms the public sphere has, or can have, its own logic and contributes in either a negative or a positive way to the political development. The public sphere will inevitably contain the elements of previous social spheres, which can be seen

² Taylor, C. Two Theories of Modernity. – Public Culture, 1999, 11, 1, 153–174; Gaonkar, D. P. On Alternative Modernities. – Public Culture, 1999, 11, 1, 1–17.

³ Ruutsoo, R. Civil Society and Nation Building in Estonia, and the Baltic States. Impact of traditions on mobilization and transition 1986–2000. Historical and sociological study. (Acta Universitatis Laponensis, 49.) Rovaniemi, 2002.

⁴ Schudson, M. Was There Ever Public Sphere? If So When? Reflections on American Case. – In: Habermas and the Public Sphere. Ed. C. Calhoun. Cambridge; Massachusetts; London, 1992, 143–162.

⁵ Ibid., 147.

⁶ Lii, D. T. Social Spheres and Public Life. A Structural Origin. – Theory, Culture and Society, 1998, 15, 2, 115–135.

as “residuals” to the existing mode of societal interaction. At the same time the national public sphere is open to inter-community, inter-cultural and inter-national impacts.

In this perspective we challenge traditional writing on political history of the Baltic States that supplies a picture about “clear cut” sequences of democratic and non-democratic periods, authoritarian rule and parliamentary democracy, which follow each other. However, the ways of human interaction, political regimes, modes of production etc. have their own history in the framework of the national history. In this perspective research of the fabric on social history contributes to studies that contrast the periods of political formations. There are always deficiencies of the social fabric through the deconstruction of the public sphere behind the collapse of democracy. The introduction of non-democratic discourses in the public sphere prepares society to turn away from democracy. Research into the public sphere informs us about the emergence of non-democratic discursive trends in any particular society; and by setting pre-conditions towards non-democratic or democratic change it is possible to reveal the changes as motion in the discursive field.

The “liberal bourgeois public sphere” as it was described in “The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere”⁷ is a highly normative concept – it is an ideal model, which does not actually come into existence. But as a field of communication – a shared discursive space makes a public sphere in any society. As a space or domain of expression and argument, bourgeois society is accessible to the main social groups.⁸ The public sphere is “a sphere which mediates between society and state, in which the public organises itself as the bearer of public opinion”.⁹ The public sphere, however, is not a univocal but primarily an ambivalent social phenomenon. Michael Foucault pointed out that the development of bourgeois public sphere involves not only the social liberation but also social disciplining. Such universal aspects of the concept of the public sphere, its rationality, equality, and openness¹⁰ are relevant for discussion about the quality, role and fate of the public sphere in the Baltic history.

Nevertheless the focus of this paper is on the modernisation of the media and the institutions and less on the structure of the discourse of the national public sphere in the Baltic States. It is not possible, for practical reasons, to trace all the important dimensions and structural levels defining the public sphere in every State in one comparative perspective. The overall task of this article is to map the socio-cultural conditions of regime change and the development of the nation building projects in the Baltic States.

⁷ **Habermas, J.** *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere. An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society.* Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1991.

⁸ **Mah, H.** *Phantasm of Public Sphere: Rethinking of Habermas by Historians.* – *The Journal of Modern History*, 2000, **70**, 1, 155–182.

⁹ **Roderick, R.** *Habermas and the Foundation of Critical Theory.* New York, 1980, 16.

¹⁰ **Kramer, L.** *Habermas, History and Critical Theory.* – In: *Habermas and the Public Sphere.* Ed. C. Calhoun. Cambridge, Massachusetts; London, 1992, 251.

BALTIC SETTING FOR MODERNISATION OF THE PUBLIC SPHERE

Overall societal changes are the causes of any change in the public sphere. The emergence of a modern public sphere presupposes the larger accumulation of socio-cultural change. The most recent change is linked to the metamorphosis of the urban environment and the growth of a new urban culture of socialising and entertainment (coffee houses, taverns, clubs, concert halls, theatres, opera houses, lecture halls, museums) dependant on a new infrastructure of social communication (the press, publishing companies, and other literary media; the rise of the reading public via reading and language societies; subscription, publishing and lending libraries and improved transportation) and a new universe of voluntary association.¹¹ The impact of these preconditions is determined by the political outlook that gained momentum in the Baltic States after the gaining of independence from the Soviet Union. A standard view of the 20th Century is that the ruling social elites of inter-war Europe were pursuing state building rather than nation building. The history of the Baltic nations during this period would benefit from this perspective because many of the studies in the fields of political and cultural history ignore social history. A history of society and community building would help us to understand the intentions of the ruling social elite of the Baltic nations and the deficiencies of democracy.

The new states that emerged after the World War I started to perceive a management system that would permit the complete control of both the economy and society – the systematic integration of the nation as its main task. The post-war period opened a new era in culture (where an active cultural policy became a natural part of the nation states' activities). This strategy was legitimated in the Baltic States by the approach that can be understood as the first "catching up" project in their history. The economic struggles of the Baltic States have been described as an accelerating development project of recently undeveloped nations.¹² The same is true about their efforts to build a mirror image of European civilisation. Their main concern was the establishment of their own economic, political and cultural societies while managing a sustainable dialogue with the structurally more developed national cultures of mainland Europe. The Baltic people understood that the perception of their provinciality and asymmetry in relation to the dominant European nations could be couched in cultural as well as economic and political terms.

Nation building was a political and socio-cultural objective with the aim of developing a national culture according to the fundamental model that the European nations had already developed in the 19th century.

¹¹ Eley, G. Nations, Publics and Political Cultures. – In: Habermas and the Public Sphere. Ed. C. Calhoun. Cambridge, Massachusetts; London, 1992, 290–291.

¹² Kõll, A. M., Valge, J. Economic Nationalism and Industrial Growth. State and Industry in Estonia 1934–1939. – Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis-Studia Baltica Stockholmiensia, 1998, 19, 15–19.

The modernisation of a nation and national culture into a modern 'complex culture' means:

- The creation of a system of cultural innovation (educational system, libraries, etc.);
- The sophistication of a modern public sphere (development of both printed and electronic media);
- The development of diversified educational capital (high or elite culture and the formation of the modern national elite). The Baltic States were in this perspective nationalising states.

These attainments were not possible without economic support from the state and the political will of the elite. The Baltic nations rapidly approached the point at which the gaining of independence was a keystone condition for modernisation. It is arguable that had a few more decades passed without their gaining independence the Baltic nations would have dissolved and been assimilated into the cultures of mainstream Europe.

Historical accounts of the regime changes in the Baltic States do not usually concern themselves with the conditions, which shaped the public sphere in every respective state. The regimes in the Baltic States were, for example, simply portrayed by Soviet historiography as fascist. This politically motivated qualification had an important impact on the understanding of Baltic history by many Western scholars. Undemocratic regimes of the Baltic States were seen as different variations of the same theme. Estonia and Latvia were labelled as centrist-corporatist regimes while the model of government in Lithuania was both corporatist and semi-fascist.¹³ This example shows that historians, despite their use of different terminologies, have tended to view the composition of the Baltic States as that of Estonia and Latvia on one side and Lithuania on the other. Scholars who implement the modernisation theory approach, share the perception that places Estonia and Latvia close to the bourgeois-democratic and Lithuania to the authoritarian-reactionary path of modernisation.¹⁴

The contemporary attitude on carrying out research into the social and civil histories of the Baltic States is narrow and limited. There are papers in which increasingly sophisticated ideals of the regimes are applied to the historical facts. There are papers concerning the contrasting varieties of 'social' and 'intellectual' capital that were available to all three of the Baltic communities at the end of the 19th century. There are also those that are content to say that features typical to the *Gemeinschaft* type patriarchal community continued to dominate in independent Lithuania while the *Gesellschaft* type market-based, procedural society took a

¹³ Berglund, H., Aarebrot, F. The Challenge of History in Eastern Europe. – In: The Handbook of Political Change in Eastern Europe. Eds. S. Berglund, T. Hellén, F. Aarebrot. Cheltenham, UK & Northampton, 2000, 27.

¹⁴ Berg-Schlosser, D., Mitchell, J. Introduction. – In: Conditions of Democracy in Europe, 1919–39. Systematic Case Studies. Eds. D. Berg-Schlosser, J. Mitchell. Houndmills; Basingstoke; Hampshire, 2000, 7.

shape in Latvia and Estonia. They are rarely followed up by attempts to develop these perspectives through comparative studies.¹⁵ It is fair to say in the perspective of modernisation that each of the Baltic societies represented a different type of organisational culture in terms of society and public sphere. Nation building as a development project did not begin in any of the Baltic States till the second part of the last century. The creation of language and reading associations and the development of the capacity to print in national languages were essential elements in the fight for national emancipation and the achievement of independence. The underdeveloped ethno-cultural parameters of the abbreviated history of the Baltic States did not meet with Habermas' model of conditions with which to build a framework for a modern public sphere. Public discourse in Russian provinces, like the Baltic States, was structured around religious, literary and cultural debates and not on political discussions. Public life prior to independence was focused on issues at local and municipal levels. We are as a result able to observe the differences in the conditions that shaped the public discourse in the Baltic nations.

First, the public spirit (the desire for freedom and independence) started to make headway in different locations and environments. In Estonia and Latvia, the debates took place in locations as diverse as urban and rural associations, national theatres and theatre groups, student and literati circles. By contrast, the Church in Lithuania played a central role alongside literati circles and political discussion clubs, illegal nationalist circles and outdoor assemblages.

Secondly, the enthusiasm of the Lithuanian elite to embrace the chance of an open discourse allowed for an active, contentious and fervent style of debate. The atmosphere in Estonia and Latvia was calmer. The German and Nordic traditions of building civil associations and the urban bourgeois led to a more rational and critical discourse. Nevertheless, such were the repressive conditions under the Tsarist regime that in this emerging atmosphere, of an open discourse, there was an urgency to treat matters of national concern as priorities. The politics of the public sphere became a part of nation building in the modernisation project. As Jürgen Habermas has pointed out, a politically functioning public sphere "requires more than institutional guarantees of constitutional state. Modern public sphere needs the supportive spirit of cultural traditions and pattern of socialization, of the political culture of the population accustomed to freedom".¹⁶ Alongside progress made in the institutionalisation of the public sphere a political culture, in which the population was accustomed to freedom became an essential element for the future. In these terms, there was a significant difference between the Baltic States. Three main indicators, which were of central importance in defining the type of the public sphere emerged: the formation of an urban class-structure, the healthy condition of society and a dominant subculture. All three indicators were very different in each Baltic state.

¹⁵ Brint, S. *Gemeinschaft Revisited. A Critique and Reconstruction of the Community Concept – Sociological Theory*, 2001, 19, 2–21.

¹⁶ Habermas, J. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 222.

The patriarchal and community ties, for example, remained very strong in Lithuania where a “peasant citizenship”¹⁷ only started to form in the years of independence. The societal changes and the cultural developments of the Baltic nations are reflected in their journalistic cultures. Regular newspaper subscriptions were available to everyone in Estonia and Latvia. The intensity of subscription in 1885, for example, was comparable in Estonia and Finland.¹⁸

Newspapers in Estonia and Latvia became instruments for the reconstruction of the civil community whilst in Lithuania the press relied on the illegal activities of enthusiasts supported by the Church. The development of a national media was restricted to the western part of Lithuania where the movement was resisted by the illegal amateur presses. Nevertheless, there was the potential for a fascinating if not rapid recovery of a national media after fifty years of repression during which the Roman alphabet was prohibited. The clearest result of the prohibition in favour of the Cyrillic alphabet was that the literacy levels achieved by Lithuania in the first decades of the 20th century were half those of Estonia and Latvia.

The development of the press is more closely connected than any other element of cultural sphere to the social and class organisation of society.¹⁹ This was certainly true in the Baltic and Scandinavian nations with their characteristically small and peasant dominated populations. It has even sometimes been argued that the rise of the party press started at the same time in the Baltic area as in Scandinavia, but its development was halted in the Baltic nations by the period of Russification. This observation is incorrect in timing, but accurate in the cessation of the construction of the public sphere: “In terms of nationalism, the party press in the Baltic area and Scandinavia played a paradoxical role. By splitting up the attention of the public along the lines of conflicting interests and ideology the parties and their press played a decisive role, but by demonstrating that such interests could be realised within a national decision-making process the party press also contributed to national unity across the regional borders”.²⁰

The social base necessary for the promotion of a class-based and journalistically sophisticated media was almost non-existent in Lithuania. However, at the same time in Lithuania the ideological initiative groups, like the social democrats, the

¹⁷ **Granberg, L., Nikula, J.** Introduction. – In: *The Peasant State*. Eds. L. Granberg, J. Nikula. (Publications in the Social Sciences, 1995, Serie B. 20. University of Lapland.) 7–19.

¹⁸ **Lauk, E. et al.** National Journalism’s Challenge to the Russian and Baltic German Authorities. – In: *Towards a Civic Society. The Baltic Media’s Long Road to Freedom. Perspectives on History, Ethnicity and Journalism*. Eds. S. Høyer, E. Lauk, P. Vihalemm. Tartu, 1993, 92.

¹⁹ **Alapuro, R.** Social Classes and Nationalism. – In: *National History and Identity. Approaches to the Writing of National History in the North-East Baltic Region Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*. Ed. M. Branch. (Studia Fennica Ethnologica Finnish Literature Society, Ethnologia, 6.) 1997, 113.

²⁰ **Høyer, S.** A View from Outside. – In: *Towards a Civic Society. The Baltic Media’s Long Road to Freedom. Perspectives on History, Ethnicity and Journalism*. Eds. S. Høyer, E. Lauk, P. Vihalemm. Tartu, 1993, 291.

liberals and the Catholics emerged to disseminate their ideas on the basis of international networks with centres in Russia and USA, and to establish newspapers, which eventually concentrated on discussing the “Lithuanian idea”.²¹ The authorities assigned the Catholic Church the role of moral tamer after the revolution of 1905–1906. The Church enacted this role using its prestige against the social democratic and liberal ideology.²² The social structure in Estonia was the most petty bourgeois in the Baltic nations. There the newspapers, as the ‘discussion clubs’ of secularised intelligentsia, were the main agents in the shaping of the political parties.²³ Latvia’s nation building was about ten years ahead of Estonia through political maturation and a more rapid programme of technological modernisation, and as a result the public space was much more fragmented than in either of the other two Baltic nations. Yet in this perspective Latvia’s politically funded and sectarian party press made the least contribution by any of the Baltic’s media to the development of the national public sphere.²⁴ Nevertheless Latvian public space was at the time considered to be the most intellectual and the most cosmopolitan because of the role Riga had as a major Baltic metropolis. There were as a result 107 periodicals in Latvia by 1902, 63 of which were daily or weekly newspapers.²⁵

The ideological mobilisation in Latvia became burdened by the ethnic strife (between Russian, German, Jewish and Latvian elite) and with the social conflicts typical to the modern industrial society. In Riga, in one of the most developed industrial centres of Baltic States and Russia the fully-fledged party-press took shape.

In the triple perspective of a class-structure pattern (modern and urban), societal development and an emergent dominant ideology (religious versus secular), Latvia and Estonia are deemed to be closer to Habermas’ ideal of a modern society. The tradition of self-government and the consolidation of political parties as public bureaucracies (manifested initially in Latvia), created a model able to adapt to different modern (Western) political ideas. This in turn promoted the rationalisation of the public sphere.²⁶ Political development in Lithuania took place in a more

²¹ **Donskis, L.** *Between Identity and Freedom: Mapping Nationalism in Twentieth-Century Lithuania.* – *East European Politics and Societies*, 1999, 13, 3, 475.

²² **Laukaiyte, R.** *Lithuanian Catholic Clergy in the Revolution of 1905–1906.* – In: *The Year-Book of Lithuanian History.* Vilnius, 1995, 51.

²³ **Ruubel, P.** *Intelligentlikust liikumisest meil ja mujal.* – *Vaba Sõna*, 1915, 1, 27.

²⁴ **Ašmanis, M.** *Die Faktoren der intellektuellen Entwicklung des Volkes.* – *Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis – Studia Baltica Stockholmiensia. National Movements in the Baltic Countries During the 19th Century.* Stockholm, 1985, 2, 11–15; **Priedite, A.** *Establishment of a Discourse About National Identity in Latvia in the Late 19th Century and the Early 20th Century.* – *Humanities and Social Sciences in Latvia*, 1999, 4(25), 8.

²⁵ **Plakans, A.** *The Latvians. A Short History.* Stanford, 1995, 121.

²⁶ **Apals, G.** *The Influence of Western Liberal Thought on the 19th Century Baltic Nationalist Movements.* – In: “Liberalism” – *Seminars on Historical and Political Keywords in Northern Europe.* Eds. K. I. Lakaniemi, A. Rotkirch, H. Stenius. Helsinki, 1995, 126–131; **Jansen, E.** *Liberalism in the Baltic Provinces in the 19th Century.* – In: “Liberalism” – *Seminars on Historical and Political Keywords in Northern Europe.* Eds. K. I. Lakaniemi, A. Rotkirch, H. Stenius. Helsinki, 1995, 137–149.

conservative and quiet manner,²⁷ or as Rousseau might have said the consensus of hearts, rather than that of arguments dominated the public sphere. The Lithuanian elite was more of a spiritual community than a bourgeois-rational discursive community.

Modernisation has to take place for the successful consolidation of society along institutional-organisational lines, which constitutes the socio-cultural precondition for a viable public space. It also has to occur at the same level as the beliefs and value systems, which constitutes the public sphere. The public sphere of all the Baltic societies on the eve of independence remained much closer to the pre-modern standards than their Nordic neighbours. Popular value systems were only to some extent penetrated by liberal attitudes with the stress on universalistic moral bonds and values as foundations of solidarity. Even very modern ideologies, such as Marxism, that competed with the nationalist ideologies (in their different modes) were overcome by Leninism. The concept of a good nationalist or of a good proletarian as a model of the true citizen replaced the idea of a liberal or intellectual being the modern citizen.

NEWSPAPERS AND PUBLIC SPHERE IN THE INDEPENDENT BALTIC STATES

In the early twentieth century the familiar modern newspaper industry structure was established in the Central European and Nordic countries. During the two decades after the World War I there were more minor than major changes in the mass press, although there was a growth in circulation.

The considerable differences in the institutional development and modernisation of the print media in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania originate from the pre-independence period. The press in Lithuania was in poor shape in comparison to those in Estonia, Latvia and Finland. The base for the Lithuanian national press was laid by *Vilniaus Žinios* which appeared in 1904, but by “1919, there were only three newspapers in Lithuania, with an approximate circulation of 20,000”.²⁸ The development of the Lithuanian press after the war was hindered by the annexation of Vilnius by the Poles in 1920. Lithuania lost not only its historical capital but also more than a third of its original population – 1,275,000 people.²⁹ The circulation of Estonian newspapers by contrast in 1918 was almost three times greater than Lithuania’s (about 60,000).³⁰ Latvia, on the other hand, whose population had

²⁷ Kuzmickas, B. The Tradition of Liberalism in Lithuania. – In: “Liberalism” – Seminars on Historical and Political Keywords in Northern Europe. Eds. K. I. Lakaniemi, A. Rotkirch, H. Stenius. Helsinki, 1995, 132–137.

²⁸ Simutis, A. The Economic Reconstruction of Lithuania after 1918. New York, 1942, 34.

²⁹ Niitemaa, V., Hovi, K. Baltian historia 2. Täydennetty painos. Helsinki, 1991, 365.

³⁰ Lauk, E. Eesti Vabariigi ajakirjandusest 1920.–1940. aastatel. – Eesti ajakirjanduse ajaloo, 1991, VII, 78.

suffered very heavily because of the war and evacuations of more than half a million of its residents was still able in 1919 to produce the same number of newspaper issues as Estonia.³¹

The establishment of sovereign States with the ability to create their own public sphere involved fundamental changes in the ownership, management and operation of the news media. The new democratically elected governments responded favourably, though occasionally at the expense of internal efficiency, to the broadening of the public sphere. This was the result of the constitutional freedoms that now defined the formal relationship between the State and the public. The segmentation of the public sphere was an unforeseen effect of democracy as a result of the incentive to increase the publication of new periodicals at all levels of the public domain. This is most noticeable in Lithuania in the interwar period from 1920 to 1939. There, despite a relatively illiterate agrarian population, considerably more newspaper titles were published throughout these years than in either of its Baltic neighbours.³² The diffusion of the media space could be argued as an effect of the dominant role of regional newsletters prior to the inception of the national press. These quasi-newspapers had a negative impact on both the professional level as well as the journalistic quality of the media that followed. The development of a national press is dependent on an increasing level of literacy and a national elite that is adaptable to modernisation neither of which was evident in Lithuania.

The matrix displayed in Table 1 reflects a trend of centralisation both in the field of media and political life. Concentration of the media in the late 1930s was a general trend in Scandinavian countries and in the Baltic States. One important qualitative change in terms of consolidation of public sphere was the fact that

Table 1. The number of newspaper titles issued in Baltic and Scandinavian countries 1920–1940*

Country/Year	1920	1925	1930	1935	1939
Estonia	24	30	77	62	37
Latvia	22	109	103	51	54
Lithuania	133	141	121	138	138
Finland	128	149	210	210	202
Norway	235	–	–	–	145
Sweden	Ca 225	–	Ca 220	–	Ca 210
Denmark	156	–	137	–	–

* **Ruutsoo, R.** *European Traditions and Development of Civil Society in the Baltic States 1918–1940.* – In: *The Baltic States: Looking for the Small Societies on Europe's Margin.* Eds. C. Giardano, A. Žvinkliene, D. Henseler. (*Studia Ethnographia Friburgiensia*, 28.) 2003, 36.

³¹ *Towards a Civic Society*, 333.

³² *Ibid.*, 330.

there were attempts to reshape the party presses as independent dailies. An average newspaper issue was, by the end of the 1930s, not only of better printing quality but also larger than it was at the beginning of the 1920s, consisting of 12–14 pages in Estonia and even more 16–24 in Latvia.³³ This increase in size reflects not only a rise in journalistic content but also the increasing amount of advertising and commercials that filled the new pages. It can be expected that the same process took place in Lithuanian journalism. However, it should be also accounted that the income of the average Lithuanian was between a half and two thirds of the income of Latvians and Estonians. The social division between the elite and ordinary people (countryside settlers and urban residents) was also much deeper, and the middle class was much weaker in Lithuania.³⁴ The Latvian publishing culture made a more considerable impact on the quality of the newspapers compared to Estonia, where book production was more intensive and numerous than the newspaper production.

The dramatic start of the Lithuanian State – the annexation of Vilnius, unrest in the Klaipeda (Memel) region and Suwalkia had a negative impact on the shaping of the democratic public sphere. The social structure of the public sphere, as defined by Dahlgren³⁵, began to develop in a different direction than the other Baltic States. The Lithuanian example was built around two main institutions – a totalitarian administration and the Catholic Church. The public sphere was not just divided but becoming increasingly bi-polarised.³⁶

The influence of the national bourgeoisie who had been the main beneficiary of the wars of Independence upon the public sphere was indirect until the *coups d'état* in 1926 in Lithuania and 1934 in Estonia and Latvia. However, the direct pressure did exist and was exercised. There was the permanent threat from communists within the Baltic republics to import the proletarian revolution from Russia. The tension in the political atmosphere was kept at a high pitch through the communist funded press' systematic misuse of media freedom. This abuse legitimated the governments' energetic responses against the press.³⁷ This was the main reason why Martial Law was maintained in the capitals and major cities of the three republics up to the beginning of the World War II. The conflicts with the Soviet Union and then Nazi Germany deformed the political process and the public discourse. The public sphere had, by the end of the period of independence, become increasingly autonomous from State sponsorship. The crises

³³ Lauk, E. Eesti Vabariigi ajakirjandusest 1920.–1940. aastatel, 63; Briške, I. Journalism in Independent Latvia during the 1920s and 1930s. – In: Towards a Civic Society. The Baltic Media's Long Road to Freedom. Perspectives on History, Ethnicity and Journalism. Eds. S. Høyer, E. Lauk, P. Vihalemm. Tartu, 1993, 144.

³⁴ Rauch, G. Balti riikide ajalugu 1918–1940. Tallinn, 1995, 64.

³⁵ Dahlgren, P. Television and the Public Sphere. Citizenship, Democracy and the Media. London, 1995.

³⁶ Vardys, V. S., Sedaitis, J. B. Lithuania: The Rebel Nation. Boulder, Colorado, 1997, 34.

³⁷ Ant, J. Sõjariist kodanluse vastu. Legaalne revolutsiooniline töölisajakirjandus Eestis aastail 1926–1930. Tallinn, 1977, 33, 34, 43.

faced by the democracies, however, rested upon the types of political culture that had developed in each particular Baltic state. In Lithuania and Latvia, for example, the drawn-out political crises and the more elaborate projects for the establishment of an authoritarian state were the basis of the upheaval.

Sooner or later, after an indefinable period of parliamentary rule, a policy of state censorship became an essential element of the regime in all Baltic States. A general observation is that censorship operated in all three Baltic States in a similar authoritarian manner.³⁸ There were, however, obvious differences in the performance of censorship. Censorship was stricter in Lithuania than in other Baltic States even before the period of authoritarian rule. Between 1926–1935 the Lithuanian “government authorities mercilessly censored all opposition press, using the state of martial law as justification. Control over the press was officially made stricter through the second Press Law adopted in 1935”.³⁹ New restrictions were imposed in 1935 and 1936. However “it cannot be claimed that the regime operated as a watertight censorship controlling all sources of information and prefabricated data”.⁴⁰

Censorship was most severely implemented against the press that acted as Komintern agencies in Latvia, Lithuania, and also Estonia, especially after the Moscow inspired coup-attempt in Estonia in 1924. Censorship was applied in Finland for much the same reason when in 1930–1931 a large proportion of the communist press (about 25 periodicals) was closed down.⁴¹ The *Vorpost* position of the Baltic States was detrimental to the tensions within the political arena, and damaging the intellectual atmosphere made discursive spaces ineffective in all the Baltic States. Indeed, anti-independence rhetoric and revolutionary agitation largely replaced political discussions.

The 1934 coup in Latvia was the most complex and antidemocratic. Draconian restrictions were imposed on the non-patriotic press; the social-democratic press was closed down as well as a large percentage of the periodicals produced by the German minority. The effect these measures had on the overall activity of the press was dramatic. The publishing output decreased from 1934–1936 by 71% of newspapers and 43% of all journals.⁴² In Estonia the setting of restrictions to press freedom (censorship) came into force in August 1933 as a legal and legitimate security measure initiated by liberals (Jaan Tõnisson) to fight rising instability and danger of coup planned by rightist forces. Once Konstantin Päts

³⁸ Lauk, E. Eesti Vabariigi ajakirjandusest 1920.–1940. aastatel, 47.

³⁹ Vaišnys, A., Krivickiene, V. The Mass Media Structure in Lithuania 1918–1940. – In: Towards a Civic Society. The Baltic Media's Long Road to Freedom. Perspectives on History, Ethnicity and Journalism. Eds. S. Høyer, E. Lauk, P. Vihalemm. Tartu, 1993, 157–158.

⁴⁰ Lane, T. Lithuania: Stepping Westward. London; New York, 2002, 27.

⁴¹ Neuvonen, K. E. Suomen kirjallisuuden kasvu viime vuosikymmeninä. – *Kansanvalistus ja kirjastolehti*, 1936, 8, 306.

⁴² Butulis, I. Autoritäre Ideologie und Praxis des Ulmanis-Regimes in Lettland 1934–1940. – In: *Autoritäre Regime in Ostmittel- und Südosteuropa 1919–1944*. München; Wien; Zürich, 2001, 282.

became President, the Law of the changed Constitution was used to increase the censorship and the control of the press.⁴³ The Right-wing press of pro-fascist conspirators against the parliamentary regime was, for example, closed down and under the tightening of authoritarian rule the Estonian press was entirely subjected to the state control.⁴⁴

The effect of the coup on the publishing output of the Estonian press was different from that in Latvia. The overall decline in output during the second half of the 1930s was not only the result of anti-democratic political pressure, but also the impact of market forces in a country with a low number of readers. Some of the decline in the number of periodicals in Estonia was the result of closing down the papers of the ultra-nationalist movement in 1933–1934. Furthermore about 50 publications from 1934–1937 did not receive permission from the Chief of Internal Defence to register for publishing.⁴⁵

The negative impact, which the manipulations and restrictions set by the authoritarian regime imprinted on the quality of public sphere during the “Period of Silence” (1934–1940) in Estonia was even more significant than the impact on its quantity. The impact on the media of the need of people to be informed and to discuss matters increases in a critical situation.⁴⁶ A large proportion of the press was released from pre-publishing censorship but it did not concern large dailies from the capital. The Law of 1938 prevented the press from public criticism of the State administration and the officials and insisted that the press must “maintain a positive content and a constructive form”.⁴⁷ In December 1934, the Government Propaganda Service was founded and in 1936 there came into force a decree on the compulsory publication of the official texts by all dailies.

The authoritarian leaders of the Baltic States, while exercising a policy of censorship launched their own media with its own set of positive control measures. The most successful of these regime subsidised publications was the Latvian daily *Jaunākās Ziņas* with 200,000 copies in 1939; then the Lithuanian daily *Lietuvos Aidas* with 90,000 copies and in Estonia the daily *Uus Eesti* managed 22,000 in 1934.

A growing diversity, rising journalistic quality and extended circulation of the press of the Baltic States brought the sphere of the media by the middle of the 1930s closer to the media of Finland and Norway. The total number of issues of the periodicals published in Estonia in a year grew from 3,400 in 1919 to 5,100 in 1939.⁴⁸ 56 million newspaper copies were published in 1935 in Estonia, and

⁴³ Lauk, E. Demokraatia kriis ja ajakirjandusvabaduse piiramine Eesti Vabariigis 1930ndail aastail. – Keel ja Kirjandus, 1998, 1, 585–596.

⁴⁴ Marandi, R. Must-valge lipu all. – Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis, 1997, 18, 21–22.

⁴⁵ Lauk, E. Eesti Vabariigi ajakirjandusest 1920.–1940. aastatel, 57.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 59.

⁴⁷ Lauk, E., Kaalep, T. Journalism in the Republic of Estonia During the 1920s and 1930s. – In: Towards a Civic Society. The Baltic Media's Long Road to Freedom. Perspectives on History, Ethnicity and Journalism. Eds. S. Høyer, E. Lauk, P. Vihalemm. Tartu, 1993, 124–125.

⁴⁸ Liivaku, U. Eesti raamatu lugu. Jyväskylä, 1997, 149.

87 million in 1936 in Latvia. These figures equate to annual ratios of issues per capita of 53:1 and 43:1 per year. In the late 1930s circulations grew even larger. Latvia's circulation in 1938 is estimated as high as 102 million copies.⁴⁹ The daily circulations of the leading newspapers in 1939 can be estimated at 90,000 in Estonia, at 300,000 in Latvia and at 150,000 copies in Lithuania.⁵⁰

The differences in the rural-urban, socio-geographical segmentation and civil organisation of Baltic societies made a visible impact on the press culture of the Baltic nations, the construction of the public sphere and on social structure of media. Riga as a metropolis dominated Latvia's more commercialised press, and the concentration of both the media and such a large population facilitated the huge circulation of national dailies (100,000–200,000 copies).⁵¹ The overlapping characteristics of Riga, such as being the political centre, the intellectual resource of the nation and the centre of administrative power made a significant impact on the nature of Latvian public sphere and later facilitated Kārlis Ulmanis' power over Latvian society.

The Estonian press was less concentrated. Public space remained segmented. Estonia was politically more balanced because the country had two centres, Tallinn and Tartu. The latter was an old liberal-minded University town and a perfect environment for many civil initiatives that built an integrated space not only for democratic media, but also for interconnected networks to construct an autonomous academic world.

In Lithuania, where one of the main tasks of nation builders in the 1920s was the development of a shared language standard (Lithuanian) and the integration of national resources, the farmers remained the focus of media politics of the Lithuanian state for a long time. The largest newspapers for farmers had 50,000 to 100,000 subscribers.⁵² Those state sponsored newspapers, which targeted the farmers, had been in existence long before the more modern periodicals were printed. The essential responsibilities of these papers was the facilitation of the state funded education of farmers and aid in the creation of networks of state-sponsored co-operatives. It was only during the second decade of independence that a modern, more individualist type of self-consciousness and a civic culture took root among the peasants – the social basis of Lithuanian society.⁵³ The rapid rise of the literacy level was both a condition and a result of this process that contributed to the modernisation of the Lithuanian countryside and the emergence of a 'reading public'. The existence of a 'reading public', and the habits of reading and discussion are the main conditions of the emergence of a modern rational public sphere. In terms of educational capital, there was still not parity between Estonia and Latvia on one side and Lithuania on the other even after considerable

⁴⁹ Liivaku, U. Eesti raamatu lugu, 150.

⁵⁰ Towards a Civic Society, 332, 334, 336.

⁵¹ Švābe, A. Lettlands Historia. Stockholm, 1961, 100.

⁵² Sjumauskas, M. Litauen i dag ock i morgon. Stockholm, 1960, 64.

⁵³ Ambrazevičius, J. Leedulase vaimne pale iseseisvas Leedus. – Looming, 1990, 8, 1121.

efforts by the Lithuanians to close the gap. In 1939, there were 81 people with at least secondary education per 10,000 residents in Lithuania, 176 in Latvia, and 161 in Estonia.⁵⁴

Communicative functions aside, the media also carried out cultural functions. This means that while developing a capability for a rational / irrational discourse, the development of semiotic citizenship is a legitimate task. Semiotic citizenship makes a dimension of liberal political citizenship. Liberal political citizenship is a function of literacy in a broad sense; literacy is variety of cultural competence. "What is now problematic is not illiteracy /---/ but those, who are capable of reading in a physiological and psychological, but not culturally valorised sense, threaten to deconstruct the fixed opposition between influential persons and multitudes. What is the most ideologically undermining is literacy, which is not literacy".⁵⁵

JOURNALS AND MODERNISATION OF PUBLIC SPHERE

The modern public sphere is largely a function of development of "organic intelligentsia" by social classes (in terms of Antonio Gramsci) – journalists, civil servants, lawyers, university teachers etc. National independence and the modernisation of culture and society gave birth to these groups of intelligentsia and in this perspective also to specific layers of the print media. Habermas' ideal citizens, a perfect subject of public discourse was conceived in highly reductive terms – as a rational public individual, and his account of public sphere was based on an Enlightenment epistemology.

The inter-war years are generally seen as a golden age for the newly independent Baltic nations in the foundation of the intellectually demanding and 'socialising' journals. The development of the public sphere in the sense of an institutional installation as well as the repertoire of discourses had great potential to create new opportunities for democratic development of these countries. The number of book titles doubled during this period. There was also an increase in the number of titles of the journals by 500–600% compared to the pre-war years. The formation of the national press culture, the diversification of periodicals and the creation of magazines supporting various forums were the most essential achievements of the Baltic peoples in their first period of national independence.

The development of a set of modern, professionally composed and edited periodicals was important from the standpoint of a developed civil society (autonomous media and civil associations belong together) and the sophistication of the intellectual sphere and discursive culture. Compared to newspapers, journals 'instruct' people by presenting their ideas as certain form of dialogue between

⁵⁴ Narodnoje hozjaistvo SSSR 1922–1972. Moskva, 1972, 38.

⁵⁵ Eagleton, T. *Marxism and Literary Criticism*. With a new introduction by the author. New York, 2002, 54.

professionals and experts. The launching of journals, which operated as forums for intellectuals brought the national public sphere closer to the ideal bourgeois (rational and critical) public sphere in Habermasian meaning which calls for integration to be based on rational critical discourse. Integration, in other words, is to be based on communication rather than domination.⁵⁶

The popularity of University education and especially a high proportion of art and theology students in all the Baltic, and especially in the Lithuanian, Universities was to a large extent a part of the national spiritual heritage.⁵⁷ "Bildungsideologie", related to the German education mentality, associated education with general intellectual creativity (Geisteswissenschaften) rather than with the development of skills as it was characteristic to the British educational system.⁵⁸ The dominance of humanitarian education combined with deep religiosity had serious ideological and political implications. One of the results of the interpretation of the reality perception was a symbolised or spiritualised relationship with national culture and political order, which complicated rational-critical (not ideological) perception of the social world.⁵⁹

There is not a comparative study that concentrates on the editing of magazines and journals in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. There was, however, an exhibition on the publication of journals in 1918–1940 in the Baltic States (100 journals were selected from every state, which made about one-fifth of all magazine titles launched in this period). This exhibition shows that the publications in the Baltic States covered all essential areas that were subjected to the public discourses – history, philosophy, politics, sociology, theology etc.⁶⁰

Detailed statistical data is available on journal printing in Latvia. According to official statistics the number of issues of magazines printed in 1936 totalled 349,217 copies. This is a ratio of 19 copies per 100 inhabitants. This huge output indicates that the Latvian market of printed material was still strongly book oriented. Magazines accounted for about 10% of all printed material published in Latvia in 1936. (It was the most intense market of its kind among the Baltic States and output in the second half of 1930 reached about two to four million copies per year.)

Comparative data on circulation of journals in Estonia and Lithuania are scarce. It is estimated that in 1938, in Lithuania the total circulation of periodicals –

⁵⁶ **Calhoun, G.** The Infrastructure of Modernity: Indirect Relationships, Information Technology and Social Integration. – In: *Social Change and Modernity*. Eds. H. Haferkamp, N. J. Smelser. Los Angeles, Berkeley, 1996, 205.

⁵⁷ **Donskis, L.** *Between Identity and Freedom: Mapping Nationalism in Twentieth-Century Lithuania*, 490.

⁵⁸ **Karady, V.** Juifs et Lutherans dans la system scolaire Hongrois – *Actes de la Recherche et Sciences Sociales*, 1987, 1, 67–86.

⁵⁹ **Ringer, F.** *Buildung: The Social and Ideological Context of German Historical Tradition*. – *History of European Ideas*, 1989, 10, 2, 193–202.

⁶⁰ **Starovoitova, M.** 1918–1940 ilmunud ajakirju Eesti, Läti ja Leedu TA Raamatukogudes. Näituse kataloog. Riia–Vilnius–Tallinn. Tallinn, 1990.

Table 2. The number of magazines issued in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Finland in 1920–1940*

Country/Year	1920	1925	1930	1935	1939
Estonia	27	97	156	189	221
Latvia	45	181	218	166	149
Lithuania	42	85	171	159	134
Finland	217	240	475	601	727

* **Ruutsoo, R.** The cultural profile of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in the first half of the 20th century. – In: *The 20th Century Libraries in the Baltic Sea Region*. Ed. P. Lotman. (Rahvusraamatukogu Toimetised, 11.) 2003, 14.

including newspapers was 830,000⁶¹ or even one million copies⁶². The insufficient economic capacities of the Baltic nations limited their ability to develop their own set of professional and popular periodicals and in this way, successfully institutionalise the public sphere in order to reproduce and participate in the important social, political and philosophical discussions, which were held in Europe. It was not only the development of newspapers but also the public space described by the journals that was damaged by the authoritarian regimes. One of the main aims of the authoritarian leaders in the Baltic States was to silence the working class and social democratic movement (in Latvia – the workers movement, in Lithuania – the rural proletariat). Left wing journals were almost abolished (in Lithuania and Latvia) or faced persecutions (in Estonia). The authoritarian (corporatist) regimes not only minimised public political dialogue but also intellectual participation in public life because of the deformed public sphere.

The achievements and flaws in development of journalism and civil society in the Baltic countries can be better understood if put into a Baltic–Scandinavian context. The Nordic neighbours were the favourite objects of comparison for the Baltic nations in the 1930s. The flourishing of journalism depends very much on a state's politics because journals that serve the public interest rarely have any commercial value.

In all the Baltic States, especially in Latvia, the regimes did much to support and establish literary and philosophical journals that propagated official culture and ideology.⁶³ Thus, these authoritarian regimes exercised hegemonic strategies of control over public space and public mind.

⁶¹ **Simutis, A.** *The Economic Reconstruction of Lithuania after 1918*, 18.

⁶² **Eidintas, A., Žalys, V.** *Lithuania in European Politics: The Years of the First Republic, 1918–1940*. New York, 1997, 280.

⁶³ **Veidemanis, J.** *Social Change: Major Value Systems of Latvians at Home as Refugees and Immigrants*. – In: *Occasional Publications in Anthropology*. (Ethnology series, 30.) Colorado, 1982, 94.

The development of the press was, however, a dimension of an effective civil organisation (the role of press as organiser and agitator). The uninhibited performance of organised journalist movements in the Nordic countries substantially contributed to the quality of the media content and distribution. Nordic editorial leaders were not loath to be harshly critical about the regimes in the Baltic States.

The total circulation of journals published by trade unions and democratic popular movements in Sweden (including journals on professional matters, culture, youth, education, and women issues) was about 1.5 million copies!⁶⁴ The estimated distribution of these journals was about 30 million of copies a year – for a population of 6.2 million people. Magazines and journals formed almost a half of the circulation of all printed matters in the considerably richer Nordic countries. This proportion reflected the State support for culture as well as a very large distribution of popular magazines connected with the development of consumerism of the mass market of the entertainment industry that colonised public space in the 1930s.

PUBLIC SPHERE – A FORUM FOR “WILL OF NATION” OR “PUBLIC INTEREST”?

The history of consciousness should be considered one of the most appropriate research strategies for examining the development of the public sphere. Scholars writing about the collapse of the Baltic democracies in a comparative perspective tend to see the Baltic region as ‘a whole’ in respect of both the development and the role of the public consciousness and the way of dealing with their political history. “There were, after all, many superficial similarities; distinctly anti-democratic paramilitary organisations, vociferous and potentially violent ‘anti-system’ movements, and a dangerous diminution of the centre ground upon which government coalitions had largely rested. Enthusiasm for authoritarian system was widespread amongst the younger generation of intellectuals and students, for whom the national interest occupied a higher place than liberal democratic cosmopolitanism”.⁶⁵ A similar declaration has been made by Kasekamp, but without any reference to Estonia and using very weak arguments concerning Latvia.⁶⁶ These vague generalisations, especially concerning the mentality of younger generations in Estonia, are not correct.

The Habermasian model of the rational public sphere has been criticised on good grounds. Like the self-legitimizing rhetoric of the mainstream news journalism, it is based on Enlightenment epistemology – on belief in the objective

⁶⁴ Olberg, P. *Rootsi töölisdemokraatia*. – Akadeemia, 1940, 53–55.

⁶⁵ Kirby, D. *The Baltic World 1771–1993. Europe’s Northern Periphery in the Age of Change*. London; New York, 1995, 328.

⁶⁶ Kasekamp, A. *Right-Wing Movements in the North-East Baltic*. – *Journal of Contemporary History*, 1999, 34, 4, 596.

truth and in knowledge as an unmediated representation of the world. In terms of these criteria the Baltic world was a very different place. In this perspective, it is complicated to assess the construction of discourses and setting of arguments as rational or irrational. The spectrum of political cultures and dominant mentalities, which constituted public consciousness of every national community in the Baltic region, was quite different and developed in the years of independence in different directions. One of the methods to reveal the differences in construction and map them is to look closer at conceptualisation of nationalism and the content (interpretations) given to the ideas related to the “will of nation” and “public interest”. Some approaches exist in understanding how a general will can be constructed.

There is no doubt that the collapse of the young Baltic democracies was connected with the weakness of the cultural tradition of legislation and also with the democratisation of the public sphere. Lithuanian scholar Vincas Trumpa’s statement that Lithuania during the inter-war period transformed her will-to-power into will-to-culture, and thereby transformed from *Naturvolk* to *Kulturvolk*⁶⁷ is correct, though very general.

There was a long way to go from the ‘literary public sphere’ that was formed mainly by doctors, lawyers and literati (in Estonia and Latvia) or by priests and journalists (in Lithuania) to the creation of a genuine (liberal) political public sphere as partner and also opponent to the state. The concept of *Kulturvolk* tells us a little about the ideas that shaped the public sphere. There are grounds to argue that the development of political culture in Estonia and Latvia not only received a boost from the establishment of *Kulturvolk*, but from the transformation of nation from *Kulturvolk* to *state nation* and *civil nation*.

The national public sphere (like the civil society) can only achieve full development when the democratic national state has been constituted both as the administration and as the framework of society. The main agents of this change are bourgeoisie and civil society. The conflict or co-operation between the dominant elites determines the “embourgeoisement” of nations. Lithuanian bourgeoisie remained weak and fragmented in the 1920s and 1930s, and was unable to offer a social and intellectual basis for developed political journalism and an independent rational public sphere. The will-to-culture, which was the principal driving force behind the nation building politics of inter-war Lithuania was based on conservative nationalist drive.

The political elite of the new nation states experienced a growing tension between constitutionally defined community and market based liberal principles of economy on one side, and a need for mobilisation of the nations and a call for effective articulation of “national interests” on the other. Political confrontations and ideological fragmentation of the public space became a challenge to the projects of accelerated development in the ethnically divided and institutionally poorly integrated societies. The most dramatic effects produced these tensions

⁶⁷ Trumpas, V. The flourishing of the philosophy and culture in Lithuania. – Methmenis, 1986, 51, 165–166. (In Lithuanian.)

quite soon in Lithuania. The political parties and party presses and all representatives of democracy in general received the strong impression that the top elite was unable to mobilise the Lithuanian nation. According to observations made by K. Pakstas (an American professor of Lithuanian origin), the Lithuanian political parties experienced heavy ambiguity. They were “not satisfied with the political democracy and equality before the law. They strive for the higher cultural standard for the masses and substantial living comforts for the poor. They believe in planned economy, in co-operative forms of business and industry, and in regulated capitalism, yet, adhere strongly to the principles of private property and private initiative.”⁶⁸ A representative democracy that could be seen as a means of coping with such an ambiguity was perceived as ‘alien’ and not a natural answer to the mental stance of the nation. Similar ideas found popular support in Latvia and to a lesser extent in Estonia.

The concept of ‘We’ – a vision about a national community naturally included an implicit or explicit (articulated) assumption about democracy, national interests and freedom of speech (the formation of public opinion as an aspect of the public sphere). The formation of the public sphere depended on the understanding of the essence of the ‘public’ and ‘public opinion’ which could be interpreted predominantly in terms of ‘national interests’/‘public interest’ or in terms of ‘general will’/‘will of nation’. The idea of ‘national interest’ emerged and developed as a defining concept in the new national political space that was quite different from the provincial political culture exercised in the Baltic region. The awakening of the ‘Baltic tribes’ in the second half of the 19th century within the framework of the Russian empire facilitated the ‘Hegelian-Herderian’ self-interpretation. This defined public opinion in terms of substantial ‘general will’ (as either the revolutionary will of the proletariat or the ‘will of nation’), and effectively resisted the categorisation of national interest as an articulated liberal discursive space.

A deliberative-rationalist interpretation of the nature of public sphere, which is space for discussions on interests of nation, and the substantial ‘voluntaristic’ conception of the ‘will of nation’, which needs a forum to surface, belong to radically different political discourses. They are also based on quite different assumptions about the nature of social and political order, and implied competing concepts about the substance of the public sphere that might become the basis for the politics of the future. In light of these alternatives it is possible to understand the differences in civil culture and mentality of the Baltic nations. It has been argued that the slide into authoritarianism of the mass subject came from a public fear of modernity. This stems from the refusal of people to recognise the modern concept of a public sphere. Lithuania was alone among the Baltic States, where the leadership openly took a conservative and overtly anti-modern stand and started to develop a nationalist-conservative national identity for the Lithuanian nation.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Pakstas, K. Lithuania. Chicago, 1954, 68.

⁶⁹ Sabaliūnas, L. Lithuania in Crises. From Nationalism to Communism 1939–1940. Bloomington; London, 1972.

Thus, from the perspective of the 'accelerated development' project the collapse of democracy became only an issue of political culture or collaboration of the intelligentsia with the authoritarian regimes. It was a problem of the capital of ideas, of giving preference to the historically conditioned type of public sphere and 'communicative standards' that were expected to be the most effective to integrate the social, political and cultural realms into a cohesive 'national world'. There are considerable differences among the Baltic States in the installation of the dominant representative discourses. The collapse of Lithuanian democracy looks to be a specific case in this context.

The vision of Lithuania's substantial 'will of the nation' that was shared by the younger generation was developed into a political philosophy by president Antanas Smetona whose ideas originated from the literary circles around the newspaper *Viltis* (*Hope*). Plato, his favourite authoritarian philosopher and his book *The Republic* ("Politeia") inspired Smetona's vision that shaped the official ideology of Lithuania for almost two decades and dominated the public sphere. Smetona combined a formidable critique of modern society with nostalgia for the lost greatness of Lithuania and an integrated political community of the past. His favourite idea was the recovery of solidarity and freedom through the operation of the general will of a reconstituted state. Smetona's vision was that the 'organic state', unlike parliamentary democracy, was best suited to express the 'will of nation'.⁷⁰ A certain messianic world-perception facilitated the development of a highly spiritualised philosophy of Lithuanian history, which had its origins in German philosophy and Russian literature.⁷¹

Latvians also belong to the 'latecomers' in terms of modernisation and nation building. In Latvia, a shared public sphere emerged in which national minorities were also among the active participants. However, being more industrialised than the other Baltic States, Latvia remained socially and ethnically deeply divided. Mental and physical traumas that developed from the tragedies of the Russian Revolution of 1905 and casualties of the World War I made the nation desperate. Open debates on nation building, disputes on popular discourses of the 'will of nation' and 'public interest' made the positions of politicians more ambivalent, and the public sphere was for a decade open for debates between nationalists and social democrats, between ethnic Latvians and the minorities. Serious flaws in performance of the main instrument of articulating the 'national interest' – the parliament (*Saeima*) – had a devastating effect on the rational discourse. Alongside rising nationalism the concept of the 'unity of nation' gained power in the 1930s, when international political life became increasingly inflammable (both Nazis and Stalinists spoke of the 'general will'). After the coup in 1934, the ideals of the democratic participatory republic were replaced by the two main slogans of the new regime: the *vadonisprincipis* (*Führerprinzip* – the infallibility of the

⁷⁰ Sužiedelis, S. *Historical dictionary of Lithuania*. London, 1997, 204

⁷¹ Donskis, L. *Between Identity and Freedom: Mapping Nationalism in Twentieth-Century Lithuania*, 477–479.

supreme leader), and *Latvian Latvia*. The loss of democracy meant the end of public discussions and the loss of alternative concepts of Latvian society other than those proposed by the state.⁷²

Political fluctuation in Estonia occurred within the same conceptual framework, but a different civilisational context. 95% of the Estonian population was literate. The deficit of political culture undermined popular support to the representative democracy. The closure of the Parliament by Konstantin Päts and the ensuing ban of all political parties were articulated in a very pragmatic language – as a means to stop the rise of the fascist movement. A corporate governmental party *Isamaaliit (Patriotic Front)* was designed to build networks for creating a functional national unity. Päts made use of a shared disdain for party squabbles and did not consider parliament to be a legitimate representative of the Estonian people.⁷³ However, the paternalistic outlook of Päts who saw himself as an embodiment of the national interests was quite different from the vocal description by Ulmanis of himself as *Tautas Vadonis (Führer des Volkes)*.⁷⁴ The highly exaggerated nationalist rhetoric distanced Estonia from its Southern neighbours on discursive grounds – it became hard to build a shared discursive space.⁷⁵

A liberal-nationalist understanding of the public sphere is the outcome of a critical and pragmatic public discussion. The other – conservative-nationalist approach – refers to the ‘will of the nation’ and makes it an unreflective force of common assumptions and beliefs. That latter understanding implied the repudiation of the concept of the rational public sphere in favour of the illiberal idea of an intrusively political society in which the autonomous public sphere has no place.

BROADCASTING AND MODERNISATION OF PUBLIC SPACE IN THE BALTIC STATES

The rise of telecommunication (telegraph, telephone, and more importantly by the beginning of the 20th century radio) had a deep effect on the development of public sphere. A profound change took place in both the social structure of public sphere and in the type of socio-cultural interaction. New channels contributed to the development of democracy but changed also the balance of state and civil society. Unlike the press, telecommunication basically undermines social segregation as it establishes the infrastructure for a “shared informational environment”.⁷⁶ But electronic media builds also a new type of infrastructure,

⁷² Pabriks, A., Purs, A. *Latvia: The Challenges of Change*. London; New York, 2001, 21.

⁷³ Smith, J. D. *Estonia: Independence and European Integration*. London; New York, 2002, 22.

⁷⁴ Šilde, A. *Die Entwicklung der Republik Lettland*. – In: *Die Baltischen Nationen: Estland, Lettland, Litauen*. Ed. B. Meissner. Köln, 1991, 21.

⁷⁵ Niitemaa, V., Hovi, K. *Baltian historia*, 395.

⁷⁶ Verstraeten, H. *Media and the Transformation of the Public Sphere*. – *European Journal of Communication*, 1996, 13, 3, 354.

which contributes to the control over society by state and class of owners. "The development of the capitalist economy in direction of monopoly capitalism lead to an uneven distribution of wealth, to rising entry costs to the Public Sphere and thus to unequal access to and control over that sphere /---/. In addition, the growth of the status's role as a co-ordinator and infra-structural provider for monopoly capitalism led to the massive development of state power /---/. Thus the space between civil society and the state which had opened up by the creation of the Public Sphere was squeezed shut between these two increasingly collaborative behemots."⁷⁷ Broadcasting as a type of mass communication was (and is) predominantly mono-logic and 'instructive'. The democratisation of the public sphere as a dimension of genuine modernisation became more ambiguous than on earlier occasions. The nature of the political regime in every Baltic State had a decisively formative impact on the sector of the media.

Institutionalisation of broadcasting

Institutionalisation of broadcasting gave a new breath to the cultural and technical modernisation of the Baltic nations. Its progress mapped new configurations in communication and also revealed problems related to nation building. World War I had become an effective booster for the promotion of the technical modernisation of communication technique in the Baltic States. The experience obtained from military radio service played an important role in the development of broadcasting in all three Baltic States. In spite of the peripheral position and economic weakness of the Baltic countries as compared with old European national states, broadcasting in the Baltic region was started after a brief delay in the early 1920s. Institutional development of broadcasting informs us about the differences in state – civil society relations. Three possible models of broadcasting exist: 1) public service broadcasting based on licence fees (was chosen by Estonia and Latvia); 2) commercial broadcasting based on private capital (common practice in the USA) and 3) totalitarian (the Soviet model). In Lithuania, broadcasting was launched on a transmitter left by the retreating German army⁷⁸ and was operated by the Lithuanian Army. Lithuanian defence forces actively contributed to the cultural life from the very beginning of the independence.⁷⁹ Radio became instrumental in supporting and mediating the policy of the state, especially after the take-over in 1926. For the emerging non-democratic regimes, the control of the 'mass media' was essential to their wider dreams of control. But the temptation was strong even in the old democracies with more liberal

⁷⁷ Garnham, N. Media and the Public Sphere. In: Communicating Politics. Mass Communication and the Political Process. Eds. P. Golding, G. Murdock, P. Schlesinger. Leicester, 1986, 41.

⁷⁸ Vaišnys, A., Krivickiene, V. The Massmedia Structure in Lithuania 1918–1940, 160.

⁷⁹ Ruutsoo, R. European Traditions and Development of Civil Society in the Baltic States 1918–1940, 28, 29–57.

traditions.⁸⁰ After the metamorphic excerpctions of the World War I the modern nation state had begun to dream of a complete management and control of economy and society – of a systematic organisation of the population.

In the beginning of broadcasting the governments of Latvia and Estonia did not adequately value its possibilities in public communication. Efforts to establish a national broadcasting company in Estonia failed because of the disinterest of the rural parties. A concession made with a private company defined very strictly the obligations of a broadcasting company to serve general, cultural and national-educational interests.⁸¹ It was several years before the national governments realised the cultural and political potentials of broadcasting. The paternalistic approach was at the beginning supported by a belief in the indisputable value of international and national 'high culture', and the mission of radio to entertain and educate a society. 'High culture' was perceived as democratic as its aspiration was considered to be a universal educator of citizens as moral subjects.⁸²

The nationalisation of the privately owned radio broadcasting was a common phenomenon in many Scandinavian countries (Finland in 1934). Legislators of these countries wanted to make certain that the radio functioned for the benefit of people.

How to charge the radio audience became a rising problem in connection with broadcasting. Licence fees drastically limited the access to broadcasting in very poor countries like Lithuania. They also had a negative effect in Latvia, Estonia and Finland, although these were much richer countries. After the take-over in 1934, the State control over radio broadcasting was introduced and large public transmitting centres were established.

After the collapse of the democracies, the idea of a public service was more openly used as a cover for promoting a paternalistic or authoritarian media system. It is hard to indicate at the present level of research to what extent the regimes of the Baltic States were mirrored in the structure of radio programmes. There is no doubt that the conservative-paternal regime had different cultural and social preferences.

Radio transmission in Lithuania was from the very beginning in the grip of the power holders. In Estonia before 1934, practically no control had been exerted over the materials aired. The attempts of the authorities to take advantage of the nationalisation of radio were in Estonia rather mild. After nationalisation, no official censorship was enforced, but all performers were required to submit their manuscripts for advance inspection.⁸³ The impact of the Information and Propaganda Service at the Ministry of Internal Affairs (established in 1934) was limited to the

⁸⁰ O'Connor, J., Derk, W. *The Uses and Abuses of Popular Culture: Cultural Policy and Popular Culture*. – *Society and Leisure*, 1991, 14, 2, 467.

⁸¹ Lään, V. *Ringhäälingu sünniloost Eestis*. – *Fakt. Sõna. Pilt*, II. Tartu, 1965, 34.

⁸² O'Connor, J., Derk, W. *The Uses and Abuses of Popular Culture: Cultural Policy and Popular Culture*, 471.

⁸³ Lauk, E., Kaalep, T. *Journalism in the Republic of Estonia during the 1920s and 1930s*, 140.

transmission of the reportage of national holidays and speeches.⁸⁴ Päts' regime appointed his representatives onto the Council of Radio. The way the hidden censorship operated signalled that the regime was concerned about maintaining its democratic image. "Inspection was often motivated by the need to improve the language or contents".⁸⁵ Latvian broadcasting was subjected to strong pressure by the Ulmanis' regime. Patriotic and political programme series were launched. "The coup also instituted organisational changes; the executive staff of the Radio Centre was replaced and in 1937 the Centre became controlled by the Ministry of Public Affairs which disseminated propaganda."⁸⁶ On the eve of the World War II, the radio became an institution of strategic importance and the State control over broadcasting became increasingly systematic and efficient (it was a general tendency in all Baltic States).

Development of technical capacities of national broadcasting

The rising interest by the State became a decisive factor in the modernisation of broadcasting in the Baltic States. In the following paragraphs, the technical development of the broadcasting in the Baltic States and Finland will be compared in order to draw a more complete picture. The technical modernisation of radio transmitters and receivers was very rapid. Differences in the numbers of listeners, the types and capacities of receivers became quite remarkable by the end of the 1930s.

Table 3, below, demonstrates that the broadcasting capacity developed at a different speed in Lithuania compared to the other Baltic Sea countries including Finland. Industrially developed Latvia had its own large radio industry. Also Estonia produced radios of a good quality. In 1932, two 50 KW transmitters operated in Riga and Madona, a 20 KW station in Kuldiga and a smaller one in Liepaja. In 1938, the most modern radio station in the Baltic States was built at Türi, in Estonia, where the development of broadcasting had been quite painful. Transmitting capacity was and remained the lowest in Lithuania. A new radio station was launched in Klaipeda in 1936 and also in Vilnius in 1940.

The data about listeners in the table includes only registered listeners. There were many 'radio pirates' in addition to those who paid the licence fees. There were also a number of those who were exempted from the fee, like schools etc. Therefore, instead of 15,000 officially registered radio listeners the total was considered as high as 20,000.⁸⁷ The listeners were spread very unequally between the rural and urban areas. The audience of radio lived mainly in towns (in 1937, 40% of Latvia's radio receivers was in Riga). In 1935, 80% of Estonian listeners

⁸⁴ Trikkel, I. Ringhääling eile ja täna. Tallinn, 1977, 39.

⁸⁵ Lauk, E., Kaalep, T. Journalism in the Republic of Estonia during the 1920s and 1930s, 140.

⁸⁶ Brikše, I. Journalism in Independent Latvia During the 1920s and 1930s, 152.

⁸⁷ Trikkel, I. Ringhääling eile ja täna, 32.

Table 3. Broadcasting capacities in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Finland in 1926–1940*

	Estonia	Latvia	Lithuania	Finland
<i>Start of Broadcasting</i>	<i>December 1926</i>	<i>November 1925</i>	<i>September 1926</i>	<i>September 1926</i>
Capacity of transmitter:	Tallinn	Riga	Kaunas	Lahti
1926	0.7 KW	2 KW	3.5 KW	15 KW
1930		7 KW	7 KW	40KW(1928)
1938–40	50 KW	50 KW	10KW (1936)	85 KW
Number of listeners in 1930	15,000	29,400	10,528	107,000
Listeners per 1,000 residents in 1930	13	16	5	29
Number of listeners 1939–40	92,000	145,000	77,500–90,000	347,000
Number per 1,000 residents in 1940	84	88	1940 (with Vilnius) 33	94
Hours on air per annum 1929–30	2,166	4,289	–	2,483
per diem 1939–40	5,2	–	3,0	–
per year 1939–40	3,100	6,500	2,777	3,826

* **Ruutsoo, R.** *The Cultural Profile of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in the first half of the 20th century*, 38.

were located in towns.⁸⁸ The more available the radio became, the more it expanded its social mission to provinces, and new 'local' radio stations were launched (in 1926 in Tartu).

Progress in the enlargement of the electronic layer of the public sphere in the Baltic States followed the main European trends. There were nine million licensed radio sets in Britain by 1938.⁸⁹ The introduction of radio broadcasting to Estonia and Latvia was approaching the level of Finland, where in 1939, there was one radio receiver for every 12–13 people. It is interesting that in 1938, the number of radio sets was 862,000 in Poland, 419,000 in Hungary, and 317,000 in Romania; while their number in Czechoslovakia was 764,000, in Denmark 704,000, in Norway 423,000, in Sweden 1,1 million, in Belgium 1,1 million, and in Austria 638,000.⁹⁰ On the eve of the World War II, there was one radio receiver for every

⁸⁸ **Trikkel, I.** *Ringhääling eile ja täna*, 50.

⁸⁹ **Gorman, L., McLean, D.** *Media and Society in the Twentieth Century. A Historical Introduction*. London, 2002, 55.

⁹⁰ *International Historical Statistics. Europe 1750–1988*. Ed. B. R. Mitchell. New York, 1992, 700–704.

10 people in the Nordic countries, while in the countries of East-Central Europe there was one receiver for every 20–30 people. The difference is considerable. It should be also taken into account that in the more prosperous Nordic countries radio receivers were more modern and able to receive signals over longer distances. The price of a radio receiver in most of Western Europe was equal to two week's average wages; in Germany, even one week's. In Estonia, at the same time, a radio receiver cost 100–300 Estonian Kroons⁹¹, which was equal to a wage of eight weeks! A more primitive radio, the detector-receiver, remained popular in Lithuania long after Estonia and Latvia had developed their own radio industries in the 1930s. There were also a lot of enthusiastic detector-receiver builders among students. In every Baltic State two or three journals for amateurs and enthusiasts were launched and the radio-programs of neighbouring countries were transmitted.

The growth of radio broadcasting in the Baltic countries correlated with the general development of their technological industries, communication networks and the modernisation of their urban culture. The correlation between the economic capacity of a country and the development of broadcasting, telephone and telegraph is claimed to be linear.⁹² In terms of the development of other elements important in the effective building of the public sphere (the use of the telegraph and the number of telephones), Lithuania was close to the level of East-Central European countries. In Poland, for example, there was one telephone per 149 residents in 1939, while in Lithuania the respective number was 146. In Estonia, at the same time, there was one telephone per 54 people, and one per 30 in Latvia. The two northern Baltic States were thus technically more advanced than the majority of the East-Central European countries. They were almost on a par with Finland (one telephone per 26 people), but lagged behind the Scandinavian countries where in 1940, there was one telephone per 10 residents.⁹³

Impact of broadcasting on the public sphere

Broadcasting had a strong impact on almost all the important aspects of functioning of the public sphere in terms of redistribution of audiences, media representations and socio-cultural interaction. Geographical, social, cultural and many other 'distances' lost their previous meaning. Communities started to share their experiences with others of the Baltic nations. The attitude of intellectuals in Europe (but also in Estonia⁹⁴) towards radio as a political and cultural agent was initially interested and sceptical. The separation between the state and civil

⁹¹ Pedusaar, H. Kullerist ringhäälinguni. Tallinn, 1990, 174.

⁹² Cherry, C. World Communication: Threat or Promise? A Socio-Technical Approach. Revised Edition. New York; Brisbane; Toronto, 1991, 139.

⁹³ Kalninš, K. Do you know that Latvia? Ludvigsburg, 1956, 49–50.

⁹⁴ Koort, A. Rahvahariduse probleem seoses ühiskonna struktuuri muutustega. – In: Inimese meed. Tartu, 1996, 403–431.

society – which had created a space for the public sphere – began to break down, as states assumed an increasingly interventionist character.⁹⁵ In the old “cultural countries” governments immediately responded to the challenge of the new medium.⁹⁶ The cultural elite of the Baltic States had developed a different political pattern from the older, politically stronger and more traditional European countries. The elite of the Baltic States predominantly belonged to the so-called ‘organic’ elite and did not sense, so acutely, the ‘estranged’ manipulative power of radio and its possible cultural hostility. The attraction of shared identity enabled by the radio in a national language, and national independence reduced the attention and sense of danger. As an example of this Estonian intellectuals almost ignored the debates on the impact of radio and mass-culture on society, which were topical in Europe in the 1930s.

A rapid progress in airing made radio an essential player in the shaping of the public sphere in the 1930s. While at the beginning of the decade only five percent of the population had access to broadcasting, by the end of the decade the number had increased to fifty percent of the population in Latvia and Estonia, and one quarter of the population in Lithuania. The socio-pedagogic and cultural role of broadcasting became significant when the quality of broadcasting improved to the extent that listening to the radio became a special activity and a part of daily routine. The rapid growth of radio broadcasts from a couple of hours to seven and more hours by the end of the 1930s, together with the spread of the cinema had a conspicuous effect on the development of aesthetic taste. The Baltic countries entered the age of entertainment and the local public sphere became more and more colonised by international entertainment culture. The quartet bands established by radios developed into full size orchestras in the 1930s; the readings of plays developed into radio theatres that in addition to music occupied an essential place among the interests of listeners. Radio became a widely spread hobby, a promoter of technical knowledge and more broadly speaking an appraiser of the entire technical culture in Latvia and Estonia.

The different types of discourse that were broadcast were important in the shaping of the public sphere. The structure of programs developed in two main directions – both the function of entertainment and enlightenment were promoted. The number of programs on rational discourses increased while those of religious education and spirituality were reduced. The proportion of aired time for religious programs was relatively standard across Europe: in East-Central Europe no more than two to four percent of the aired time. At the beginning of the 1930s, spiritual programs made up 3.1% of the total broadcasting schedule in Italy, 1.4% in France, 2.5% in Poland, 3.3% in England, 0.7% in Germany and 3.7% in Latvia.⁹⁷ There is no data for Lithuania. The suggestion that in Estonia, in one of the most secular

⁹⁵ Thomson, J. B. *Ideology and Modern Culture*. Cambridge, 1990, 99–101.

⁹⁶ Feilitzen, C. A Historical Review of Radio Research in Sweden. – In: *Radio Research in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden*. Ed. U. Carlsson. (The Nordicom Review, 1.) 1997, 23.

⁹⁷ Raid, L. *Vabamõtlejate ringidest massilise ateismini*. Tallinn, 1978, 239.

countries of Europe, religious programs made 12.3 % of the whole program⁹⁸ is a clear miscalculation⁹⁹.

Radio broadcasting became one of the institutions that provided intellectual workers with work, and the studio became a public institution in a broader sense, which reported not only news and political matters but also on cultural events, science etc. Radio lectures became popular in the second part of the 1930s. The proportion of radio lectures was the highest in Latvia where it constituted up to one-fifth of the entire program schedule.¹⁰⁰ The modernisation of a national state in a socio-pedagogic manner paid its main attention to the mediation of 'high culture', and then to the educational function. Lithuanian researchers emphasise the proportion of children's broadcasts in radio programs. In the middle of the 1930s, the special "Kooliraadio" (School Radio) launched its transmissions in Estonia and the same kind of programme was popular also in Latvia.¹⁰¹

In the middle of the 1930s, music constituted the lion's share of the radio broadcasts. Estonian radio devoted almost the same amount of time to music as Finnish radio (a bit more than 50% of the aired time), while in Latvia music occupied 45–50% of the time, and in Lithuania 38%. Popular music constituted a particularly large amount of the Estonian radio's program (after Italy which was in the second place in Europe), and this made the radio station popular among the neighbouring countries.¹⁰² Playing an established quota of Estonian music also contributed to the nation building function of radio.

Alongside the consolidation of the national public sphere, radio broadcasting also supported changes in the identity building. Though 'authoritarian' by its monologic nature (as expostulated by cultural critics) radio was at the same time a democratic mediator of culture because it broadened the options – access to information and world culture. It also took from the national state the monopoly to be the mediator of culture and ideas. In the 1930s, radio increased Estonia and Finland's mutual interest towards each other. Radio provided access to the local culture (literary programs, radio plays), and at the same time brought the Baltic people closer to the rest of the world, as well as closer to each other through common programs and exchange of programs.¹⁰³

The structure of the population took a shift towards multiple identities. Scholars have claimed that radio hastened the shift from identifying oneself and one's social solidarity with the 'others' on the bases of location and family ties, to identifying oneself on the bases of consumer and taste preferences.

⁹⁸ Lään, V. Kuidas raadio kodanlikus Eestis kirikut teenis. – Küsimused ja Vastused, 1966, 12, 204–205.

⁹⁹ Trikkel, I. Ringhääling eile ja täna, 36.

¹⁰⁰ Salnitis, V., Skujeniks, M. Kultūras Statistika 1918–1937 Latvia starp Europas Valtsim. Rīga, 1938, 150.

¹⁰¹ Lauk E., Kaalep, T. Journalism in the Republic of Estonia During the 1920s and 1930s, 140.

¹⁰² Lään, V. Eesti Raadio. Esimesed 70. Tallinn; Tartu, 1996, 45.

¹⁰³ Vaišnys, A., Krivickiene, V. The Mass Media Structure in Lithuania 1918–1940, 161–162.

Due to the development of electronic media, the institutional configuration of the public sphere in the Baltic States is remarkably different from what it was at the beginning of the 1930s. In the second half of this decade radio broadcasting made impressive progress in the European context. Becoming an important part of the public sphere broadcasting started to influence the construction of identities, civil habits and the community building. It is also possible to talk about the effects of a new type of public sphere on the civic culture of the people. The implications of informational system on social behaviour are now determined not solely via the degree of accessibility to these information systems, but in particular the extent to which the persons involved know about each other's access to these systems. Meyrowitz calls this "explicit access".¹⁰⁴ Due to telecommunications society gains a deeper insight into the off-stage behaviour of the other societal groups, which inevitably affects the way in which people will behave towards each other. The public sphere has become more dynamic, as it is now no longer based exclusively on 'on-stage behaviour' (as was Habermas' public sphere) but on 'off-stage' behaviour as well. As a result, the way in which social identity was formed was also in need of a radical change. Social identity was no longer fed only by one's own space-time setting; increasingly it occurs through confrontation with the other social settings. This deregulation of identity puts the public sphere into a different perspective.¹⁰⁵

HEGEMONIC STRATEGIES AND PUBLIC SPHERE

There are a number of different strategies through which national bourgeoisie maintained control of the public sphere over a period of almost twenty years. Relations between hegemonic strategies and the public sphere are crucial to the understanding of the development of the public sphere. Different periods in the inter-war history of the Baltic nations can be interpreted in this key. The period between 1917–1920 was a huge challenge to European democracies and also to the Baltic nations. The "debate" between different political subjects – classes, nations, territorial units, churches etc trying to make use of very fragmented public sphere of young nations, was not just a conflict of ideologies, where one was better or more correct and used better arguments. Focusing only on 'nationalism' as a dominant form of ideology spiritualises the public sphere. The rule of one class or group over the other or over the rest of society is a matter of hegemonic control over the public sphere and informs us about dominance of one type of public sphere over the other.

Hegemony means that the subject with pretensions about dominance must establish its own moral, political and cultural values as conventional norms of

¹⁰⁴ Meyrowitz, J. *No Sense of the Place. The Impact of Electronic Media on Social Behaviour.* New York; Oxford, 1985, 91.

¹⁰⁵ Verstraeten, H. *Media and the Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 355.

practical behaviour. In this perspective the conflict of different types of ideologies – “polemical ideologies” (plain ideologies) and ‘organic’ ideologies or (ideological movements)¹⁰⁶ applies also to the Baltic States.

The fight over the domination of the Baltic States in the years 1917–1920 illustrates this type of conflict. The failure of the Soviets to colonise the Baltic public spheres (and export “A Great Proletarian Revolution” into the Baltic States) was the result of an unsuccessful hegemonic strategy. This was a defeat in the “hegemonic conflict”, in clashes between ideologies, the polemical and the organic ideologies that have different capacities to colonise the public sphere. The Marxist-Leninist ideology remains an example of a polemical ideology. Doctrinal thought can not without meditation be used to convince the masses, whose traditional views are folkloristic, ‘realistic’ and often grounded on faith, of the ‘correct’ line to be taken at a given historical juncture.¹⁰⁷ Nation-building projects of the Baltic elite were in fact just different modes of articulation of historical ‘folklore’, and were developed into ‘national worlds’ without any other alternative effective ‘folklore’. Nationalist projects of the Baltic nations had had almost a half of a century to mature and develop into the complex ideologies with which they were able to generate a set of political projects.

The Baltic States as independent states, and members of the League of Nations formally entered into a new type of discursive space defined by routines of a legal state. The Baltic nations were made or even forced, by the League of Nations, to follow democratic rules and surrender their legal guarantees to their citizens about full citizens’ rights. Lithuania was the first of the Baltic States to be reluctant at adapting to the accepted characteristics of western civilisation.

Maintaining the potential of public sphere for emancipation, its non-ideological dimension, and the development of publicity into a discursive and rational public sphere was the main challenge for the young Baltic democracies that emerged from the continuum of the collapsed Tsarist Russia. The establishment of parliamentary democracies in the Baltic States meant an institutional choice with fundamental importance, and installing the framework for “debates” on the many different levels of power sharing.

Once the independence of the Baltic States was established the national public spheres received new perspectives that were “bourgeois” in Habermasian terms, but operated in a style, which was much closer to the Marxist understanding of ideological domination. Habermas himself did not deny the fact that the formation of “bourgeois public sphere was ideological to the extent it secured the domination of one class over another.¹⁰⁸ But it was “more than merely ideological to the degree that it constituted the normative ideal of the dissolution of domination into

¹⁰⁶ Gramsci, A. Intellectuals. – In: *The Cultural Studies Reader. History, Theory, Practice*. Eds. J. Munns, G. Rajan. London; New York, 1995, 111.

¹⁰⁷ Conte-Costa, L. A. *The Marxist Theory of Ideology. A Conceptual Analyses*. – Acta Universitatis Uppsalaensis, 1991, 33, 124.

¹⁰⁸ Habermas, J. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 86.

consensual rule of the reason through the mechanisms of open discussion and debate”.¹⁰⁹ The maintenance or not of this normative ideal and either explaining and/or understanding the outcome is a matter of research.

Research that aims to understand differences in the mental development of the Baltic States between the two World Wars focuses usually on different types of nationalist ideologies, which are seen as the main actors and which made a decisive impact on the shaping of their communities. But no less important than the impact of imported ideologies is the mental construction of a community, which is imbedded in and reproduced by the structure of the public sphere. The Estonian and Latvian intellectuals shared to the same extent that which the German and also the Russian intellectual tradition possessed, which produced a certain type of “cultural individualism”.¹¹⁰

It must be considered that the history of consciousness is not only reproducing the ideas – but also the public sphere. The continuity has its roots in a form of hegemony that is exercised in the community. The forms, standards, habits etc. of maintaining intellectual and mental hegemony are carried on by that class of intellectuals, who reproduce forms of control in any new environment. In this context Antonio Gramsci makes the important distinction between the urban and rural type of intellectuals. “Intellectuals of the urban type have grown up along with industry and are linked to its fortunes. Their function can be compared to that of subalterns in the army. Their job is to articulate the relationship between the entrepreneur and the instrumental mass”.¹¹¹ The rural type of intellectuals “brings into contact the peasant masses with the local and state administration (lawyers, notaries etc.). Because of this activity they have an important socio-political function, since professional mediation is difficult to separate from political”.¹¹² The difference between instrumental and ideological function is that they had made a strong impact on the discursive habits and the hegemonic domination of both types of intellectuals.

All three Baltic counties were predominantly agrarian countries. Intellectuals of all these countries were predominantly from rural backgrounds. But equally as important was that in Latvia and Estonia the proportion of urban intellectuals was far greater than in Lithuania. Within this urban sphere was one of the most dominant of the institutions that had an essential impact on development of the discursive culture – the Catholic or Lutheran Church. In Estonia and Latvia the formation of the urban type of intellectual was based on a combination of the urban environment and a protestant discursive culture. The majority of the rural intellectuals in Lithuania reproduced over a much longer period the rural type of hegemonic domination over the entire national community. This type of hegemony

¹⁰⁹ Baker, K. M. *Defining the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century France*. – In: Habermas and the Public Sphere. Ed. C. Calhoun. Cambridge; Massachusetts, 1992, 187.

¹¹⁰ Donskis, L. *Between Identity and Freedom: Mapping Nationalism in Twentieth-Century Lithuania*, 489–491.

¹¹¹ Gramsci, A. *Intellectuals*, 103.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 104.

also defined the discursive culture and character of public sphere whereas the dominant discursive culture of Estonia and Latvia was of the more critical-rational type.

The key difference between the structures of the public sphere is the timing in collapse of democracies. The Baltic States could never enjoy a stable political environment, which was a privilege of the Nordic countries. In the context of the permanent illegal subversive activities exercised by Soviet Russia, the Baltic States could not afford to give up Martial Law. As the crises of the democratic model of rule deepened in Europe, the Baltic States had two principal options – to maintain a hegemonic model of domination based on the normative argument of a bourgeois democracy or seek other types of modernisation project.

The ability to maintain a parliamentary state is the key element of the national public sphere and was of crucial importance both to hegemonic projects and to hegemony generally. Hegemony and hegemonic projects point to two different aspects of the modernising state and society. In the case of hegemonic projects the State should be seen as a strategic terrain that allows different social groups and hegemonic blocs to unfold different projects and strategies.¹¹³ Hegemonic leadership means that the dominant part of the national elite will not only impose its rule, but must also demonstrate its claim to be the intellectual and moral leaders, and this requires the arts of persuasion and a continuous labour of creative ideological intervention. This basically means hegemonic control over the public sphere.

In the perspective of hegemonic domination the public sphere represents an operationalisation of civil society's capacity for self-organisation, which allows it to alter its own condition of existence by means of rational-critical discourse of reason *on* and *to* power, yet not *by* power, but by society itself.¹¹⁴ The moral and intellectual hegemony, in Lithuania and Latvia, of the liberal bourgeois-type political elite were not challenged by the deficiencies of civil activism. The main goal of the introduction of censorship was to limit the development of civil society but also to stop the inadequacies of civic activism (as was the case in Estonia where liberals introduced censorship against populists). Leaders of the Baltic States attempted to compensate for their historical weakness by carrying through a reorganisation of civil society in order to pre-empt the direct activity of the masses. The real effect of censorship depended on the extent the autonomy of civil society was maintained. This was crucial to the development of the public sphere not only as rational-critical discursive space but also as "folklore" which was not accessible to censorship.

Latvian censorship differed from Estonian and Lithuanian censorship in that it was mainly defined politically (it did not target absolute cultural hegemony) and its impact on the cultural activities and ideological-philosophical discussions has

¹¹³ Joseph, J. Hegemony in the Fourth Dimension. – Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour, 2001, 31, 3, 271.

¹¹⁴ Lii, D. T. Social Spheres and Public Life, 115–135.

been described as minimal¹¹⁵ without attempts to restrain intellectual life.¹¹⁶ The strategy of political hegemony chosen in Lithuania and Estonia resulted with a stimulating effect on the development and sophistication of the public sphere. Important sections of civil society, the Catholic Church in Lithuania and the network of associations in Estonia continued to operate after censorship was installed.

This stimulating effect could be seen from the growth in the number and quality of important cultural and philosophical magazines. By 1939 an intellectual prevalence in the public sphere already belonged to the Catholic Church, which possessed twenty-six magazines, by contrast *Tautininkai*, the political party of President Smetona, commanded only eleven magazines.¹¹⁷ Among the 160 various periodical publications of Lithuania, there were several that clearly formulated general national ideals in the sphere of spiritual and material culture, that created their own ideologies, and were influential in their communities. We may mention among these the most popular and widely read dailies “XX Amžius” (20th Century, Catholic), “Lietuvos Žinios” (liberal) and “Lietuvos Aidas” (nationalist); the weekly magazine “Naujoji Romuva” (Catholic) and the monthlies “Židynis” (Catholic), “Kultura” (liberal and socialist) and “Vairas” (nationalist). Each of these was published by a specific ideological organisation, and the most important national ideals found expression through an interchange and development of ideas in these and similar publications.¹¹⁸ It is notable that the circulation of the Catholic press in Lithuania, 1935–1939, increased at a rate of double that of the regular press.¹¹⁹ Catholic dailies had large following outside traditionally Catholic circles and Catholic academic journals were among the most prestigious cultural weeklies. These developments signal that the Catholic press gained popularity as a kind of “protest culture”.

The same tendency is observable also in Estonia. Hidden and open debates between the ‘official’ and the liberal-pluralist approach in cultural and political matters did not result in Estonia of the opposition being marginalized. The strategy of hegemonic domination chosen by the authoritarian regime in Estonia contributed to the debate, with the increase of number of periodicals, which became important forums. So in the mid 1930s, with the maturing of the national culture and the enlargement of the middle class, a public sphere continued despite the authoritarian regime making significant progress. New high-quality cultural and social-philosophical magazines were established mainly by academic circles (journals “Akadeemia”, “Tänapäev”). The state-sponsored journals launched by people close to official Estonia became important forums of discussion and were open also to liberal intelligence (“Varamu”).

¹¹⁵ Roolah, A. Nii see oli. Kroonika ühest unustuse liiva vajunud ajastust. Tallinn, 1991, 290–310.

¹¹⁶ Lieven, A. The Baltic Revolution: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and the Path to Independence. New Haven, 1993, 70.

¹¹⁷ Eidintas, A., Žalys, V. Lithuania in European Politics: The Years of the First Republic 1918–1940, 130.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 131.

¹¹⁹ Sužiedėlis, S. Historical Dictionary of Lithuania. European Historical Dictionaries, 21, 1997, 84–85.

CONCLUSION

When the Soviets occupied the three small Baltic States of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania during the World War II the independent public spheres of these nations ceased to exist. All three had long been the target of systematic Soviet propaganda in their own languages. This meant that their neighbour had helped to shape the public sphere. The most powerful radio transmitter in all Europe that served the Komintern agency began broadcasting in Moscow in 1922. On the eve of occupation the Soviets started to dictate to the Baltic States the main lines of some of the content of their broadcasting. After annexation the radio broadcasting was totally reshaped and communication replaced by propaganda.

The Soviet leaders in contrast to the Baltic dictators fully understood the substantial role of the media especially journals as an intellectual space, which had maintained the mental autonomy of the democratic part of the elite of Baltic nations. The Soviet regime did not allow the continuation of either the editing or publishing of journals on history, sociology, theology, or cultural matters etc., which naturally belong to a complex of developed national cultures and serve as interest forums. The effect of this was a dramatic decrease in the number of the titles of journals in the Baltic languages compared with the pre-annexation period. As far as formal-institutional opportunities and discursive qualities created by the Soviet public space were concerned, the Baltic nations were thrown back to the beginning of the 20th century.

MODERNISEERUMINE JA AVALIKU SFÄÄRI KUJUNEMINE BALTI RIIKIDES KAHE MAAILMASÕJA VAHELISTEL AASTATEL

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Artikkel toetub Jürgen Habermasi arendatud kodanliku avaliku sfääri kujunemist uurivale väga mõjukale ideestikule. Mitmes aspektis ajalooliselt lähedaste Balti riikide võrdlus lubab testida Habermasi ideid ja täpsustada Balti riikide arenguerisusi esimesel iseseisvusperioodil. Neil aastail kujunesid Vene impeeriumi provintsidest omanäolised poliitilised üksused, mille konstitutiivse elemendi moodustas avalikkus. Avalikkuse sfääril oli riikluse ja ühiskonna edasises arengus keskne tähtsus. Avalikkuse institutsionaalne konfiguratsioon (väljaannete struktuur ja maht, meedia eri liikide esindatus) arenes kõikides Baltimaades jõudsalt ja saavutas 1940. aastaks modernsetele rahvuskultuuridele ja ühiskondadele iseloomuliku funktsionaalse keerukuse, mis ületas Eestis ja Lätis mõnevõrra Ida- ja Kesk-Euroopa taseme.

Rahvusliku iseseisvuse saavutamine andis võimaluse "kodanliku avalikkuse" kui ratsionaalse ja kriitilise avalikkuse arengule, mille juurdumise eeltingimusteks on demokraatlik riiklus ja autonoomne kodanikuühiskond. Liberaalse avalikkuse kujunemisel oli Balti riikide stardipositsioon erinev. Eesti ja Läti arenev kodaniku-

avalikkus toetus pluralistlikule seltsiliikumisele ja hea kirjaoskusega rahvaste raamatukultuurile. Leedu avalikkus aga leidis tuge korporatiivselt kirikult, selle nõrgemat institutsionaliseeritust ühiskonnas kompenseeris spirituaalne ideologiseeritus.

Demokraatia tuleviku mõtestamisel oli tähtis avaliku arvamuse tõlgendus eri kultuurides ja hiljem riikides. Balti riikide iseseisvumisel oli rahvuslikult meeletatud avalikul arvamusel olnud keskne roll. Kuid ühelt poolt Leedu ja teiselt poolt Eesti ja Läti esindasid ajaloolise arengu lähedusele vaatamata erinevaid rahvusliku eneseteadvustuse tüüpe. Leedus kalduti avalikku arvamust valdavalt nägema "rahva vaimu", selles avalikuks saanud olemusliku "üldise tahte" väljendusena. Ajalooline areng ei esindanud seega mitte vaadete pluralismi, vaid "õigete" ja "vaenulike" arvamuste konflikti. Kujuteldav ühtekuuluvus pidi siduvalt hõlmama ka kultuurielu. Eestis ja Lätis oldi avaliku arvamuse tõlgendamisel lähemal arusaamale sellest kui "rahvuslikku huvi" kujundavast foorumist. Esimene seisukoht toetus avaliku arvamuse spirituaal-substantsiaalsele käsitlusele, teine aga oli lähemal avaliku arvamuse pluralistlikule tõlgendamisele.

Kuna vaimset tegurit käsitleti Balti rahvaste auahnetes tulevikuprojektides "kiirendatud arengu" olulise ressursina, siis arenes Baltimaid haaranud sisepoliitiline kriis suuresti ka võitluseks avalikkuse kui poliitilise ja arengulise ressursi ümber. Riigipöörded olid katseteks allutada avalik sfäär kui valitseva eliidi võimu tagav ressurs. Rakendamist leidis nii keelustav ehk negatiivne kui ka ettekirjutav ehk positiivne avalikkuse mõjutamine. Kõikides riikides oli tsensuur. Formaalselt oli see jäigem Leedus ja Lätis, pehmeim Eestis. Kõikides Balti riikides püüti meedia üle kontrolli saavutada ka autoritaarsete vahenditega – sponsoreeriti ajakirjandust kuni poolametlike väljaannete loomiseni ja kujundati ettekirjutuste ning kohustuslike juhtkirjadega avalikku arvamust.

Eesti ja Leedu avalikkuse tuleviku seisukohalt oli otsustava tähtsusega, et neis riikides jäi püsima riigist suuresti sõltumatu mittepoliitiline kodanikuühiskonna osa – Eestis seltside ja Leedus opositsioonilise katoliku kiriku kaudu. Avaliku arvamuse pluralismi toetavad institutsionaalsed alusstruktuurid säilisid. Lätis tõi enam polariseerunud alternatiivsete eliitide süvakonflikt kaasa kodanikuühiskonna tõsise piiramise ja negatiivse kontrolli jäikuse. Struktuurse autonoomia säilitanud avalikkuse üle hegemoonilise kontrolli kehtestamiseks pidi valitsev kiht Eestis ja Leedus tekitama oma võimu õigustavaid moraalseid ja intellektuaalseid argumente (ideoloogia). Eesti ja Leedu tingimustes, kus säilis kodanikuühiskonna autonoomia, toetas ideoloogiline võitlus avaliku arvamuse pluralismi säilimist, piiratudki dialoog stimuleeris ratsionaalsuse arengut.

Ühegi Balti riigi niigi hilise arenguga avalik sfäär ei saanud parlamentaarse demokraatia puududes kujuneda ratsionaalseks liberaalseks avalikkuseks. Diskursiivne "tõe režiim" takistas privaatsusse tõrjutud kriitilise mõtte jõulist avalikutumist. Kahe maailmasõja vahelises Baltikumis suutis kõige tõhusamalt modernse, s.t kriitilise ja ratsionaalse avalikkuse elemente kuni 1934. aasta riigipöördeni arendada Läti, kõige liberaalsem püsis autoritaarse režiimi tingimustes Eesti avalik sfäär.