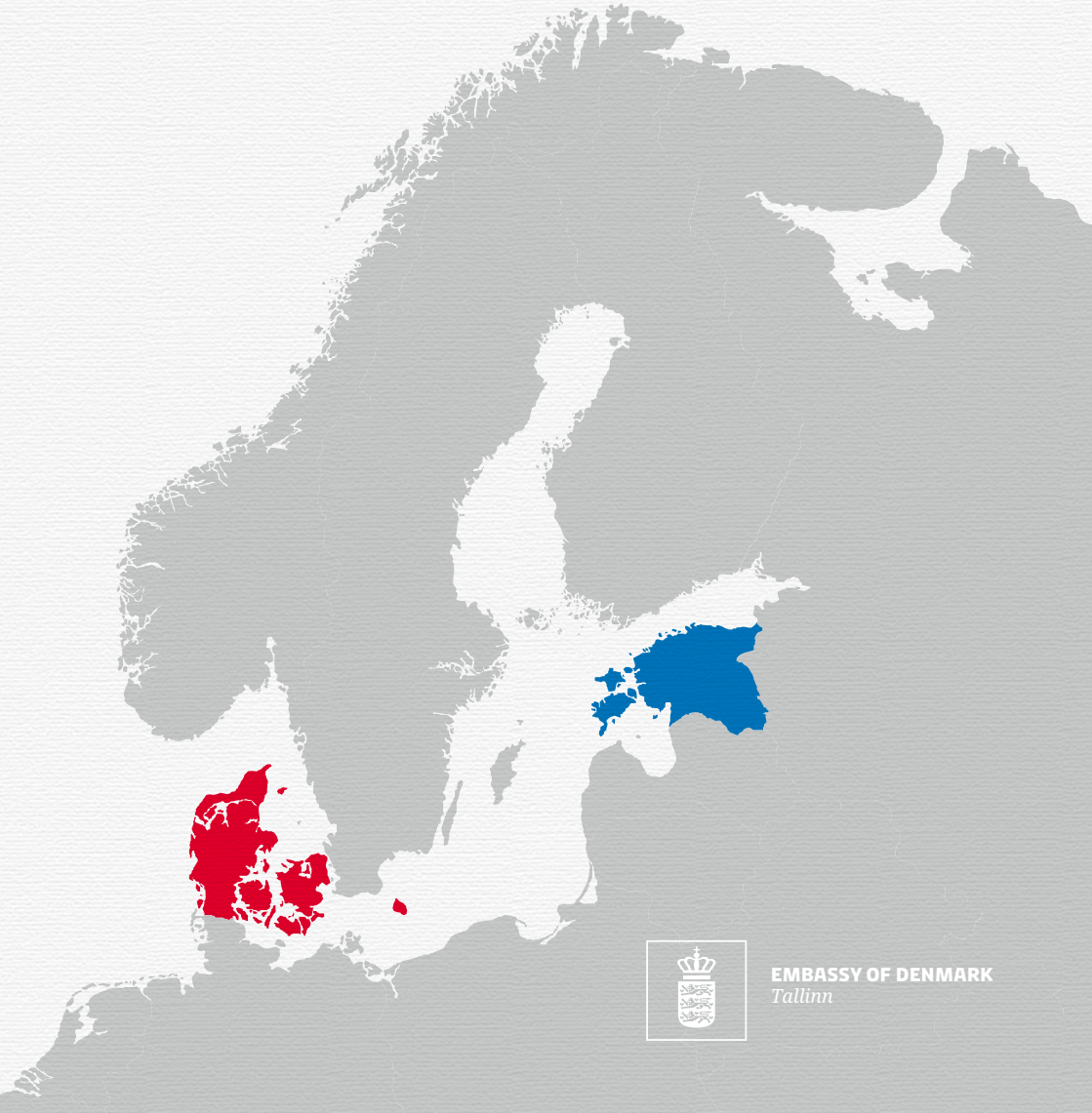
Denmark and Estonia

100 Years of Diplomatic Relations



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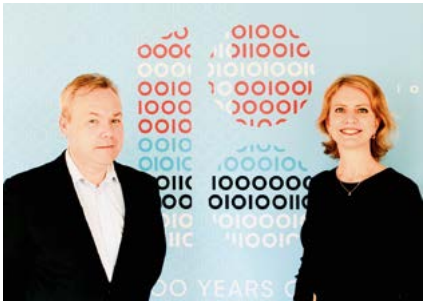

Kristina Miskowiak Beckvard,
Danish Ambassador to Estonia
and
Jens Christian Andersen,
Former Deputy Head of Mission

Preface

The year 2021 is an important milestone for the diplomatic relations of Denmark and Estonia. 100 years have passed since Denmark's recognition of Estonia in 1921, and 30 years have passed since Estonia regained independence from the USSR in 1991.

Denmark was not a bystander but an active participant at the frontline of recognising Estonia's independence. In 1919, 200 Danish military volunteers risked their lives in the Estonian War of Independence. In 1921, the Danish Consul General J. C. Johansen handed Estonia's Foreign Minister Ants Piip the letter recognising Estonia *de jure*. In 1991, the efforts of the former Danish Foreign Minister Uffe Ellemann-Jensen made Denmark one of the first countries to restore diplomatic relations with Estonia.

This year, we celebrate our shared history and look back at some of the events and prominent figures who strengthened the bonds of Estonia and Denmark.

As we do so, we also look to the future and at how we can continue to nourish our relations through shared cooperation. On 5 February 2021, the day of our 100 years of diplomatic relations, the Embassy together with the Estonian and Danish Foreign Ministries hosted the event "Estonia and Denmark – Going Green Together", discussing how future collaborations within the green energy sector could be achieved together. We are proud that several Estonian and Danish Ministers participated and encouraged the progress that is now taking place in the field of wind power, with several Estonian and Danish energy companies now working together for a greener future.

As this booklet is published on 24 August 2021, exactly 30 years after the reestablishment of the diplomatic relations with Estonia, we wish to reaffirm our strong bonds by highlighting our shared history from a historical, cultural and military perspective, and to hear from some of the individuals who participated in building this unique history.

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Speeches from the event "100 years of diplomatic relations between Denmark and Estonia – Going Green Together"

5 February 2021

Jeppe Kofod
Danish Minister for Foreign Affairs

Speech by Danish Foreign Minister

Today is an important day for our countries.
Exactly 100 years ago, our diplomatic relations were established. On the 5th of February 1921. Not long after Estonia's independence. Later this year, we will also celebrate the 30th anniversary of the restoration of our diplomatic relations.
Denmark was among the first to resume official contacts with Estonia in 1991. For this, I am very proud.
For me personally, Estonia's fight for freedom shaped me as a person and a politician. This was not least due to an Estonian student named Neeme Korv whom I met in 1992 when I myself was a high school student. As some of you might know, I grew up on the Island of Bornholm – a Danish Island in the middle of the Baltic Sea. As a young high school student, I attended the first Baltic Sea Camp – a meeting for students from islands in the Baltic Sea. This was where I met Neeme Korv. At the time, I was very passionate about the environmental issues in the Baltic Sea, as my friends and family had felt the consequences of overfishing. But Neeme Korv said something that put things into perspective for me. He said:

"How can you talk of all of your little problems when the Red Army is still occupying the streets of Tallinn, Riga and Vilnius?"
"Why is it that You are free countries and We are not?"

This affected me deeply.
There were young people like me – living only a few hundred kilometres away – for whom freedom was not a given. For the first time, I myself clearly felt the responsibility of fighting for a different and more just world. This became a turning point for me, and it laid the foundation for my political interest and my future political career. Therefore, I am proud that Denmark was an active supporter of Estonia's independence, and I am proud of the role that Denmark played with regard to Estonia's integration into the international community. Not least when Estonia became a member of the EU and NATO.

Over the past 30 years, Estonia has undergone an impressive development into a strong democracy, a vibrant and

digitized economy, and a trusted international partner.
30 years ago, the Nordics were role models for the Baltics. Today, the Baltics – and not least Estonia – have become role models themselves. We should now build on this. By working together to defend and promote our common values in the European Union, and by pushing for positive democratic change within our neighbourhood. We will, for instance, continue our strong support and stand in solidarity with the people of Belarus. Who fight for democracy and freedom.

For Estonia and Denmark alike, preserving security and stability in our region is a shared ambition. I deeply regret recent developments, where Russian military activities cause rising tensions in our neighbourhood. Only five years ago – in Ukraine – Russia showed willingness to move established borders in Europe through brute force. We cannot allow Russia – even for one second – to doubt our willingness to defend our Allies and our values.

Denmark is determined to stand by Estonia. Your security is our security.
That is why we contribute to NATO's enhanced Forward Presence. Last month, 200 Danish soldiers returned from Tapa. We truly hope we will be back next year and expect to consult with our parliament soon. This is also the reason why we have contributed seven times since 2004 to NATO's air policing in the Baltics. We plan for a new deployment by the end of this year, and it is the reason why we have established the Multinational Division Headquarters in Adazi, together with NATO allies. Another future challenge, where I strongly believe we should increase our cooperation, is climate. Though we are small countries, we can make changes.
An example is the recent EU adoption of ambitious council conclusions on climate and energy diplomacy in the Foreign Affairs Council. Estonia and Denmark worked together with other countries. To ensure that the EU takes a leading role in, for example, promoting a worldwide phase-out of coal in energy production. In the Council, we also agreed that the transition from coal to clean energy must be fair. It must leave no one behind.

The economic recovery after COVID-19 will be a major joint challenge in the time to come.
The Recovery plan for Europe includes measures to ensure that the EU is Built Back Better and Greener. Denmark has a long history of green energy transition. We are ready to share our experience, solutions and know-how. To sustain the continued green transition in Estonia. I am sure you will hear much more about that later today.

100 years ago, Denmark was among the first to establish diplomatic relations to Estonia.
30 years ago, we were – once again – among the first to re-establish diplomatic relations.

Today and in the future, Denmark will stand by Estonia as a close ally, partner and friend.
I wish you all a fruitful seminar. Thank you.

Eva-Maria Liimets
Estonian Minister for Foreign Affairs

Speech by Estonian Foreign Minister

Dear Ministers, Ambassadors, Friends
Dear Jeppe,

I'm truly honoured to co-host today's seminar dedicated to centenary of Estonian-Danish de jure diplomatic relations.

In reality, our common history goes beyond 100 years, and even beyond the horizon of written history. We know about it thanks above all to two historians, Paul Johansen, a Dane who was born worked in Estonia and Vello Helk, the Danish historian from Estonia. Should one describe our history in two sentences, I think one can say it has been a typical Northern European story, where after about a thousand years of intensive trade interspersed with devastating wars, it was finally decided that peaceful co-operation was the way forward.
So, here we stand today, going green together. But first, let us look back to last 100 years, and how did we got here.
When Denmark *(together with Norway and Sweden)* recognized Estonia *(together with Latvia and Lithuania)* as an independent member of the international community, it happened for a reason. Already in 1918 Jaan Tõnisson, a legendary politician and a Founding Father of Estonia, travelled to Copenhagen as head of the Estonian Foreign delegation. Copenhagen became the headquarters of the Estonians seeking international recognition for our new-born democracy.

Not only have the state of Denmark, but also Danish people played an important role in supporting Estonia. We will always remember the contribution of the Corps of Danish Volunteer Soldiers, who came to our help in the War of Independence in 1919, as well as Danish doctors and nurses who worked in the field hospital. There were 200 Danish soldiers then.

Today, about the same number of Danish troops have stationed in Tapa and Ämari. They are supporting Estonia as a NATO ally and contributing to the security of our region. On behalf of Estonian Government, allow me to use this occasion and express our sincere gratitude for your previous and also for future rotations.

The World War II destructed our relations in many ways. Denmark refused to recognize our forceful incorporation into the Soviet Union. The Estonian state was kept alive in Copenhagen by the Estonian diplomatic representative to Denmark, Mr. August Koern, who was the Foreign Minister of the government in exile from 1964 until 1982 and died in 1989.

However, the official ties between Denmark and occupied Estonia were minimal during the years of Soviet occupation. But immediately when the political situation changed, on the wave of the singing revolution, Denmark could see behind the Iron Curtain and recognize the same wish for freedom in people as there was in the early 20th century. Denmark's support came quickly and set an example for the world. As early as March 1991, Estonia still being occupied, Foreign Ministers Uffe Ellemann-Jensen and Lennart Meri signed an agreement to restore diplomatic relations as soon as the situation allows.

It happened – beyond any hopes - already in August 1991. Even Denmark left the honour of being the first one to sign to Iceland there is no doubt that one of the masterminds and the driving force of bringing Estonia back to the international arena was Denmark with its Foreign Minister Uffe Ellemann-Jensen. His legacy, Council of the Baltic Sea, is still around and plays its role in r egional politics.

Danish support was not only political. Bilateral aid to Estonia from before Estonia's accession to the European Union amounts to 147 million euros. It´s extremely appropriate to mention today that much of it went to environmental programmes (incl. power engineering, implementation of Baltic Agenda 21). All in all, the modern liberal and open Estonia we know today was only possible to build up with the support of our Nordic neighbours, including Denmark.

Dear friends,
Today, we continue to enjoy excellent bilateral relations. We are like-minded partners on many crucial issues in regional and international organizations. Security in the region and worldwide has been one of the main focus of our cooperation. Estonia participated in the ISAF operation in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, with Denmark and the United Kingdom and Estonia contributed with instructors to the Danish contingent in Anbar Province, Iraq. The Danish Air Force was the first to carry out an air-policing mission from Ämari Air Base in 2014.

So much for history. What about the future?

We have already decided in the EU that our common future must be sustainable, we have set ourselves strict but fair, measurable and realistic targets. We need to Go Green, globally. And who else than the EU can lead the way as in so many other socio-economic issues? I will venture a step further and ask – who else than the Nordic Baltic region, still economically divergent but like-minded in the innovative spirit, can set an excellent example of the transition in the EU? Let's discuss the possibilities today.

The only sustainable approach to recovery after the COVID crisis is green recovery. We have the guidelines of the Green Deal, we have the money from MFF and RRF. Do we also have the ideas? Sky is the limit here and we are going to explore further but I dare to say that some of the promising paths forward have already been identified. Estonia

and Denmark as like-minded countries are well placed to promote also regional cooperation on our journey towards climate neutrality. An idea has crystallized in the form of a joint network of offshore wind parks in the Baltic Sea. We will hear more about this later on. Estonia and Latvia have made the first steps in preparing a common offshore wind project in the Gulf of Riga. Those bilateral pilot projects are stepping stones in the process.

We see ongoing regional energy cooperation projects also as vehicles of energy security. Much has already been done to lessen our energy dependences, be it synchronization of the electricity markets or a single gas market in the region. Renewables will further increase our security of supply. Interconnections in the EU will in the end lead to Baltic wind power on the German market or solar energy from the Mediterranean on our market. As for bilateral and regional co-operation, there are ample opportunities in the field of renewable energy but also in any other fields of green technology which by default includes digital technology, be it Smart Cities or circular economy. Our respective business communities have a lot to gain from enhanced cooperation.

The EU is getting its act together also in climate and energy diplomacy – a route which Denmark learned to navigate as a pioneer. No wonder Secretary Kerry answered your call Jeppe, to meet with the EU Foreign Ministers during his first days in office. Estonia is willing to learn from you and support where we can. We are grateful for the Danish initiative on the gradual phasing-out of coal globally and have joined your call for action.

Yet another example of the need for co-operation is the extremely vulnerable region of the Arctic, especially in the context of Estonia's observer aspirations in the Arctic Council. If the Covid crisis enables more attention to sustainable development and green energy globally, it is also good for the Arctic.
Turning back to the festive occasion today, centenary of our relations, I wish us all many happy years of constructive endeavours driven by the Green Agenda. As the festivities are taking place not only in Tallinn but also in Copenhagen throughout this year, I am looking forward to continue our discussions on the future cooperation soon.

Thank you and have an interesting seminar!

Stefan Pajung
PhD, The Museum of National History at Frederiksborg Castle

Mihkel Mäesalu
PhD, University of Tartu

Unravelling the mysteries: Researching the common history of Denmark and Estonia

Recipients of the postdoc fellowship, "HM Queen Margrethe II's Distinguished Research Project on the Danish-Estonian common history" sponsored by the Carlsberg Foundation

In June 2019, on the 800th anniversary of the alleged appearance of the Danish flag Dannebrog, which fell from the sky during the battle of Lyndanise above what is now Tallinn's Old Town, we, two researchers from Denmark and Estonia, respectively, were fortunate enough to be awarded the Queen Margrethe II Distinguished Research Fellowships on Danish-Estonian Common History. The research project is being carried out in collaboration between Tallinn City Museum, the Museum of National History at Frederiksborg, and the University of Tartu. It is sponsored by the Carlsberg Foundation, which supports research within the humanities as well as the natural and social sciences and promotes international cooperation. As the protector of the research fellowship, the Danish queen took it upon herself to hand out this prestigious award at the opening of the exhibition *Dannebrog and Estonia* 1219–2019 at Kiek in de Kök, an exhibition created in cooperation by Tallinn City Museum and the Museum of National History at Frederiksborg. The postdoc fellowship has given us the opportunity to become immersed in aspects of our common history for the last two years. It is a subject which, for various reasons, researchers in both countries have given little attention to, misunderstood, or even grossly misrepresented.

After receiving the award, we began sharing our preliminary thoughts on how we would like to approach the subject in general and began finding relevant literature and source material. Shortly after the project officially started in October 2019, we began talking

about coordinating visits to the archives and libraries in Denmark and Estonia in order to obtain material we could not acquire in our own country of residence. Thus Stefan was to visit the archives and libraries in Estonia, and Mihkel the ones in Denmark.

Thus Mihkel, at the end of October 2019, came to Copenhagen to find relevant sources at the National Archives and the Royal Library. This he combined with a visit to the University Library at the University of Copenhagen. Much of the source material related to Estonia has been digitised and is available online – but not all of it. Having ordered the remaining undigitised sources at the Royal Archives beforehand, we took scans of those that seemed promising. Among the collection of material at the Royal Library, we found a nice surprise: a collection of privileges of the Estonian Ritterschaft (Knighthood) from 1712, which included privileges dating back to the 13th century. Apparently, this was compiled to show the latest conqueror of Estonia, Czar Peter the Great, what privileges the local nobility possessed and for how long they had held them. The trip concluded with a visit to the University Library in Copenhagen to find material not readily found in Estonia.

Stefan made his corresponding visit to Estonia at the beginning of December 2019 and found some archival material both at the department of the National Archives of Estonia in Tartu, where historic records are kept, and at the Tallinn City Archives. However, most rewarding was a visit to the University of Tartu Library, which abounds with literature related to the history of Livonia and Danish Estonia that cannot be found in Danish libraries. Stefan scanned those works which were not yet available online and took note of how he could get access to those that were.
As the project was now well underway, we began publishing a blog on the website of Tallinn City Museum (in English and Estonian) and on the website of the National History Museum at Frederiksborg (in Danish), so that everybody interested could follow what we were currently working on. This could be some interesting finds in the archives, new takes on a previously misunderstood subject, or even some mysteries that occupied our minds for a while before we came up with a possible explanation. Writing these blogposts often helped us in our thought process.

As 2019 turned into 2020, we were able to begin our research in earnest, and everything looked bright. We had planned to write papers on various subjects, such as the interaction between the Estonian vassals and the Danish king, the role of Estonian clerics within the framework of the Danish church, and Danish kings' attempts at either regaining northern Estonia from the Teutonic Order or at least securing political and economic influence in the territory in the centuries after the sale in 1346. We also wanted to study the relationship between Danish Estonia and its neighbouring powers during the Middle Ages, the communication of the Livonian Branch of the Teutonic Order with the Danish king in the 15th century, and the Livonian reaction to the Danish king's engagement with the region

during the 15th and 16th century. Finally, we wanted to write a survey of how the Danish-Estonian common history had been treated in the respective history writings of the two nations, as such a survey had hitherto been missing. In short, we wanted our contribution to take a more nuanced view of the historical relationship between the two nations, a relationship that involved a higher degree of interaction and reciprocity than the previous research had indicated. We made very extensive and elaborate plans for a two-year research project; we were confident that we could manage all this in time, because we had established a good working relationship during Mihkel's visit to Denmark and Stefan's visit to Estonia.

Then came something we had not accounted for – the Covid-19 pandemic. Initially, we were both able to continue our studies from home, as we both had piles of books and PDF files of the most important sources to work with in our home offices. We were so confident that the pandemic would blow over by spring that we even began inviting Danish and Estonian researchers to join us for a conference in Tallinn in September 2020. Our goal with the conference was to share some of our preliminary results and, in the process, get valuable advice as well as new inspiration and ideas on how to approach our subject. We also planned to organise a second conference in June 2021 at the National Museum of Denmark in Frederiksborg Castle. But the pandemic continued to interfere with our plans. As Covid infection levels again began to rise in August 2020 in both Denmark and Estonia, historians began cancelling their participation. The pandemic situation worsened day by day, and eventually Estonia restricted entry into the country, so we were unable to hold our conference in Tallinn. Now we simply hope to be able to organise a concluding online conference in the late summer of 2021.

However, both of us relentlessly pursued our research as well as we could, supporting each other with advice and asking each other for sources or literature. This was of invaluable help throughout the entire process but was only possible because of the high degree of digitisation of both countries, which gave us easy access to those resources which were otherwise out of reach due to the closure of libraries and archives. We even managed to write a collaborative paper on how both nations' historians had treated our common past. In particular, the value of having a colleague giving constructive advice and helping clear up the misunderstandings that are bound to happen during such a research process should not be underestimated.

In Estonia, our research project began to draw the attention of professional historians as well as the wider public of history enthusiasts in November 2019. In the course of our project, Mihkel was invited to give public lectures both in societies of professional historians – the Learned Estonian Society in Tartu and the Centre for Medieval Studies in Tallinn – and for a wider public audience. Some of these lectures were in front of in-person audiences in Tallinn and Tartu, when the Covid restrictions allowed it, while others took place in online meetings. The

lectures gave Mihkel the opportunity to present and discuss his preliminary research results to a wider audience and to get feedback from professional historians. This opportunity was surely needed amid the pandemic, as international conferences were largely postponed or cancelled. At the end of every lecture, at least one member of the audience asked Mihkel to say some words about the research done by Stefan in Denmark.

The pandemic also resulted in slight changes in our research focus. As travels to archives outside of Estonia became impossible, Mihkel decided not to pursue the research on Danish-Estonian relations in the 16th century, which would have required visits to Swedish and German archives. Instead, he began to pay more attention to previous centuries, for which the majority of archival materials have already been published or made available online. A deeper focus on the period of Danish rule over northern Estonia (1219–1346) led to several new insights and to the publishing of a paper that we had not initially planned. This paper concerned the St. George's Night Uprising, which took place in northern Estonia under Danish rule and in western Estonia in 1343–1345. In it he focused on the role of the Danish administration, a topic that had been almost completely neglected in previous research.

Through this project, we have produced a number of papers and submitted them to international journals, which will publish them this year. As of this writing (early May 2021), we are working on additional papers. We also intend to edit an anthology devoted to the common history of Denmark and Estonia, which we hope to be able to present later this year. We ourselves have learned a great deal during the process, despite all the difficulties caused by the pandemic. We hope our work will evoke an interest in our common history and provide an inspiration for future researchers, as numerous subjects within the field still need to be illuminated. The quite unexpected interest in our research project in Estonia gives hope that the Danish-Estonian common history in the Middle Ages will continue to capture the interest of historians and history enthusiasts in both countries.

Mikkel Kirkebæk
PhD, historian and author

They fought for Estonia: Danish Volunteers and their motives for participating in the Estonian War of Independence 1919

All sources and references can be found in a longer version of this article, published in *Denmark and Estonia* 1219–2019: *Selected Studies on Common Relations, ed.* Jens E. Olesen (Greifswald: Druckhaus Panzig, 2019).

Introduction

On 5 February 1921, Denmark officially recognized the sovereignty of Estonia, an event whose 100th anniversary we celebrate this year. Danish-Estonian relations developed in the wake of the Estonian independence war of 1918–1920, in which Estonia fought a political and military battle to gain sovereignty. A small corps of Danish volunteers arrived in Tallinn in 1919 to aid the Estonian army in this fight, and although their contributions might have been of limited military significance, they were of considerable symbolic value to Estonia's fight for recognition of independence. To many people in Estonia and Denmark alike, the Danish corps became an important point of reference for Danish-Estonian relations and a symbol of the close bonds of friendship between the two nations.

However, the deployment of the Danish corps in 1919 was controversial in many aspects, not least because it was based on a private initiative, without formal approval from the Danish government. Nevertheless, approximately 2000 Danes volunteered for this military expeditionary corps, which was named the Danish Baltic Auxiliary Corps (DBAC). By contemporary as well as modern measures, this was an impressive number of volunteers. By comparison, a total of 1619 Swedes applied to join the volunteer Swedish corps *(Svenska Brigaden)* in the Finnish Civil War in 1918; approximately 500 Danes volunteered for the Spanish Civil War in 1936; and some 1000 Danes joined up for the Winter War in Finland in 1939.

Due mainly to economic problems, only the first company of approximately 200 men actually went to Estonia, but many more were willing to fight for Estonia's independence. Who were they, and were their motives for enlisting?

The volunteer soldiers

In 1929, celebrating the 10th anniversary of the Danish corps' effort in Estonia, the Estonian newspaper Waba Maa posed the question: Why did these Danes decide to aid the Estonians when the relationship and knowledge between the two nations was so limited? The newspaper pointed out the nations' shared historical bonds as a plausible explanation, stating that every Danish schoolchild had heard about Estonia and that sympathy for the Estonian cause had been inspired in that way. In several memoirs, some written many years after the war, Danish volunteers indicated that the fight for Estonia's freedom was their primary reason for going. However, the theme of 'Estonia's freedom' is not particularly apparent in the contemporary sources documenting the soldiers' motivations to join the fight. To most Danes in 1919, Estonia was a distant and unknown place, despite the historical bonds, and hardly a country whose freedom was worth risking one's life for. Indeed, contemporary materials show that other, more personal or ideological reasons for joining the war in Estonia were far more frequently stated than any desire to fight for Estonian independence.

The motives and backgrounds of the soldiers

Naturally, the young Danes had numerous individual reasons for enlisting in volunteer military service, and a classification might seem artificial. Still, there are some patterns which make a categorization appropriate. For the sake of a general overview, the crew can be split into five categories: 'ideologists', 'professionals', 'mercenaries', 'adventurers', and 'criminals'. Of course, such categorization is not as rigorous as it might seem, since groups often overlapped. For example, many of the professionals were also ideologists in their attitude towards Bolshevism, just as adventurers could be found in all groups, and mercenaries could be criminals. The five groups were not of equal size either, and therefore not equally represented in the corps. The following should be seen as a number of – tentatively categorised – suggestions as to what motivated Danish volunteers to go to war in the Baltic in 1919.

The ideological warriors

Among the Danes who joined, several belonged to the educated upper-middle class. Men like these often had no military training but answered the call to arms for idealistic reasons. The cornerstone of their idealism was an intense, often fanatical hatred of Bolshevism, which they considered a threat to the good, established middle-class conservative world order. In the Danish Estonian corps, the Gudme brothers

The Danish corps lined up for flag parade in the training camp in Nõmme. The Corps had been bestowed a Danish "Dannebrog" flag by the Danish General Consul in Tallinn, and the flag followed the corps in their fighting at the southern border of Estonia

in particular constituted an educated, ideological anti-Bolshevist vanguard. This is immediately evident in some of the brothers' writings from their time in Estonia. On the first page of his diary from Estonia, Peter de Hemmer Gudme wrote that all the attacks on the volunteers were ridiculous, and added: 'If these people had seen half as much of the fruits of Bolshevism as I have, they would not be such harsh critics of those who go to fight this plague of the world.' His brother also considered Bolshevism a disease from which the world urgently needed to be cured. But a number of the other enlisted men also cited ideological anti-Bolshevism as their main motive for joining the corps. For example, one young man from the city of Aalborg stated on his application: 'My reason for wanting to join the corps is that I hate any kind of Bolshevism, particularly when it affects a kindred people.' The last half of this sentence illustrates that the fate of the Estonians was far from irrelevant to the ideological volunteers – it was just not their primary concern. Of course, the fight against Bolshevism and Estonian independence were two sides of the same coin when joining the DBAC, but the ideologists' primary motivation was the fight against Bolshevism.

By far the largest group among the DBAC volunteers who went abroad, however, were not ideologist soldiers but members of Copenhagen's working class.

The mercenaries

'The individual has not been encouraged by anyone to join the corps, but as he had been unemployed for some time, and he learned that the corps was recruiting troops, he volunteered.' This is what the police wrote about 35-year-old tailor Søren Christian Petersen when he was interviewed upon his return from Estonia. Unemployment or financial problems seem to have been an important factor in enlistment for the majority of the volunteers. Unemployment in Denmark had reached 27.5 per cent by the end of January 1919, and this was the time when the recruitment for the DBAC began.

One example of a person who volunteered not because he wished to experience war but because the corps might be a way out of his dire economic situation was a 21-year-old from Kolding. Of his situation and motivation, he stated: 'I am a deserter from South Jutland [the Danish minority in Germany who were forcibly recruited for the First World War], and I have been in this country for three years. I have been unemployed since November 1, and it has been impossible for me to find any employment since then. I humbly request that you do what you can to assist me to go, as I am entirely without funds or family here in Denmark, and I am for that reason unable to sustain myself without employment.'
Even if there are some negative connotations to the term 'mercenary', that is what they were: individuals who went to war with pay as their primary motivation. In some cases, that act could be quite noble. The sources indicate that several volunteers used their earnings to sustain their families and that the money earned in the DBAC was their only income to sustain their wife and children. To other volunteers in the 'mercenary' group, excitement and adventure likely also played a role, but money was clearly the main driving force for the mercenaries.

The professionals

A very influential group among the volunteers was 'the professionals'. Roughly one-fourth of the troops had a military background; most of them were officers or NCOs. The Baltic expeditionary corps undoubtedly enjoyed enormous support in the Danish army. Had the Danish Ministry of War not forbidden its permanent staff from going, a number of Denmark's leading officers of the line would have left for Estonia. A few days after the departure of the first group, a list of enlisted officers and NCOs named 55 officers from all branches of the military (infantry, cavalry, artillery, navy, engineers, and airmen) who had not yet been sent off. These were made up of 23 first lieutenants and 33 lieutenants. It is known from letters that there were many more volunteer officers than the names on this particular list – not to mention the higher-ranking officers with ranks above first lieutenant. But the lack of consent from the Ministry of War was a significant problem for the corps.

Although the professionals had all received their training in the armed

forces, they were not a homogenous group in terms of motives. Some of the professionals emphasized anti-Bolshevism as their main reason for enlisting. A former member of the general staff, Captain Bagger of the Ninth Battalion, wrote to the organizers of the corps that he considered Bolshevism the greatest danger to ever ravage the world and that it could only be 'fought by force', which was why he wished to go to Estonia. As Denmark had been neutral in the First World War, most of the Danish professionals had no battle experience, but many saw the expeditionary corps as a way of acquiring it – benefitting their own professional competences as well as Denmark's defence. Upon the return of the corps, Richard Borgelin, who would later become company commander in the corps, told a newspaper: 'I admit that I myself did not enlist for idealistic reasons but merely because I wanted to test the merits of the training I had received in military service.' Another factor which might have mattered to some of the professionals was the opportunity to advance quickly through the ranks when joining the war in the Baltic. The small Baltic countries were often in desperate need of troops. As part of the recruitment process, foreign officers who entered into volunteer military service could often add one rank to the one they carried, as soon as they set foot on Baltic soil. This happened to the top Danish DBAC officers too, as lieutenants Gudme, Borgelin, and Mortensen were appointed Estonian captains while they were on their way to Estonia. Often the rank did not correspond with the actual military experience. For example, Iver Gudme had not even completed his compulsory military service but merely had a few months of volunteer service in Finland to his name, and now he was a captain. The particularly favourable career opportunities of volunteer service, just like the chance to perfect one's own military skills in realistic conditions, could be part of a larger personal 'career plan', to secure more favourable conditions for one's future. For several of the professionals, it is not unlikely that concepts like honour and manliness influenced their decision to enlist. Erik Wieth, who would later become army commander-in-chief, stated in his application that the officers of the neutral states had been 'stuck in their cages as spectators', while officers of other countries had fought and bled in the First World War. The idea that Danish officers felt almost cheated of their chance of going to war could be rooted in the notions of honour, duty, and manliness associated with fighting a war.

The adventurers

'Fighting and the joy of battle has forever been tied to the banners of youth; war was always popular in its own right, and it would be unwelcome if civilisation was to smother this healthy thought. Let us hope that the young Danes who have gone to war in Estonia will do honour to their native country, and show that seven hundred years have not diminished the Danes' capacity for crusades in the savage East.' This statement appeared in the illustrated magazine Verden og Vi (The World and Us) under the headline 'The Estonian Crusade'.

There is no doubt that 'adventure' and a romantic idea of war was a motivating factor for several of the Danish volunteers. 'Here in Horsens we are a few young people with adventure in our blood, and we would not pass on a chance to test ourselves against the Bolshevists', one applicant wrote in his letter to the recruitment office. In 1919, very few young people were able to travel and see the world, and participation in the Estonia campaign was clearly seen as such an opportunity. For example, an 18-year-old man from Copenhagen wrote to the recruitment office and stated: 'As I would very much like to travel abroad and see things, it would please me if you would consider me.' Another perspective on the group of adventurers can be found in a letter written to one of the organizers of the volunteer corps, Aage Westenholz, from the father of one of the underage members of the corps. In this letter, the father criticised Westenholz and the corps for letting minors of 16 years enlist without adult intervention: '...a young person, I daresay a child, can commit acts of thoughtlessness out of a lust for adventure, for let us agree, Mister Westenholz, that they are not doing it out of patriotism towards the Estonian government...' That description was probably accurate. How many joined the Estonia campaign for the excitement and adventure is impossible to answer. But that it was a main motivation for some, and a partial one for others, is beyond doubt.

The criminals

A group seldom mentioned in the celebratory speeches but who nevertheless constituted an important part of the Danish Estonia corps were the criminals. Not only the Danish corps but volunteer corps in general were attractive to some personalities who attached little importance to the reasons and ideologies of war but who, in the theatre of war, could freely engage in antisocial behaviour.

Undoubtedly, some Danish volunteers also belonged to the above category. In numerous places there are indications or references to theft and poor morals among parts of the crew – including in internal correspondence during the campaign. There were examples of property of the corps being sold, for example from the depot, for personal financial gain, and several staff grievances were mentioned. In a report to Aage Westenholz regarding the payout of discharge money, corps commander Iver Gudme wrote the following about Private 216 Petersen: 'Deserves nothing, as he is a thief and a liar through and through – to be discharged around July 1.' Private Viggo Hansen also wrote about the impact of the criminal individuals in the corps: 'Time after time, they have ruined the good relationships in the corps, both between privates and officers, and among privates. Among other things, they did this by stealing from their comrades and from the depot, and this often caused suspicion against innocent men. Also, the fact that many had not been soldiers before was a liability, as these people did not know the meaning of discipline but

thought that once they had made it over here to a foreign country, they could behave as they pleased. And no sooner were we in Reval [Tallinn] before a few went off the rails; they stole their comrades' coats and capes, which they sold, and then spent the money on indecent women.'

Although the majority of the corps did behave themselves, the recorded cases illustrate that for some, the corps was a welcome opportunity for a 'free' existence, or a way out of personal problems. This is exactly the role that the French Foreign Legion has historically served for people who find themselves in trouble and need a new start or a new identity.

Conclusion

Officers' memoirs and other narratives of the post-war era speak of the Danish elite corps' idealistic motives as the primary motivation for the enlistment of Danish volunteers in the Estonian War of Independence. The desire to fight for Estonian independence is a recurring theme in many accounts of the war, but in reality, it did not play a big role in the decision to volunteer, as many other motives were also in play. It is not unlikely that idealistic intentions for helping Estonia were indeed a decisive motivation for some of the Danish volunteers, but other motives such as fighting Denmark's enemies, payment, career, and adventure were likely just as important.

In the past, volunteers were generally stereotyped as either 'idealists' or 'criminals', which is highly misleading. Danish volunteers were a diverse group; they included idealists and criminals, but neither of these was dominant in the corps as such. It is important to note that even though many of the volunteers were not idealists, the DBAC did represent an idealistic concept. Both Aage Westenholz and Iver Gudme, the organizers of the corps, had no other interest in forming the DBAC besides ideology. Neither of them gained personally from getting involved in the cause or expected any personal glory – quite the opposite. And although the corps was initially formed to curb Bolshevism for Danish national interests, organisers and volunteers alike found considerable satisfaction in helping a small kindred people against their imperialist neighbours – a situation that Danes could relate to. It should also be made clear that the Danish volunteers – despite their widely varying motives – fought loyally, and fell, for Estonia's freedom in 1919. When the corps was withdrawn from the very heavy fighting in the Pskov region in late August 1919, the corps could muster only 60 able-bodied men. The rest were either sick, wounded, captured, missing, or had died in the battle for Estonia's freedom and independence.

Jens Christian Johansen – Consul General of Denmark in Tallinn

Sirje Kivimäe
PhD, historian and author

Jens Christian Johansen, a Danish national, had run the bureau of soil improvement in Tallinn (Reval), since the beginning of the 20th century. In general, the Danes felt welcome in Russia thanks to the marriage of Tsar Alexander III to the Danish princess Dagmar. In the Baltic provinces of Livland and Estland, several Danish managers and dairy experts worked, followed by soil improvement specialists who, at the time, were called 'cultural engineers' (German: *Kulturingenieur*). From among the latter, Peder Rosenstand-Wøldike (Wöldike) (1855–1935) was noted for his innovatively implemented economical drainage system, which took into account the conditions of the soil relief and the upstream areas, and which was relatively inexpensive. He worked mainly in Tartu (Dorpat) with plenty of orders from northern Livland, but he left for Denmark due to his dissatisfaction with social relations in the countryside.

Due to the expanding drainage work in the manors of the Baltic German landlords, a central office was needed. Thus the Livland Public Benefit and Economic Society (*Livländische Gemeinnützige und Ökonomische Sozietät*), which in the

J. C. Johansen

J. C. Johansen with wife Ingeborg Agnes

self-government system of the *Ritterschaf*t (nobility corporation) of Livland formed a kind of agricultural chamber uniting various societies and organisations, decided to establish a common office with the Estland Agricultural Society (*Estländischer Landwirtschaftlicher Verein*). Johansen had analysed a variety of local land improvement methods in the society's publication *Baltic Weekly (Baltische Wochenschrift)*. However, some landlords favoured a German expert with a doctoral degree as the technical head of the office, as only three of the nearly 20 Danish technicians in Livland had graduated the Copenhagen Polytechnic, which raised doubts about their training as well. Thereafter Wöldike was called back from Denmark to be appointed as the technical head and Baron Victor von Stackelberg was assigned to be general manager of the office. He had successfully engaged in bog cultivation with the Danish manager Frederik Welding in his manor.

The Land Cultivation Bureau, which served both provinces (*Liv-Estländisches Bureau für Landeskultur*) and opened in Tartu in 1897, was tasked with to providing project expertise, compiling relevant documentation and promoting land improvement. When the bureau's display at the 1899 Baltic Agricultural Exhibition in Riga was awarded a gold medal by the Russian Ministry of Agriculture and sent to Paris for the World Fair, Wöldike was involved in drafting Russia's water law. As the bureau both prepared and carried out projects itself, its activities were decentralized on 1 July 1901. Wöldike was left in charge of managing the central office and profitable projects in the Russian provinces. A new branch was established in Tartu under the leadership of Johann Hoppe, who had acquired his speciality in the Danish officers' corps, and another branch was founded in Riga. A third, led by Johansen, was established in Tallinn for the province of Estland; it was financed by the mortgage society of Estland landlords, which was known as *Kreditkasse.*

Johansen, of course, was attracted by the opportunity to work independently, but also by the chance to give his growing family a more secure place to live. Born in Slagelse in 1868, Johansen, like Wöldike, graduated from the Copenhagen Polytechnic with a *cand. polyt.* degree. In 1892, he moved to Livland. Johansen returned to Denmark for a short while to marry Agnes Ingeborg Laudrup. Their first three children were born in Riga. The youngest daughter was born in April 1899 in Latgale, a Catholic Latvian settlement in Vitebsk province, where Johansen worked for a Russian landowner. The youngest son, Paul, was born in December 1901 in Tallinn. It must be noted that the Tallinn city centre was still predominantly German-speaking, as was the family's social circle. To spare the children from the multilingual milieu, the Johansens changed their home language, previously Danish, to German. At that time, Russian was the language of instruction in Baltic schools. However, in 1906, the regulation was amended to allow German as the language of education in private schools. Thus, the eldest son attended the *German Realschule*, and the daughters studied at Baroness von der Howen's private school. The younger sons studied at the reopened

Tallinn Cathedral School *(Domschule)* of the *Ritterschaft*, which was once established by a right granted by the king of Denmark.

In one of the little rooms of the *Domschule*, Johansen started working with two clerks until he moved his office into the house of the Estland landowners' purchase and sale association. At once he started visiting the manors that had requested land improvement projects. The establishment of new branch offices was also determined by the difference in natural conditions. Soil conditions in northern Estonia were much more diverse by region. As Johansen had already stated at the Agricultural Society's meeting, upstream conditions are more complicated due to the limestone base; drainage works are was often unprofitable, and the harsh climate requires knowledge and experience. He gave a more in-depth presentation at the technical section of the Estland Literary Society and once again at the annual session of the Economic Society in Tartu. The presentation was published in *Baltische Wochenschrift*, where Johansen often authored articles.

Many manors continued to cultivate marshlands. In 1903, Wöldike and Johansen took part in a study tour to Finland to learn more about these techniques. In the early spring of 1907, Johansen embarked on a trip to Denmark. Johansen, the 'inspector of rural culture at the Livland Economic Society, a Danish national, *cand. polyt.*', was kindly received by the Ministry of Agriculture in Copenhagen and provided with letters of recommendation. First, Johansen became acquainted with a couple of farms and dairies near Korsør, where his sister's family lived. The main purpose of the thoroughly prepared tour in Jutland was to visit several land reclamation sites of the Danish Heath Society *(Danske Hedeselskab)*. Finally, as requested by the Ministry, Johansen gave a presentation at the Society of Engineers in Copenhagen on his experience of working in Russia. The society published his paper in its journal. On the way back, he also got acquainted with the organisation of land reclamation in northern Germany. Again, *Baltische Wochenschrift* published his informative series of travel reviews, full of data and figures, which reflected his admiration of his homeland's achievements and life in general.

The collection of 14 descriptions of moorlands taken into use in the manors was also translated into Estonian. As the Tallinn office also provided services for peasants at a discounted price, Johansen, to exhibit the possibilities of a farm and to obtain practical experience, leased Liebwert, a 20-hectare site on the banks of the Pirita River from Paunküla Manor, from the president of the Kreditkasse, Julius von Hagemeister, in 1905. It also became a lovely place for the family to spend their summertime. Johansen published four comprehensive annual reports, along with suggestions on the work, cultivar and fertilization tests undertaken at Liebwert. But the farmers already preferred the advice of their Estonian agricultural associations. Even so, Danish examples were used side-by-side with Finnish ones in the interest of developing the farmowners' cooperative movement.

Rosenstand-Wöldike left Livland for good. In the autumn of 1910, the Tallinn branch was separated from the central office and continued to operate as a branch of the Kreditkasse; Johansen also obtained work premises in his representative building. Johansen joined the Baltic Moor Society and became a member of the board of the Tooma experimental moor station in Tartu County. At his initiative a manorial managers' school was opened in Tallinn; however, the ministry allowed teaching only in German. Over the next three years, the office carried out 212 projects; of these, a significantly increased proportion involved forest drainage. Compared to the starting point, each year the combined length of open ditches increased approximately four times and the length of drains almost 10 times. The office had eight engineers and technicians and hired Estonian foremen. From the very beginning, Johansen had demanded constant control over ditch work and the exact execution of plans. It was even made mandatory to use foremen on projects in order to receive a loan from the *Kreditkasse*. However, the results were still far off the mark, as Johansen summarised in his triennial report. To his mind, at least a quarter of the manor fields would need drainage. Over the years, Johansen had visited more than 400 manors in Estland, meaning that he knew most of the manor owners and was regarded as an authority of sorts; however, these were only professional contacts.

At the same time the building industry boomed in Tallinn due to the work on Peter the Great's Naval Fortress, which began in 1912. Alongside this, a Russian branch of a French company initiated the construction of a modern shipyard complex; two more shipyards were built with foreign capital. Russian workers flowed into Tallinn. At the same time, the contingent of military troops increased.

In 1915, the summer of war, land reclamation work came to a complete halt. Johansen travelled to neutral Denmark, where his older daughter Ingeborg was continuing her education. Unexpectedly, Johansen, a Danish national, was not able to get a Russian visa for his return on the grounds that he had worked for German landowners. His eldest son, Karl Adam, was studying at a technical school near Berlin and then served in the Danish army. His younger daughter also came to Denmark. His second son, Hans, moved to Siberia to study at Tomsk University. Only his wife and son Paul stayed in Tallinn. In May 1917, Johansen gave a lecture at the Society of Engineers on the future of drainage and irrigation techniques. He believed that Danish agricultural conditions would completely change after the war. During his earlier tour in Denmark, Johansen had met Thorwald Claudi Westh. Now Westh enjoyed the favour of the Social-Liberal government. Together they helped establish a central organisation, the National Soil Improvement Commission *(Statens Grundforbedringsvæsen)*. This was a result of their joint efforts to improve the utilization of two large bogs in northern Jutland. In April 1918, they both presented their ideas at the Society of Engineers. They proposed that the government purchase the land so that it could be cultivated and divided into small holdings. Indeed, all soil improve-

ment activities later became the area of responsibility of the Heath Society.

Johansen was certainly informed that, at the request of Estonian political representatives, the Provisional Government of Russia united northern Livland and Estland into one autonomous province, headed by Estonian lawyer Jaan Poska. The Estonians quickly took over the administration. Several new organizations were established, and Estonian soldiers were recruited to national units. The Provincial Assembly was formed on 1 July 1917 as a result of the general elections. However, Tallinn also saw the establishment of the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, dominated by Russians. The Bolsheviks won the city council elections. Simultaneously with the October Revolution in Petrograd, the Military Revolutionary Committee seized power in Tallinn. Soon all of Estonia was under Bolshevik rule. But Johansen could not have known that, before its dissolution, the Provincial Assembly had declared itself the sole supreme power in Estonia until the Estonian Constituent Assembly could be convened. Nor could he have known that on February 24, 1918, when the German troops were already at the gates of Tallinn and the Bolsheviks were fleeing on ships, the Estonian Salvation Committee declared Estonia an independent, democratic republic. Nevertheless, Estonian representatives quickly began to seek recognition of the independence declaration and asked for arms assistance, first in the Foreign Ministry in Stockholm, then in Kristiania (Oslo) and Copenhagen. Johansen did not know that the Scandinavian prime ministers and foreign ministers, at a meeting in Copenhagen on 26–28 June 1918, had agreed not to confer initial recognition on the countries that had seceded from Russia, with the exception of Finland. Given that they were in fact in contact with representatives of the new nations, formal recognition was to be discussed jointly. Until then, the policy of neutrality remained in place.

The German military authorities restored the tsarist provincial boundaries and laws. After the deportation of Erik Gahlnbäck, the honorary consul of Denmark in Tallinn, to Siberia in May 1916, his duties were taken over by Theodor Brosse, deputy consul of Sweden. In his report to the Embassy of Denmark in Berlin on 14 March 1918, he described the events in Tallinn during the previous weeks as the 'reign of terror of maximalists'. Russian sailors searched Gahlnbäck's apartment and tried to break into the consulate's premises. The local consuls submitted a joint protest to the Executive Committee of Estonian Soviets. At the same time, Baltic noble women and men were arrested. Brosse and the Dutch consul sent a telegraph about this violence to the ambassadors in Petrograd. Brosse, who was invited to the Soviet Executive Committee meeting the next day, was arrested, along with the Dutch and British consuls. Through the intervention of the embassies, they were released. But German noblemen and adolescents were deported to Siberia. Brosse expressed his wish to continue as Danish deputy consul, as did the consul in Paldiski (Baltischport). At the end of the report, Brosse included Danish national Mrs Ingeborg

Johansen's request to send her husband in Copenhagen a telegram: 'Both healthy – Ingeborg'. After a long period of time, Johansen also received a letter from his wife. Among other things, his wife stated that to avoid looting by the Bolsheviks, she had removed his office's property from the Kreditkasse building under the protection of the Danish flag.

Political activities were banned, and Estonian national units were disbanded. However, under the terms of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty, the deported Baltic Germans returned. Representatives of the nobility of Livland, Ösel (Saaremaa), Estland, and the city of Riga began to create a common Baltic duchy, which was to join the Kingdom of Prussia in a personal union.

Johansen himself arrived in Tallinn in mid-July 1918. He continued in the service of the Kreditkasse. However, little was left of his lifework: the soil improvement sites would have needed constant care. Moreover, most of the manorial households had been looted, and many manor owners had left the country. Tallinn was visited by official German delegations, and at least once, Johansen had the opportunity to present an overview of the agricultural situation.

On the same day, November 11, when the armistice was signed between Germany and the Entente, the Estonian Provisional Government met in Tallinn with the permission of the German military administrator. A week later, Estonian government deputies signed an agreement with the German commissioner general to transfer authority over all Estonian territory. According to the truce, German troops were to remain in Estonia to defend against Russia. The Germans repulsed the Red Army's first attack on Narva but then retreated, leaving the Estonians unprotected. At that time Johansen turned to the Danish Foreign Ministry, asking to be appointed the Danish diplomatic representative in Estonia. His request was supported by Claudi Westh and – more importantly – by Alexander Foss, the founder of the Danish Confederation of Industrialists and influential member of the Landstinget, who had business interests and land in Estonia. Most likely the request was inspired by Foss, because Johansen had informed him of the situation in Estonia and described how the Germans were repatriating their assets to germany, but the radical, partly bourgeois Estonian government had neither money nor influence. The expectation was that after the Germans left, British troops would arrive.

On 2 December 1918, Jens Christian Johansen was appointed ad interim honorary consul in Tallinn to represent Danish interests. He received a telegram about his appointment on 9 December. He was not assigned any diplomatic responsibilities or given any instructions. Nor was he paid a salary; he only received an annual allowance of 8,000 Danish kroner for the costs of running the office. Of this sum, 2,000 kroner went to renting rooms and another 2,000 went to hiring a secretary.

As Johansen writes in his first report on 12 December, he immediately presented himself at the Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the consulates of

other countries, as well as to the head of the *Estland Ritterschaft*. He found suitable rooms for the consulate in the *Kreditkasse* building and found a linguistically skilled woman to be the secretary. He was immediately sought out by eight Danes who had left their homes in Narva; Johansen thought they needed the help of the Danish state. Indicating the directions of the Bolshevik military attack, he considered Tallinn's situation very grave. The arrival of the British fleet had been expected for two weeks. Allegedly, the Estonian government had shifted politically to the left and was aiming to apply for a foreign government loan. The food supply situation had become exceedingly difficult, but foreign aid was not expected until spring. At the time he wrote the report, Johansen was informed that, given the current situation on the front, the Bolsheviks might be in Tallinn within two or three days. But he concluded his report by announcing that the British fleet had just arrived in port and that the city was now presumably out of danger.

Johansen's direct superior was the Danish representative, who resided in Helsinki. However, due to communication difficulties at the time, he had to send his reports directly to the Foreign Ministry and a copy to Helsinki. In addition, he began to keep a diary to briefly document current events. He also sent excerpts from the diary to the ministry. These extracts were published with a long introduction by Finnish historian Kalervo Hovi in 1976. Johansen's notes represent a certain official lateral view of events in Estonia. Moreover, they recorded the positions formulated by the honorary consuls of other countries who met every evening at Johansen's initiative. From this detailed material we will only highlight a few aspects.
The local Danes, a hundred of whom lived in Estland, continuously needed assistance. Another hundred were located near Tartu in Livland. To help them, Johansen asked the Danish representative in Helsinki for the mandate to recruit a deputy consul, Johann Hoppe. With this paper and the Danish flag affixed to his house, Hoppe made it through the "new Bolsheviks reign of terror" in Tartu unscathed.

Despite the arrival of British fleet, the threat to Tallinn had not yet passed. The Red Army was approaching. On 25 December, Johansen went to speak to the minister of war (actually Konstantin Päts who was simultaneously the prime minister) to obtain permission to use the cable connection to arrange the Danes' departure. He was only allowed to send messages in Danish. In response to his question about the number of invading Bolsheviks, the ministerial assistant explained that there were approximately 3,000. Seeing Johansen's surprise, he added that Estonia had only 400 'fighting' soldiers to put up against them. The Estonian authorities placed their hope on Finnish volunteers. In the evening, Johansen heard from the Finnish consul that the first 700 men were already on their way from Helsinki.

Both Estonian mobilizations had failed –it was a fiasco, Johansen wrote. As an extraordinary step, on 4 January 1919 he sent a letter to the commander of the British squadron asking them not

to leave Tallinn unprotected. At that time the Red Latvian Riflemen were marching to Riga. The British ships were summoned there to protect the Latvian coastal area; however, some ships were still in Tallinn harbour. Due to the announcement of Commander-in-Chief Johan Laidoner that those who fought hard at the front would receive a plot of land in the new year, the Estonian People's Army had grown to almost 6,000 men by the new year. A Baltic German volunteer unit was also formed, and the government signed an agreement to involve White Russian units that had retreated to Estonia. The Finnish government provided loans and armaments but only allowed volunteers to be sent. In all, nearly 3,500 Finns took part in the Estonian War of Independence. With the support of these Finnish volunteers, who had recently experienced their own Civil War, the attack on the Bolsheviks that began in January proceeded vigorously. By the end of February, almost the entire territory of Estonia had been liberated.

In his diary, Johansen often listed the exchange rates of different currencies, because inflation was running rampant. The consuls considered the food supply situation catastrophic and sought help anywhere they could. In mid-January, Johansen was visited by J. von Hagemeister and an Estonian businessman. The Baltic-Danish Company *(Baltisk-Dansk-Kompani)* was founded by five Baltic Germans and five Estonians, including Konstantin Päts. Johansen's eldest son was sent to Copenhagen to take the statutes to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The funds and money of both the individuals and companies were held for safekeeping at the consulate. Johansen was visited by Knud Højgaard, an engineer from the large Danish company Christiani & Nielsen, which had been active in Russia. He had been one of the construction managers of the seaplane hangar in the Tallinn military harbour. Højgaard brought the ministry's courier post from Copenhagen, as did a representative of F.L.Smidth & Co. who arrived on 19 February. With these company partners Johansen visited Prime Minister Päts. In Denmark, both companies arranged for food aid and supported the recruitment of volunteers. Foss himself had previously been in Tallinn to negotiate their selection. Incidentally, in the first major deal, the Estonian government bought seeds from the Danish department of the American Aid Administration in the spring.

In Johansen's assessment (which proved accurate), the Constituent Assembly, which met at the end of April, consisted of up to two-thirds radical left-wingers. The Social Democratic Party won the most seats. Sending a German translation of the adopted Declaration of Independence to Copenhagen, Johansen commented sharply on both the claims on historical and agrarian relations. 'The Estonian people are hard-working, frugal and skilful rural people, but they cannot be described as cultivated' *(Estefolket er et flittigt, nöjsomt og til Landbrug meget dygtigt Bondefolk, men tör paa ingen Maade betegnes som kultiveret),* he wrote. However, Estonians' higher economic and somewhat better cultural level than the Russians, he thought, could be explained

by the ancient German influence, not by their inner character. Johansen did not believe Estonia could be completely independent; as he saw it, the country lacked the necessary economic base and political maturity. However, falling back under Russian rule would be a tragedy. Johansen saw Estonia's future in connection with or under the control of foreign authorities.

A small but well-equipped Danish volunteer company, which had been outfitted by the British, had already arrived. Johansen went to greet them with Commander-in-Chief Johan Laidoner. On the way back, the general told Johansen in confidence why the Danes would be sent to the southern front in Latvia to fight the Bolsheviks. However, the next day, the Latvian representative announced that the Baltic German Landeswehr, together with German volunteers *(Freikorps),* had already liberated Riga from the Bolsheviks and were moving north. Johansen's diary ends with the recognition that an uncertain situation had re-emerged in Estonia.

Incidentally, Johansen had great regard for General Laidoner. As for Päts, initially Johansen did not consider him very intelligent, but in February, he wrote that Päts was the wisest, ablest and most honest person in the government *(den klarste, dygtigste og reeleste Personlighed).* On the other hand, he could be merciless in his assessments of members of Estonia's new government, and he often complained about officials' incompetence. The diary notes also introduce other politicians and make many other interesting observations.

The Estonians' victory over the Germans in the short *Landeswehr* War swayed the discussion of the land issue in the Constituent Assembly toward the complete expropriation of the manors. Agrarian reform was the most important domestic social and political issue in Estonia, as the landless population was large. Only the People's Party and Päts's Rural League wished to have a gradual reform, Johansen reported to Copenhagen. He did not support the distribution of all the manors. It was therefore pointed out that Johansen sympathized with the views of the Baltic Germans, especially with regard to land reform. As noted earlier, he had given a presentation in Denmark in favour of creating small holdings from large estates in Denmark in 1919, some large land estates were nationalized for this purpose. In the case of Estonia, however, Johansen was convinced that a similar decision would lead to a continuing decline in productivity and, moreover, would create mistrust abroad.

On 10 October 1919, the Constituent Assembly passed the land law. The large land estates were initially expropriated without payment – almost 880 noble manors *(Rittergut)* with cattle and inventory, former Russian state manors and forests, and some church estates were to be divided into peasant farms. The adoption of the law was evidently hastened by the Entente's pressure on Estonia to support the major offensive of the Russian Northwestern White Army on Petrograd. The exhausted Estonian People's Army needed motivation, and the Republic of Estonia needed the political recognition. However, the Northwestern

Army was completely defeated. In February 1920, Estonia concluded a separate peace treaty with Soviet Russia in Tartu. Estonia thus became an important transit corridor for some time to come, as the opening of the Russian market was much awaited in the West. The partition of manor lands had already begun. After a rapid fall in 1920, and contrary to Johansen's warning, the agricultural production began to recover. Nevertheless, there was still a shortage of grain for bread.

Johansen still had one important day to anticipate. Due to the Allies' views on Russia, Scandinavian governments had refrained from communicating directly with Estonia. When the Allied Supreme Council finally decided to recognize Estonia and Latvia *de jure*, the Scandinavian countries followed suit. On 5 February 1921, when his credentials were handed over to Foreign Minister A. Piip, the Swedish consul spoke in English in the name of all three countries. Thereafter the Norwegian consul gave a speech of thanks in German, and Johansen followed suit in Estonian. However, his good mood was overshadowed by an order from the ministry to submit a memorandum on Denmark's expectations regarding land that was owned by Danish nationals and had been expropriated by land reform. But Johansen delayed this action, because at such a historical moment for Estonia, it could have seemed like an insult.

These land possessions were two small manors on the cliffs near Narva owned by Alexander Foss and his partner in the company, engineer Poul Larsen, about which the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs had already sent a *note verbale* to the Estonian government. Expropriation without compensation, which also affected the subjects of other foreign countries, caused complications internationally. As a large foreign loan was being procured, the *Riigikogu* (Parliament) decided in the spring of 1926 to compensate the former owners. However, the amount was considered exceptionally low, and the payment was to be made in the state debentures within 55 years. In any case, the distribution of Danish property was postponed due to this intervention. Thus, the sons of both Foss and Larsen also obtained land.

In early 1922, Johansen was officially appointed royal consul general. While in Denmark in October, he gave a presentation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Introducing economic conditions in Estonia, he mentioned the severe depreciation of the mark. Secondly, he criticised the government's customs policy and licensing system. Furthermore, his main interest was still in Soviet Russia, where the New Economic Policy had been announced. The Danes had a great deal of money stuck in Russia. Now, in Denmark, as elsewhere in the West, there were hopes that it would be possible to operate there again. However, Johansen said that the Bolshevik leaders had no morality. Based on information from other honorary consuls, Johansen gave examples that probably surprised the audience. Even if gold and diamonds were received as payment and doing business would mean large profits, the risk was high.. Danish historian Tage Kaarsted, who has studied Johansen's

materials in the archives of the Foreign Ministry, has pointed out that Johansen often analysed the issue of Russia at length in his reports. It is said that his factual and clearly formulated reports were appreciated in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The consulate remained in the *Kreditkasse* building even after its transfer to the Estonian Rural Bank. The first deputy requested by Johansen did not meet his requirements. Only Aage Norby continued his duties as deputy consul. The honorary consul was permanently located in Pärnu (Pernau), a harbour city where, during Johansen's tenure, the position was held by a German businessman, and in Narva or Narva-Jõesuu.

It should again be noted that Johansen did not receive a salary from the Kingdom of Denmark. He had indicated to the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs that his sources of profit as a member of the board of the Port-Kunda cement factory, a member of the board of a trade company (agricultural machinery) in Tallinn, and shares in the Venevere cellulose factory gave him a total income of about 4,000 Danish kroner per year. The latter, a small pulp mill in Virumaa, was built before the war, together with Frederik Welding. It did not do well and was sold. Johansen bought a similar factory at Joaveski in the north coast together with an Estonian. Converted into a joint stock company, it operated under the direction of his eldest son, who also built a new hydroelectric power plant by a nearby river.

The Kunda factory offered Johansen the highest income when, as the Danish consul general, he was elected to the board of directors at the general meeting of shareholders at the end of 1919. The engineers of F.L. Smidth & Co, co-owned by A. Foss, had reconstructed the Kunda cement plant in the 1890s. Engineer Emil Riisager designed the new factory with his own patented kilns and was its technical manager at the end of the 19th century. However, he had to leave, because he had also designed a factory for another company. To start up production in Kunda in 1920, the issuing of new shares was expanded, and the share capital was increased severalfold. Smidth & Co was added as a re-registered major shareholder of AS Port-Kunda, which meant that the plant was subordinated to the Danish cement monopoly. Theodor Hansen, who had once headed the company's branches in Russia, assumed the position of director until the factory was nationalized in 1940. The increased output of the modernized Port-Kunda soon enabled the export of cement to neighbouring countries but no longer reached its pre-war levels.

Kunda, where several Danes worked, became a kind of Danish corner in Estonia. Hansen had the use of a spacious director's house. A well-planned workers' settlement had been built before the war. The choral apse of the small stone church, completed in 1928 in the neo-Romanesque style, was decorated with a plaster copy of the sculpture Christ by Bertel Thorvaldsen. And although it had no direct connection with the factory, the first folk high school in Estonia began to operate in the Kunda manor house in 1925. In Denmark, such institutions *(folkehøjskole)* had significantly

contributed to raising the rural population's level of education.

In the 1920s, Denmark's share in Estonian exports was higher than in imports, and imports were declining. In 1929, Estonia signed an agreement with Denmark for the purchase of seeds. Johansen continued to work for local Danish businessmen and companies. Probably the most important of these companies was Højgaard & Schultz. This was established in Denmark by Knud Højgaard and Sven Schultz, who worked as engineers from the aforementioned Christiani & Nielsen on the construction of a seaplane hangar in Tallinn during the war. The Højgaard & Schultz Eesti company was registered in 1927; besides Danes, the board also included Konrad Mauritz, trusted business adviser to Päts. The company's aim was to build the Tartu-Petseri railway, completed in 1931.

Johansen purchased a house on the edge of Kadriorg Park in Tallinn in 1923, suggesting that his economic situation had improved. He also took joy in the children. Johansens were liberal-minded and raised the children in the same spirit. At that time, daughter Ingeborg was living long-term with her parents; her father had encouraged the publication of her first novel. Both younger sons received their doctorates almost simultaneously: Paul at the University of Leipzig, with a study of Estonian settlement in the Middle Ages, and Hans at the University of Munich, with a biological-geographical overview of Lake Baikal. Subsequently, the youngest son, Paul, landed a job in the Tallinn City Archives; however, Hans returned to his work in the Far East of Russia.

In his letter of gratitude to the king of Denmark upon his appointment as royal consul general, Johansen wrote: 'All my life, it has been my goal not only to work for my personal interests but also to seek opportunities to serve my country and mankind. In the three-and-a-half years in which I have had the honour to represent Denmark, I have had more opportunity to achieve these goals than ever before. I have been happy for this and hope that, insofar as my energy and abilities permit, I shall also be able to work for these goals in the future.' As a Danish patriot, Johansen had done just that with energy and trustworthiness. A serious illness ended Jens Christian Johansen's life on 29 January 1929. His wife was entitled to a small pension.

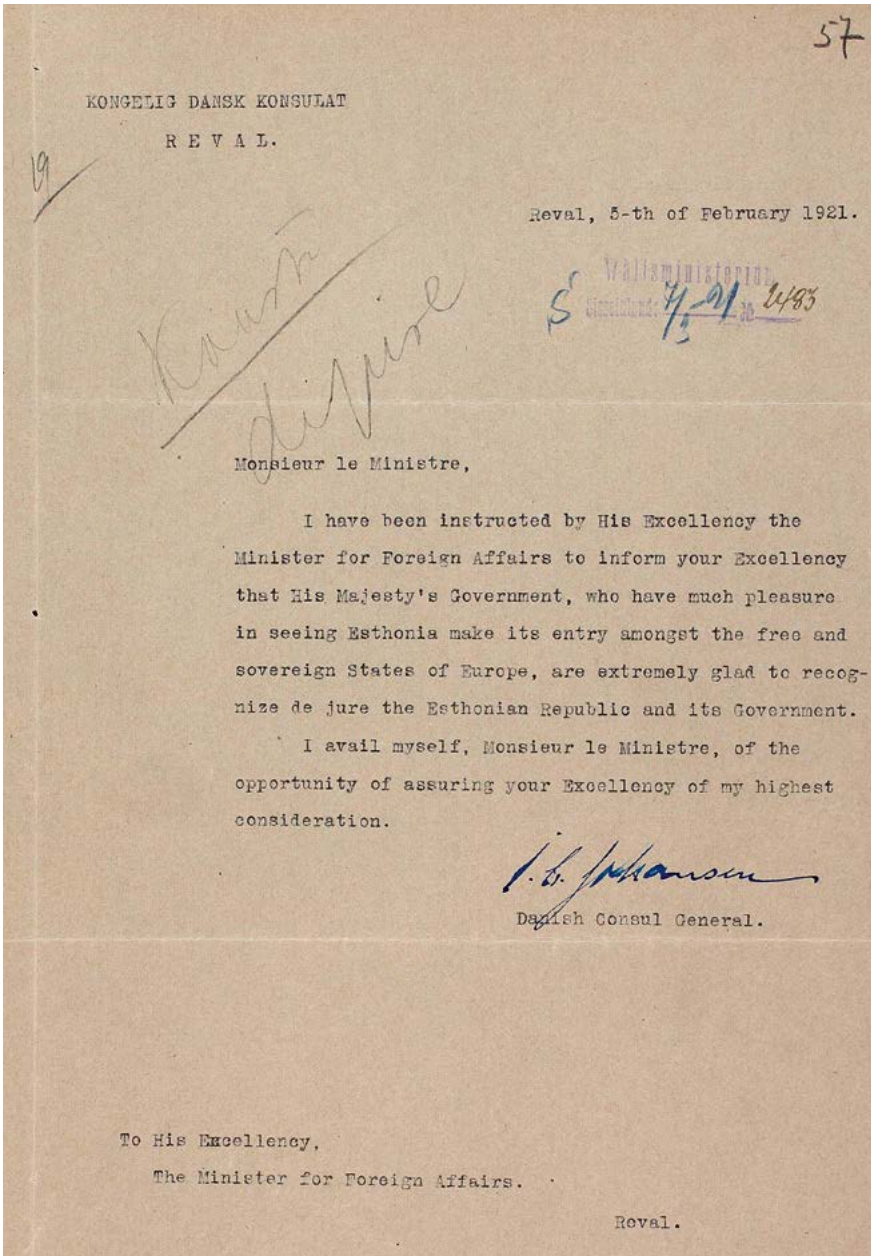
The change in Estonian-Danish diplomatic relations coincided with Johansen's passing. In Copenhagen, Estonian representatives had changed several times. The first Estonian ambassador to the Scandinavian countries, based in Stockholm, was appointed on 1 May 1928. At his suggestion, the government decided in the summer of 1930 to create the position of chargé d'affaires ad interim, as the Danish government had done with the secretary-consul in Tallinn. The Danish ambassador was to be F. de Lerche, who, for a long time, resided in Helsinki. The consulate and embassy moved. Their last location was in Tallinn's first high-rise building with an elevator, the house of the Baltic German Insurance Company on Vabaduse Square.

According to the 1934 census, 228 Danes lived in Estonia, including 68 in Tallinn

and 52 in Tartu. There were 108 persons with Danish citizenship, with spouses of other nationalities. The devaluation of the Estonian kroon contributed to the revival of the Estonian economy, which had been shaken by the crisis of the 1930s. However, Estonian-Danish trade remained modest. After the *coup d'état* of Päts and Laidoner in 1934, authoritarian rule was accompanied by an increase in the state's role in the economy. In agriculture, subsidies continued. The state monopolized the export of butter, eggs, and meat, but it was difficult to compete with high-quality Danish products on the British market.

Danish engineers demonstrated their high level of technical skills once again when the government launched a major bridge construction programme. By the March 1935 deadline, 11 companies had submitted their tenders. Only two tenders were suitable in terms of price and technical solution: those of Højgaard & Schultz and a Finnish company. Contracts were signed with a Danish company for the construction of seven reinforced concrete bridges. All of them were finished on time. The largest, which accounted for just under half of the total budget, was built by a Danish company in Pärnu. In the middle, in the narrower opening of the 210-meter-long, five-arch bridge, there was a steel folding bridge for the passage of ships. The bridge was ceremonially opened on 5 November 1938 by President Päts. It was called the Great Bridge of Pärnu, but unfortunately, the bridge did not last long. The retreating German troops blew up the bridge in 1944. Of the seven bridges the Danes built, only one small bridge survived the war. Rapid political changes in 1939–1940 permanently altered the destiny of the Johansen family. After the conquest of Poland in the autumn of 1939, the German Reich organised the resettlement of Baltic Germans *(Umsiedlung)* from Estonia and Latvia. Paul had to take Estonian citizenship in order to serve as the city archivist of Tallinn. Paul with his family was able to leave Estonia for Germany, thanks to his German wife. Hans, who held the professorship at Tomsk University, was told he would have to apply for Soviet citizenship. Thereupon he decided to leave Tomsk. Finally, he managed to leave for Germany from Riga. The consul's widow, Ingeborg, went to Denmark together with Hans's daughter. Karl Adam was the only one left in Estonia to manage his German wife's inherited manor in western Estonia. Neither the Danish flag in the yard nor Danish citizenship could help them. Like other foreigners, they were interned at the beginning of the war in June 1941. Karl Adam died the following year in the Gulag in Karaganda. His wife escaped to Denmark after the war, where her husband's relatives were waiting.

Thus, the remains of Royal Honorary Consul Jens Christian Johansen still rest in the soil of Estonia. In the Danish-Swedish corner of Rahumäe Cemetery in Tallinn, a huge field stone stands on the grave of the honoured man who was decorated with the Estonian Cross of Liberty, and twice awarded the Order of Dannebrog. It is as sturdy and solid as he had been in all his activities. On the front of the headstone is engraved: '*Livet er Lidelse / men / Lidelse er Liv / og / at leve er Lykke*' (Life is suffering, but suffering is life and happiness is living). The back reads: 'Danske reiste denne sten' (The Danes erected this stone).



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KONGELIG DANSK KONSULAT

R E V A L.

19

Reval, 5-th of February 1921.

Välisministeerium
Saabunud 7.-21 nr. 2483

Monsieur le Ministre,

I have been instructed by His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs to inform your Excellency that His Majesty's Government, who have much pleasure in seeing Esthonia make its entry amongst the free and sovereign States of Europe, are extremely glad to recognize de jure the Esthonian Republic and its Government.

I avail myself, Monsieur le Ministre, of the opportunity of assuring your Excellency of my highest consideration.

J. C. Johansen

Danish Consul General.

To His Excellency,
The Minister for Foreign Affairs.
Reval.

Letter to the Estonian Minister of Foreign Affairs affirming that the Kingdom of Denmark recognises the Republic of Estonia, signed by Danish Consul General J. C. Johansen, 5 February 1921. (Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

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Vello Helk – An uncompromising Life between Denmark and Estonia

All sources and references can be found in a longer version of this article, published in *Denmark and Estonia 1219–2019: Selected Studies on Common Relations*, ed. Jens E. Olesen (Greifswald: Druckhaus Panzig, 2019).

One of the individuals of paramount importance for Danish-Estonian relations during the late 20th century is the Danish-Estonian historian Vello Helk (1923–2014). He arrived in Denmark as a refugee in 1945, eventually opting to stay. He studied history at the University of Aarhus and became a respected Danish historian, offering his diligence and skills to Danish archives.

The Estonian writer and literary scholar Jaan Undusk (born 1958), in a 2015 article on Vello Helk entitled 'How to Become a Perfect Danish-Estonian Historian', wrote that 'it would not be an exaggeration to say that Vello Helk was the man who made a most brilliant career among the Estonian historians abroad.[1]

As a historian, Helk was always looking for themes or sources that could illuminate the history of his homeland. What little spare time he had he spent on the affairs of his homeland. He exchanged letters with other exiled Estonians and produced information on Estonian relations or for the benefit of the tiny Estonian refugee community in Denmark.

Vello Helk took great care to shape his own history. By 1991, when he had just retired from the Danish National Archives, he finished his memoirs, which were published in the Estonian historical journal Tuna from 2002 to 2005 in 13 instalments.[2] The memoirs were entitled 'Pagulastudengist Taani arhivaariks' (From Refugee Student to Danish Archivist) and covered his life story from 1947 until 1991, thus leaving approximately half of his life uncovered. The rest must be pieced together from various works or through personal knowledge.

[1] Jaan Undusk, 'How to Become a Perfect Danish-Estonian Historian', in East and Central European History Writing in Exile 1939–1989, ed. Maria Zadencka, Andrejs Plakans and Andreas Lawaty (Leiden, 2015), p. 237.

[2] Vello Helk, 'Pagulustendigist Taani arhivaariks' [From Refugee Student to Danish Archivist], Tuna no. 3 (2002), pp. 117–132 (I); no. 4 (2002), pp. 118–131 (II); no. 1 (2003), pp. 134–145 (III); no. 2 (2003), pp. 118–130 (IV); no. 3 (2003), pp. 116–130 (V); no. 4 (2003), pp. 123–138 (VI); no. 1 (2004), pp. 109–121 (VII); no. 2 (2004), pp. 119–129 (VIII); no. 3 (2004), pp. 118–131 (IX); no. 4 (2004), 141–150 (X); no. 1 (2005), pp. 116–126 (XI); no. 2 (2005), pp. 116–129 (XII); and no. 3 (2005), pp. 133–141 (XIII).

I became acquainted with Vello Helk in 1992, when I studied history in Copenhagen and my interest in Estonian history was growing. I had little to offer Helk except my enthusiasm, but I was one of the many young historians that Helk supported through correspondence and with professional advice. Throughout his life, and especially in this chapter of it, Helk went out of his way to help young historians, mostly Estonians. The idea was to prepare the younger generation to take over from the previous generation, who, according to Helk, with some individual exceptions and to varying degrees, had been tainted by Soviet communism. This changing of the guard, Helk hoped, would reduce the influence of the occupiers and their ideology on the Estonian nation.

Childhood and Early Adulthood

Helk was born on 23 September 1923 in Varstu in Võrumaa County in south-eastern Estonia, just a few kilometres north of the Latvian border. At Varstu, Helk's parents had a small farm, but in 1929 they bought a large farm in the village of Viirapalu, on the road between Tsooru and Vana-Roosa. That was where Vello Helk grew up and lived until his mobilisation into the German military in early 1944.

The farm at Viirapalu, in today's Antsla parish, was called Pööni-Jakobi 25 and covered 40 hectares – it was an old farm dating back to czarist times. In Helk's youth, Viirapalu village consisted of a dozen farms, though they were far apart.[3] The rolling hills and lakes of his childhood were echoed in the somewhat similar landscape of Birkerød, which was Helk's home in Denmark from 1959 until his death.

Helk's parents were Jaan Helk (1879–1940) and his wife, Mari Helk (née Sormul, 1882–1959), who married in 1906. Vello Helk's sister Helmi Rosalie was born in 1910 and his brother Rudolf (Villu) in 1914. Villu Helk perished in Siberia in 1946.

Helk was christened Voldemar Hintervald, but like many others in Estonia during the 1930s, the Helk family Estonianised their names. Helk started his formal education at the local Lepistu Primary School in the village of Roosiku, taking extra English lessons from a local graduate of the *gümnaasium* (academic high school) and walking seven to eight kilometres to school each day. Eventually, in 1943, he himself graduated from the *gümnaasium* in Võru. One of the memories he shared with me was that of a very young Karl Siilivask (a Soviet Estonian historian) as a Komsomol organiser terrorising fellow students and teachers in Võru with overt and covert threats of persecution during the Soviet occupation in 1940–1941. Vello Helk saw the continued presence of Siilivask (and several other Estonian historians) as a symbol of the continued strong Soviet influence on Estonian historiography and Estonian society in general.

[3] Vello Helk, 'Meenutades Viirapalu küla', *Tsoorukandi rahva teabeleht Külaleht*, no. 79 (2011), http://tsoorukant.planet.ee/kylaleht/Kylaleht%2079.pdf.

Following graduation, Helk was needed on the home farm, since his father had died in 1940. Helk had suffered from inflammation of the middle ear since he was a child and had been a frequent visitor at local hospitals – and even institutions in Tartu, where he was treated by Professor Ernst Saareste. This affliction earned him an exemption from the first rounds of German mobilisation in 1943, but in early 1944, he was unable to escape it.[4]

Settling in Denmark

Little is known of Vello Helk's wartime record. From his memoirs only small scraps of knowledge can be extracted – for instance, that he retreated from Estonia on his way to Germany and ended up in Denmark in May 1945.[5] He also describes himself as a film buff going back to his school days in Võru.
But in May 1945, Helk found himself in the southern part of Denmark, Sønderjylland in Danish, perhaps better known as the northern part of the Duchy of Schleswig (Nordslesvig), which – after 56 years of German rule – reverted to Denmark in a 1920 referendum. At the time, there were around 1,000 Estonian refugees in Denmark. They were registered as Allied refugees or displaced persons by the Danish Red Cross and later by the Danish Refugee Administration.[6]

For Helk, this meant that he was formally registered at a refugee camp in the area (in Helk's case, the camps were Stensbæk Højskole near Gram and Danebod Højskole at Fynshav on the island of Als). In fact, however, he was employed as a farmhand on a farm near Haderslev for almost the entire period. He had no idea what to do with his life, but it was clear to him that Denmark wanted to get rid of its 250,000 war refugees, most of them Germans. Thus he applied to emigrate farther abroad to Canada, Australia, or South America, as indeed, most of the Estonian refugees in Denmark eventually did.

By chance, he became acquainted with a local family who inspired him to apply to Aarhus University to study history in the fall of 1947. He received financial and other support from 'Moster' (literally, 'mother's sister' in Danish), an older unmarried woman who worked at a building society in Haderslev and who had taken it upon herself to support young members of her family. She also extended this favour to Helk, not just with funds but also with room and board during vacations.

University Years in Aarhus and Rome

As a historian, he did not have good prospects for employment. Helk writes in his memoirs: 'We did not let that stop us. My fellow students were young people, between 18 and 20 and full of hope no matter what. I was a few years older, but as the prospects for my future were dark in any case, I felt I might just as well continue on the path that I had chosen.'

[4] Helk, 'Pagulastudengiks' V, p. 126.
[5] Helk, 'Pagulastudengiks' II, p. 119.
[6] For further information on Estonian refugees in Denmark after the Second World War, see Peter Kyhn, 'Unwelcome Guests: Estonian and Other Baltic Refugees in Denmark after World War II', in *Festschrift für Vello Helk zum 75. Geburtstag*, ed. Enn Küng and Helina Tamman (Tartu, 1998), pp. 367–408.

At university, Helk found a friend in his professor of modern history, C. O. Bøggild-Andersen, who, in addition to teaching history, also helped refine Helk's spoken and written Danish. As Helk had learned to speak Danish in southern Jutland, he even sought help to shed his provincial accent before entering university.

He rented a room and sought contact among Aarhus's miniscule Estonian community, but after a few years, he moved into a dormitory, which broke his isolation from fellow students. His best friend at university was Tage Kaarsted, who was later professor of history at Odense and royal historiographer.

In April 1951 he received an alien passport and embarked on a decade of travel and study. His first trip was to the Swedish National Archives in Stockholm, where he also met Estonian historians Arnold Soom and Evald Blumfeldt, as well the publicist Vello Pekomäe, who asked Helk to contribute an article for the Estonian page in *Stockholms-Tidningen*. In Lund, Helk met with former Tartu University rector Edgar Kant, a geographer who would remain Helk's close friend for some 20 years. Another ally was the literary scholar Otto A. Webermann in Göttingen.

But most importantly, Helk met Vello Salo in Stockholm. Salo, who at the time was studying for the priesthood in Rome, set Helk's academic direction for most of Helk's academic career by pointing to the sources in the Vatican archives that related to Nordic and Baltic history. In June 1952, Helk was informed by the Estonian exile representative in Paris, K. R. Pusta, that he had received a scholarship for studies in the Vatican archives. Shortly thereafter, he left for Rome and spent the next 10 months working in the Vatican archives. He lived austerely, as he had done all his life, and gathered material that he used for the remainder of his 60 years as a published historian. He returned to Denmark in May 1953 after witnessing the remarkable effect of the death of Stalin on Italy, where the Italian Communist Party was a dominant force. Almost done with the history part of his MA, he added minor subjects and finally received his master's degree in January 1956.

Helk, the Archivist and Historian

Helk immediately found employment as an archivist at the Danish National Business Archives in Aarhus and, on the side, he prepared for his doctoral dissertation. Bøggild-Andersen wanted him to continue with his master thesis's theme of the peasantry in Livonia under Swedish rule, but Helk chose the Vatican connection and the Counter-Reformation in the Nordics. He returned to Rome in late 1956 for further studies, and in 1957, Helk temporarily replaced Vagn Dybdahl as head of the Business Archives.
The year 1958 was a great one for Helk in many respects, as he married Annemarie Jepsen (1924–2006), a university-trained music teacher and singer, in April. Later the same year, he obtained a temporary position as an archivist at the National Archives, and via Edgar Kant, he was able to make contact with his mother and sister in occupied Estonia.

Annemarie belonged to the German-speaking minority in southern Jutland, which at the time must have been a bitter pill to swallow for Moster and her family, who were Danish nationalists. At the time, national differences were still marked in southern Jutland, but today the *Dannebrog* (Danish flag) is raised on the Jepsen family farm.

Helk had chosen to keep a low profile politically in Denmark, as he utterly disliked the degree to which public opinion accepted the crimes and lies of Soviet communism. Following the Hungarian Uprising in 1956, he believed that the Danes' political understanding had matured enough that it would make sense to inform them of the plight of the Estonian people. He did so in the daily *Jyllands-Posten*, in a long article entitled 'The Land of Silence: Estonia'. Moreover, at a student rally, when Anker Kirkebye, a leading journalist associated with the Social-Liberal daily *Politiken*, lauded Stalin and the fairness of the Soviet justice system, Helk took the floor and delivered a rebuttal. It was to no avail – Helk was booed off. He writes: 'There were plenty of Soviet sympathisers, and as we were refugees, people did not believe us. They thought we had left because of a guilty conscience.[7]

[7] Helk, 'Pagulastudengiks' IV, p. 122.

Vello Helk, 1958

Danish Historian and Civil Servant

In 1959, Helk finally landed a permanent position at the National Archives, and the same year, he and Annemarie moved into the newly built house in Birkerød, north of Copenhagen, that would be their home for the rest of their lives. As an archivist, Helk was entitled to spend two-sevenths of his working time on research, and in 1962, he handed in his doctoral dissertation. A three-member evaluation committee was appointed, consisting of Bøggild-Andersen, the renowned theologian P. G. Lindhart and Astrid Friis, professor of history at the University of Copenhagen. Helk was disappointed that Bøggild-Andersen, citing his duty to remain neutral, did not want to discuss professional issues with Helk, as well as by the fact that the committee

took almost four years to approve the thesis. Finally, in March 1966, his dissertation 'Laurentius Nicolai Norvegus S. J. En biografi med bidrag til belysning af romerkirkens forsøg på at genvinde Danmark-Norge' was approved.

Helk developed connections with Baltic German historians such as Hellmuth Weiss, Arved von Taube, Georg von Rauch, Roland Seeberg-Elverfeldt and Paul Johansen (who was in fact more Danish than German by ancestry) and their *Baltische Historische Kommission* (Baltic History Commission), of which he eventually became a member.[8] He was in close contact with literary Estonians in Lund, such as writers Valev Uibopuu, Artur Taska, Herbert Salu and Bernard Kangro; he assisted Kangro with his novels on Anders Sunesen.[9] Unfortunately, he was also affected by his ear affliction and was repeatedly ill in 1963–1968.

However, in 1970, he was made department head, and much of Helk's time was now preoccupied with managing a growing organisation at the National Archives. As head of the section for private archives, Helk started each morning by reading the obituaries to determine which families to contact later. Helk was also able to contribute to the historiography on his homeland. He facilitated the publication of the diaries of Jens Chr. Johansen, Denmark's consul general in Tallinn in 1918–1929,[10] by Finnish historian Kalervo Hovi. Moreover, he published an Estonian-language version of the memoirs of Richard Borgelin, commander of the Danish volunteer unit in the Estonian War of Independence. [11]

From the late 1960s, Helk, due to his education and position, was viewed as the natural leader of the small Estonian community in Denmark. He was one of the organisers of the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Republic of Estonia in Copenhagen and Lund in 1968. He eventually became the chairman of the Estonian society in Copenhagen, Eesti Kodu (Estonian Home), a post at which he remained until 1991. Such was his authority that when he recommended that the wartime generation hand the leadership of Eesti Kodu over to the younger generation of Estonian immigrants, the older generation agreed.

By 1977, Helk was the longest-serving department head, and as such, he served as interim head of the National Archives during the many absences of the formal head, Johan Hvidtfeldt. When Hvidtfeldt finally retired in 1979, Helk backed Erik Stig Jørgensen to succeed him. However, the Social Democratic minister of culture, Niels Matthiasen, chose the only Social Democrat among the applicants, Helk's former superior from the Business Archives, Vagn Dybdahl.

[8] Helk, 'Pagulastudengiks' VI, p. 124.

[9] Bernard Kangro, *Kuus päeva* (Lund, 1973).

[10] Kalervo *Hovi, Estland in den Anfängen seiner Selbständigkeit. Die Tagebuchaufzeichnungen des dänischen Generalkonsuls in Reval Jens Christian Johansen* 13.12.1918 – 29.03.1919 (Turku, 1977).

[11] Richard G. Borgelin, *Dannebrogi lipu all* (Stockholm, 1973).

From 1924 to 1982, Denmark was ruled by Social Democratic governments for all but 10 years, and from the 1920s until Dybdahl's retirement in 1992, all the heads of the National Archives were Social Democrats. The fact that Helk and many of the archives' staff supported his rival angered Vagn Dybdahl so much that the National Archives were in a state of permanent civil war during Dybdahl's tenure. Even though Helk was encouraged by being awarded a knighthood in the Order of the Dannebrog in 1980, the conflict with Dybdahl darkened Helk's last 10 years at the National Archives. That era was also deeply affected by a series of failed surgeries that left Helk completely deaf in 1990.

For a long time, Helk's academic interests were focused on student travels and especially on student albums from 1500 to 1800. These he had collected since the late 1960s. He published several volumes on the subject,[12] as well as dozens of academic articles. In addition, Helk published archival registries and writings on a variety of other subjects, including Denmark's presence in Estonia from 1550 to 1645, a monograph on the school in Kuressaare from 1559 to 1710,[13] and the Danish participation in the Estonian War of Independence in 1919.[14] Helk also assisted the Danish journalist Erik Nørgaard in writing two books on the assassination of the Estonian communist Johannes Eltermann by other Estonian communists and their Danish accomplices in 1936. In addition, Helk published a number of entries in the Danish National Encyclopaedia in the 1990s.

At the same time, the political situation in Estonia was changing, and the Singing Revolution was gaining momentum. Though he had not set foot in Estonia between 1944 and 1993, Helk was, thanks to his extensive network of correspondents, well informed of the developments in Estonia.

Public Educator and Political Commentator

When the Soviet Union started to crumble, Helk decided that the time had finally come to enlighten the Danes about the plight of his native land. He wrote numerous commentaries, mostly published in *Politiken* or *Jyllands-Posten*, now a national paper, where Bent Jensen, a professor of history at the University of Southern Denmark, was political editor from 1989 to 1991.

However, by the end of the 1990s, Helk began to find it difficult to get his opinion pieces published in the Danish and Estonian press. Such pieces had lost their freshness in the eyes of editors – and many of them probably also felt

[12] Vello Helk, Dansk *Norske studierejser fra reformationen til enevælden 1536–1660* (Odense, 1987); Vello Helk, *Dansk-norske studierejser 1661–1813*, vols. I–II (Odense, 1991).

[13] Vello Helk, *Die Stadtschule in Arensburg auf Ösel in dänischer und schwedischer Zeit (1559–1710)* (Lüneburg, 1989).

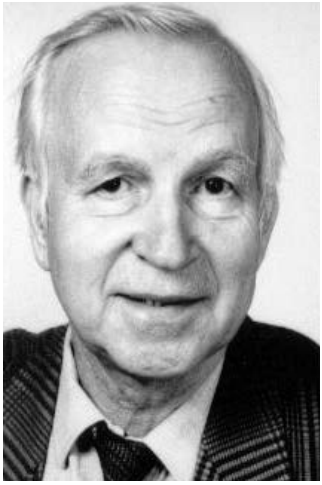
[14] Vello Helk, 'Dansk militær og humanitær indsats i Estland 1919', in Om Danmarks historie 1900–1920. Festskrift til Tage Kaarsted (Odense, 1988), pp. 97–127.

targeted when Helk warned of the Soviet legacy.

Helk wrote a short overview of Estonian history [15] that was published by Odense University Press in 1993 and was even reprinted. This was a clever strategy: as a monograph, the book is still used, while the newspaper commentaries have long since been forgotten.

Helk also promoted the translation of Estonian literature into Danish. He worked as an unpaid consultant on the three volumes of contemporary prose that Anne Behrndt translated from 1994 to 1997: Viivi Luik's *Ajaloo Ilu*, and Emil Tode/Tõnu Õnnepalu's *Piiririik* and *Hind* at the publishers Fremad and Munksgaard/Rosinante. However, Helk refused to be further involved in the translations of Õnnepalu, and eventually Anne Behrndt gave up translating from Estonian. [16]

As Helk found it difficult to get his opinion pieces published in Denmark, he turned more and more frequently to the Estonian press. He visited Estonia twice, in 1993 and 1995. Even though Helk's outlets changed, the core message of his essays was always the same: Estonia cannot hope for true survival or independence unless the influence of the Soviet era is completely uprooted. Helk's last publishing refuge was the



Vello Helk, 1958

Estonian press outside Estonia, preferably in *Vaba Eesti Sõna* in New York or *Rahvuslik Kontakt* in Sweden, where he tirelessly contributed opinion pieces but found an ever-smaller audience. A stalwart and an ideologue in his own right, Helk did not have the same respect for sources as a commentator as he did in his academic writing. Despite his memory and his many connections, Helk occasionally got it wrong. Jüri Kivimäe has mentioned the biographer Rutt Hinrikus among those who were wronged by Helk. I can add the linguist Raimo Raag to this list.

Helk also tried to do his part to create a new generation of Estonian historians who could take Estonian historiography out of what Helk saw as the claws of the Soviet legacy. Up until the late 1990s, Helk complained that most Estonian historians avoided writing about the Soviet period for fear of stepping on toes. However, when Estonian historians finally

[15] Vello Helk, *Estlands historie – kort fortalt* (Odense, 1993).
[16] Peter Kyhn, 'Nekrolog: Anne Behrndt', *DES-Nyt, Tidsskrift for Dansk-Estisk Selskab*, no. 73 (March 2019), pp. 26–27.

started to explore the Soviet period, Helk examined their writings closely for any trace of nostalgia.

With the aim of increasing contacts between historians in Denmark and Estonia, Helk created a scholarship under the auspices of the Estonian Scientific Society in southern Sweden. The scholarship was awarded from 1992 to 2006, sponsoring Estonian historians like Enn Küng, Eero Medijainen, Piia Kärssin, Liivi Aarma, Jüri Kivimäe, Ivar Leimus, Arvo Tering, Kersti Markus and others.
His many contacts with Estonian historians, and of course his long list of published works, secured him an honorary doctorate from the University of Tartu in 1996, as well as a Festschrift presented at his 75th birthday in 1998. In 1997, Estonia's president, Lennart Meri, conferred on him the Order of the National Coat of Arms *(Riigivapi teenetemärk)*.

A Refugee until the End

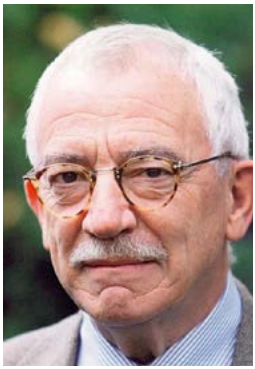
Vello Helk remained a true refugee until his death in 2014. He never stopped thinking of Estonia, its legacy and how it might have developed had the country not been treated so unjustly by Great Power politics. This played a fundamental role in all he did. This was his mission – and it was greater than his desire to be an eminent historian or a loyal Danish civil servant.

In his later essays, in *Rahvuslik Kontakt* and *Vaba Eesti Sõna* and other publications, he accentuated his position. This was summed up in a 2015 radio portrait of Helk by his younger colleague and long-time correspondent Jüri Kivimäe, namely that 'no proper Estonian historiography, or indeed a sound society in Estonia, could be created before the generations infected with the Soviet mindset had disappeared.'

Jüri Kivimäe suggested that Helk's ear condition and subsequent tinnitus, which Helk described as the constant sound of a circular saw in his head, might have played a role in aggravating his points of view, along with the fundamental tragedy of his life as a refugee and the loss of his homeland.[17] To this one was added Helk's loss of his wife Annemarie in 2006, which came as a painful blow.

The thoughts harboured in Helk's later writings reflect the world view he developed during his time as a refugee in cooperation with many of the great individuals in the Estonian diaspora. The difference, perhaps, is that Vello Helk lived for so long and continued to express these ideas and – fully in tune with his character – never compromised on them, even when the Republic of Estonia had become a reality.

[15] Piret Kriivan, ed., featuring Jüri Kivimäe, *Eesti lugu* 428: 'Vello Helk 2', Eesti Rahvusringhääling, aired October 10, 2015, https://arhiiv.err.ee/vaata/eesti-lugu-428-vello-helk-2. Accessed March 15, 2015.



Uffe Ellemann-Jensen
Former Danish Minister
for Foreign Affairs 1982-1993

A 'window of opportunity': When Estonia returned to the free world

All sources and references can be found in a longer version of this article, published in *Denmark and Estonia 1219–2019: Selected Studies on Common Relations*, ed. Jens E. Olesen (Greifswald: Druckhaus Panzig, 2019).

Logo made by Peter Blay in 1990.

The human chain formed between Tallinn and Vilnius on 23 August 1989, the "Baltic Chain"[1], was an eye-opener for Denmark. Before, the Danes had only fragmented knowledge of the Baltic states. There were no official contacts, almost no available contemporary books, and only a few scattered news reports. Before the Second World War, we had lively contacts with our old neighbours on the Baltic Sea. Then they were occupied by the Soviet Union, and since the end of the war, they seemed to have been erased from our consciousness. My own experience illustrates this.

I was born in Denmark when it was under German occupation (1940–1945) and grew up in the divided Europe of the Cold War. This means that I grew up in the post-war years, when Denmark was kept safe by our membership in NATO. The Cold War was a reality in my daily life as a soldier, student, journalist, and politician. I travelled many times to countries behind the Iron Curtain, although I never visited the Baltic states. Since I followed the developments in Europe and read more and more about our recent history, the small Baltic states became like a black spot on my conscience.

It dawned on me that the fate of these countries could have been our own. In May 1945, toward the end of the war, when Berlin was being encircled by the Soviet Red Army, one army corps was ordered to go to Lübeck and Kiel in order to get access to Jutland – and the strate-

[1] The Baltic Chain was a mass demonstration against Soviet rule of the Baltics, which stretched over 600 kilometers across the Baltic states.

gic important Danish straits. Denmark was lucky that Field Marshal Montgomery and the British arrived there first. Marshal Rokossovsky and the Red Army were only hours behind. The Danish island of Bornholm was occupied by the Red Army, but the Russians left the island the following year. It is an open question what would have happened if the Soviet Union had succeeded in getting control of Denmark and our straits guarding the access to the Baltic Sea[2].

So while Denmark came out of the Second World War as a free and independent nation, the Baltic states had to face 46 years of occupation before they were to receive the same freedom. And their fate could have been ours. My generation was given the opportunity to grow up in freedom and affluence. We could travel around the world and speak and write as we liked. So when interest in the Baltic states started to grow in Denmark, it was also a reminder of our own luck and our responsibility towards those who were not so fortunate. This explains why the Baltic cause soon received very strong support among the Danes, regardless of their political affiliation.

The realisation that something new was underway came to me in the 1980s, when we started to receive news and information from the Baltic states on freedom movements and increasing demands for a return to the independence they had had before they were forced to join the Soviet Union.

I first saw a sign of what was going on during a visit to the Faroe Islands.[3] In the harbour of Tórshavn, I saw a trawler with a flag I had never seen before – one with blue, black, and white stripes. It was the Estonian flag.

After this moving experience, things started to develop fast, and ideas of how to establish contacts to the Baltic states started to flow. One Danish idea was to establish consulates in the Baltic capitals – as Sweden had done – but in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, we said no. We also said no in August 1989, when the chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet in the Estonian SSR, Arnold Rüütel, sent a letter to the speaker of the Danish Parliament suggesting a visit to Denmark.

This apparently cold attitude was difficult for many Estonians and Danes to understand – and it was difficult to explain. But such official contacts would have meant an implicit recognition of Estonia being a part of the Soviet Union – and Denmark had never recognised the three Baltic states' forced incorporation into the USSR in 1940. Therefore, Denmark's recognition of the Baltic states from 1921 was still formally valid.

This policy of non-recognition of the Soviet annexation was the key to the Danish policy towards the Baltic states. It initially prevented us from establishing contacts as freely as some other countries did. However, our position

[2] Uffe Ellemann-Jensen, *Det lysner i Øst – Vejen til et helt Europa* (Copenhagen, 2006), p. 13. Concerning the island of Bornholm, see Bent Jensen, *Bjørnen og haren. Sovjetunionen og Danmark 1945–1965* (Odense, 1999).

[3] The Danish foreign minister is also responsible for the foreign relations of the North Atlantic parts of the Danish Realm: Greenland and the Faroe Islands.

reflected a policy that was understood and encouraged by the Baltic independence movements. As was later demonstrated, this policy also made it possible for Denmark to move fast when events opened new windows of opportunity. To this day, the principle of the Baltic states' 'continuity' from their establishment in 1918–1919 has remained of the utmost importance for their relations with the Soviet Union/Russia, which does not recognise the continuity.

It is important to stress this in order to avoid confusion, for example, when 'recognition' of the Baltic states is being discussed. Denmark recognised the three states in 1921. What we did in 1991 was to re-establish diplomatic relations, since they had been broken off in 1940 by the Soviet occupation. We did not 'recognise' them in 1991. This had already happened a long time ago.

In 1989 the Danish government had to find other ways of establishing contacts with the Baltic states than the official ones. The government sent out a public appeal to build up contacts – by the help of individuals, associations, institutions, companies, and so on – and this led to very many activities. Several members of the Danish Parliament also went to the Baltic states on private visits, cultural contacts were established, and the Danish daily newspaper Politiken started a funding campaign to establish a Danish Cultural Institute in Riga.

I had promised the organisers that if they came close to their financial goal, the government would join – unofficially – and match the funds, thus doubling them. However, this was not necessary. In 1989, almost two million Danish kroner (more than 290.000 US dollars) were collected from the general public, and the year after that, the Danish Cultural Institute was officially opened, with Rikke Helms as its first director. Soon after, the Cultural Institute established representations in Tallinn and Vilnius. This was – in the words of Rikke Helms – the first 'open window to the West'. Cultural exchange between the Baltic States and Denmark, exchange visits among cultural representatives, and study programs at Danish universities were some of the many activities which were taken up by the institute.

A further boost to the informal contacts between our countries came from the Danish Democracy Foundation, which was set up in 1990 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and financed through the ministry's budget. The chairman of the Foundation was Poul Hartling, former Danish prime minister and high commissioner for refugees at the United Nations. The task of the foundation was to promote international contacts – and this, among other things, led to many relations between individuals, associations, communities, and municipalities. The Baltic states also received Danish funds to support economic reforms and environmental projects.

Among the many private initiatives was an invitation by the Danish Chamber of Commerce to young Balts who wanted a brief 'crash course in the market economy' at Niels Brock Copenhagen Business College. In the years that followed, I met several former students of this program who now occupied senior positions in

business and civil service in their own home countries. A special study grant was established at the University of Aarhus for students of political science, named in honour of our Crown Prince Frederik – who also spent some time in Riga as part of his own studies. The study programme seems to have been effective: two of the Baltic graduates later became foreign ministers, Vygaudas Usackas (Lithuania) and Artis Pabriks (Latvia).

Official visitors from the Baltic states started to come to Copenhagen. The first individuals to arrive had ties to the independence movements; then followed ministers on official 'working visits'. One of the first was Prime Minister Kazimiera Prunzkiene from Lithuania. She was received with 'pomp and circumstance': our largest limousine from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, complete with Lithuanian and Danish flags on the bonnet. We held a common press conference – again with the two flags on the table. When the Soviet ambassador in Copenhagen protested, he was reminded that our 1921 recognition of Lithuania as an independent state was still valid.

The three Baltic foreign ministers also started to come on visits – Lennart Meri from Estonia, Janis Jurkans from Latvia, and Algirdas Saudargas from Lithuania. And we formed strong personal relationships. It was obvious that they came to regard Copenhagen as their natural gateway to the rest of Europe. Lennart Meri and I became close friends, and this friendship was to last until his death. We had frequent contacts through the years. The fables from the *Kalevipoeg* epic and the mythology of Finno-Ugric tribes, which he told me about, gave me the feeling of a special closeness to Estonia.

In Denmark, the government's policy toward the Baltic states was supported by all political parties, including the parties on the Left, who had created some problems for the government in the mid-1980s with their anti-NATO stance. Besides sympathy for the Balts, Danes also had an interest in preparing for the day when the Baltic Sea was no longer divided by the Iron Curtain. A future vision began to grow of the Baltic Sea as an open region, with Copenhagen as a natural centre for trade and economic growth. So obviously there was also a more self-interested side of Denmark's policy. But this was seen as a very long-term prospect. When it came to the shorter term, the general view was quite pessimistic. We could not have imagined how fast things would happen.

At that time, most Western countries placed their hopes on General Secretary Gorbachev. This led in many cases to a quite chilly attitude toward Baltic aspirations. However, starting in the autumn of 1989, Denmark systematically raised the issue of Baltic independence in all relevant international fora. The European Union (or as it was still called at that time, the European Communities, or EC) was the most important organisation to raise the issue. At that time Denmark was the only Nordic member. When we raised the issue, it led to a mention in the documents sent out in the EPC (European Political Cooperation). The formulations were perhaps not as precise as we had wished for, but it meant that the

Uffe Ellemann-Jensen and his wife Alice visiting Lennart Meri in Tallinn 1991 (Author's collection)

Baltic issue was at least placed on the international agenda.

The response from our European partners was often 'Don't rock the boat!' Most of the EC countries were more interested in the success of glasnost and perestroika than in what many regarded as romantic nationalism in a small corner of the Baltic Sea region. In an editorial after the Baltic Chain, the influential British newsmagazine the *Economist* wrote that for 'thinking nationalists', the best tactic would be to scale down their rhetoric and support President Gorbachev.

I raised the Baltic issue at the March 1990 ministerial meeting of the Council of Europe. And in my speech to the United Nations General Assembly in September 1990 in New York, I expressed the hope that the Baltic States would soon be permitted to take part in international cooperation as fully fledged members. I also emphasised that Denmark had never accepted the incorporation of the Baltic States into the Soviet Union.

The reluctant reaction from many Western countries was based on the fear that too-active support of the Balts might cause problems for General-Secretary Gorbachev at a time when he was already under strong pressure at home. This made it a tough struggle to find and get support for the Baltic cause – even among the Nordic countries. Finland had their own problems in their relations with the Soviet Union, and their hesitant attitude to the Baltic issue was echoed by Sweden, who had recognised the Baltic states' incorporation into the Soviet Union.[4] Iceland and Norway were much more positive.
Despite different political positions, the Nordic countries succeeded in setting up Nordic information bureaus in the three Baltic capitals. And in the Nordic cooperation, we all agreed to take steps

[4] See, among others, Mauno Koivisto, *Witness to History: The Memoirs of Mauno Koivisto, President of Finland 1982–1994*, translated from the Finnish by Klaus Törnudd, introduction by David Kirby (London, 1997), pp. 164ff.

toward closer cooperation on issues like environment, education, and cultural affairs.

Only when it came to the question of independence and relations with the Soviet Union did we have to give up after spending many hours discussing the formulation of joint communiqués.

The Nordic Council, where parliamentarians from the Nordic countries regularly meet, invited parliamentarians from the Baltic states as guests at their annual session in Copenhagen in February 1991. The Nordic Council had also sent observers to Lithuania's referendum on independence in February 1990. In both cases, the Soviet Union protested against what it regarded as interference in internal affairs.

In the summer of 1990, the Conference of the Human Dimension in the CSCE (Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe) took place in Copenhagen. The foreign ministers from all 35 member states in the 'Helsinki process', as the CSCE was known, were present at the opening ceremony. Denmark, as host country, had invited the three Baltic foreign ministers to participate as observers, but we were forced to rescind our invitation. The Soviet Union threatened not to attend, and the majority of participants did not want to risk seeing the conference cancelled. So instead, I invited my three friends to a luncheon at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
This situation was repeated three months later in Paris, when heads of state and governments from the CSCE met. Among them were General Secretary Gorbachev and President George H. W. Bush from the United States. Once again the three Baltic foreign ministers asked to be recognised as observers, but Gorbachev threatened to go home; thus they were not allowed to participate. Instead they were invited to give a press conference in Maison du Danemark on the Avenue des Champs-Élysées in Paris.

To expand the opportunities for the Balts to bring their case to an international audience, it was decided to set up a Baltic Information Office in Copenhagen. We found a place for this new office in central Copenhagen with individual rooms for each of the three countries.

On 20 December 1990, the three Baltic foreign ministers, Lennart Meri, Janis Jurkans, and Algirdas Saudargas, arrived in Copenhagen to participate in the ceremonial opening of the Information Office. Each received a key to the Information Office, and champagne was poured. Then suddenly, news arrived from Moscow that our colleague Eduard Shevardnadze had resigned from his post.

We left the crowded reception and went outside in the cold December evening to discuss the new situation. Lennart Meri drew a clear conclusion: this boded ill for further developments in Moscow and should be seen as a sign that negative forces were gaining strength. Only three weeks later, his warnings were fulfilled when Soviet Special Forces (OMON) launched attacks in Vilnius and Riga. Several people were killed, and a new and dangerous period started.
The European Community reacted with strong condemnation. In Denmark we invited the Baltic states to send repre-

sentatives to Copenhagen in order to sign protocols of cooperation. These documents were to prove decisive for the further development of our relations. The joint protocol with Estonia was signed on 11 March 1991 by Lennart Meri and me. It stated that 'the parties recalled that before the Second World War, the Kingdom of Denmark and the Republic of Estonia, which were both members of the League of Nations, had good and friendly relations, but that these were interrupted for 50 years by the forcible incorporation of the Republic of Estonia into the Soviet Union in 1940. Denmark, which recognised Estonia in 1921, never recognised the legality of that incorporation'.

The joint protocol listed a number of cooperation initiatives which had been initiated or were under discussion, notably within the areas of agriculture, education, and environmental protection – and it was stated that 'the Danish government will, subject to the approval of the Danish budget authorities, continue to provide financial support for this cooperation'.

The end of the joint protocol stated that 'when the situation makes it possible, Denmark and Estonia will seek to re-establish diplomatic relations'. Similar protocols were signed with the foreign ministers of Latvia and Lithuania.
These protocols led to very sharp reactions from Moscow. The Danish ambassador to the Soviet Union was called to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Moscow to receive a protest in a very harsh tone. We were threatened with counter-measures if Denmark did not change its position.

It took some time for the Soviet diplomats to find some 'counter-measures' that did not create problems for trade relations between the Soviet Union and the European Community. But in July 1991, we were told that the Soviet Union had some objections to the Danish bridge over the Great Belt between the islands of Zealand and Funen. This bridge was already under construction, and now the Soviets demanded that an extra leaf be added in order to ensure free passage through the Great Belt. The project had previously been accepted by the Soviet Union after Denmark had agreed to increase the elevation of the bridge. Since we were building a suspension bridge, the idea of adding a leaf was impossible. The purpose was obviously harassment, but a few weeks later the coup *d'état* in Moscow occurred, and the Soviet Union's concerns over the bridge quietly disappeared.
The summer of 1991 was filled with tensions. A group of young border guards in Lithuania were murdered at their post at Medininkai. In Denmark we prepared to receive huge numbers of refugees from the Baltic states if the worst were to happen. We also told the Baltic governments that if they were prevented from carrying out their duties in their own capitals, they were welcome to establish exile governments in Copenhagen.

Then in the early morning on Monday, 18 August 1991, we received information about the coup *d'état* in Moscow. General Secretary Gorbachev was in house arrest in the Crimea, and a junta had taken control in Moscow. The coup *d'état* fell apart on Wednesday. I was attending a NATO ministerial meeting in Brussels when we received the news directly from Boris Yelt-

The Scandinavian and Baltic Foreign Ministers Conference in Copenhagen 1990. Lennart Meri on the right and the host Uffe Ellemann-Jensen thirdfrom the right (Author's collection).

sin, who called Secretary-General Manfred Wörner during our meeting. I shall never forget the moment when Wörner told us: 'Greetings from Yeltsin, he is now in control, and he would like you to add some things in the communiqué from your meeting.'
I had to pinch my arm to see whether I was dreaming. The president of the Russian SSR was asking the NATO foreign ministers to add some sentences to their official communiqué! The world was indeed in turmoil.
I went home and found my Latvian colleague Janis Jurkans waiting there. He had come to Copenhagen with a mandate to establish a government in exile. Now we could share some wine and toast and discuss the future.

On Friday I sent a letter to my colleagues in the European Community. I told them that Denmark intended to find a way to establish an official presence in the Baltic States and suggested that they do the same. However, there was a formality that had to be taken into consideration. In order for us to open diplomatic relations with another country, that country had to be in control of its own borders. We had a special connection to Lennart Meri in Tallinn: earlier in the year, he had asked me if the Dancall mobile phone was Danish. He had seen the captain on the ferry between Finland and Estonia use such a phone, and he wanted to get one in order to communicate with the outside world without Moscow listening. We got him a Dancall, he received a phone number in Finland, and we had a secure line of communication.

On Saturday afternoon, 24 August 1991, we received the information that Estonia had established border posts and

claimed to control its own state borders. This made it possible to send my three Baltic colleagues the letter we had all looked forward to: 'It is with a profound sense of joy and relief that the Danish government and the entire Danish people have learned of the developments which mean that your country can now begin the construction of a free and democratic society in accordance with the wishes of her people. I wish to congratulate you and your government with this historic event, for which you have worked so hard. It is my pleasure to confirm that in accordance with your previously expressed wishes, Denmark is now ready to establish diplomatic relations with your country.'
The next morning, I received a call at home from my German colleague Hans-Dietrich Genscher, who wanted to hear whether it was correct that Denmark had established diplomatic relations with the Baltic states. When I confirmed this, he told me that this might create problems for me but that I could count on his support and that he would work toward a similar decision in Germany.

On Monday, 26 August, the three Baltic foreign ministers arrived in Copenhagen to sign the necessary documents. Her Majesty Queen Margrethe II had expressed a wish to meet the representatives, and late in the evening, the four of us boarded a minibus that brought us to Her Majesty's summer residence: Fredensborg Castle, north of Copenhagen. There was a full moon when we arrived at Fredensborg Castle. The Royal Life Guard was lined up in a salute with bearskin hats, and the pipes and drums struck up a ceremonial marching tune.

'Don't cry, Lennart', said Janis Jurkans laconically. But I think all four of us were equally touched by the situation. The queen received the Baltic representatives in the castle, and in a little speech, Her Majesty welcomed them back to the society of independent states.

On our way back to Copenhagen, we prepared a joint communiqué in which we confirmed 'the re-establishment, as of 24 August 1991, of diplomatic relations between Denmark and each of the three countries.' The text further stated, 'We recognise that this important development has come about in large measure thanks to the recent valiant efforts of the democratic forces, who so courageously resisted the unconstitutional coup attempt in the Soviet Union last week. We pay tribute to their efforts.

'This is a decisive moment in the history of the peoples of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Fifty-two years after the conclusion of the infamous Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and the subsequent illegal Soviet annexation, a long, dark chapter in Baltic history has finally come to an end. We rejoice at this momentous event. The Baltic people are again masters in their own house.' And the communiqué ended: 'It is with a feeling of profound joy and satisfaction that we now enter a new era in the relations between our countries.'

On the same day, Danish ambassador Otto Borch went to Riga onboard a plane from Aeroflot – without a visa. He was the first foreign diplomat since the Second World War to arrive in a Baltic country without a visa.

In September 1991, Moscow hosted a foreign ministers' meeting in the CSCE. On my way to Moscow, I visited the Baltic states for the first time in my life. I did not want to go there when a visa from Moscow was required.
When we arrived in Tallinn in a chartered Danish aeroplane, none of the stairways at the airport could be used. But the Estonians found a stepladder, which made it possible for us to jump out of the plane.
I have in my possession a wonderful picture of Lennart Meri catching my wife in his arms as a warm welcome to Estonia.

During our lunch, Lennart Meri asked me how to formulate a request for membership in the United Nations.

My personal assistant[5] took his fountain pen and drafted a text on the back of a menu card. Suddenly we were in a new phase of our cooperation.

A few days later, the conference in Moscow was opened in the House of the Trade Unions, near Red Square. Flags from all 35 member states were placed on a railing in the hall. Now three flags were added: the Baltic flags.
The new Soviet foreign minister, Boris Pankin, gave a generous opening speech in which he welcomed the three new members of our group.

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Today it is difficult to recall the atmosphere of those decisive days. We were aware of the problems ahead of us, but we were also filled with optimism. This lasted for several years. The Baltic states quickly found their proper place in the world – they joined NATO and the European Union.

However, developments in Russia have not lived up to our hopes and expectations. Under the current rule of President Vladimir Putin, Russia has become an aggressive rule-breaker threatening the stability of Europe.

The Baltic states once again felt threatened by Russia's quest to create 'spheres of interest' in a Europe that thought this concept had long ago been placed on the ash-heap of history.

But the Baltic states are no longer alone. As members of NATO, they are covered by the 'musketeer oath' that binds us together. NATO has established an 'enhanced forward presence' in the Baltic area. Danish soldiers are frequently assigned to Estonia as part of this operation.

The three Baltic states, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, have been treated brutally by history. This must not be allowed to happen again.

[5] Friis Arne Petersen, who later became head of the Danish foreign service as permanent undersecretary, ambassador to Washington, and later, ambassador to Beijing and Berlin.

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Friendship and Business: Economic Relations between Estonia and Denmark

Introduction

The year 2021 marks the centenary of diplomatic relations between Denmark and Estonia, a relationship that endured even when Estonia was under occupation. This year also marks 30 years since Estonia regained independence from the Soviet Union and set out on an ambitious reform agenda, one that turned it into a democratic country with a modern market economy.

This essay discusses the economic relations between Denmark and Estonia in light of the economic developments in Estonia since the country regained independence. While cultural and political links between the two countries are strong, economic ties remain weak. However, the two countries face similar economic and social challenges in the years to come, which suggests that there is scope for closer economic links between them.

Economic trends in Estonia

Estonia began its economic transition in the late 1980s, but the reform process gained momentum only after the country regained independence in August 1991. The reform process prioritised speed and a commitment to openness and international integration. The reforms included the liberalisation of markets and prices, a fixed exchange rate to bring inflation down, the privatisation of state-owned firms, and numerous structural reforms. The post-communist transition was largely completed in Estonia by the end of the 1990s. The reforms established a modern market economy and are often seen as a success, though the early 1990s was a period of hardship for many.

Estonia started negotiations to join the European Union in 1998. This meant it had to comply with the Copenhagen criteria, one of which is that new members should have a functioning market economy that is robust enough to withstand the competitive pressure within the union. The negotiations to join the EU meant new rounds of reforms, most of which were completed by 2004, when Estonia joined the EU along with nine other countries from Central and Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean.

Figure 1 shows indexes of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita PPP. PPP indicates that the GDP level has been

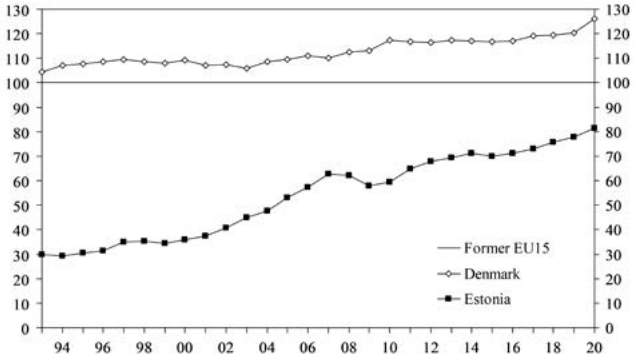


Figure 1: GDP per capita PPP in Denmark and Estonia, index with former EU15 = 100
Source: Ameco, European Commission

adjusted for the different price levels in different countries. The former EU15 denotes the first 15 EU countries from Western Europe, including the UK. GDP per capita PPP can be taken as a measure of the average living standard if all income is spent domestically. Estonian GDP per capita PPP has converged rapidly towards the levels in Western Europe; in 2020, it was around 81 per cent of the level of the former EU15. It is noticeable, however, that the income gap vis-à-vis Denmark has narrowed more gradually, as incomes in some EU15 countries have grown very slowly after the global financial crisis.

The increasing income level in Estonia has improved material conditions for the majority of Estonians, which has, in turn, resulted in longer lives and lower mortality. The average life expectancy in Estonia went up from 69.8 years in 1991 to 78.6 years in 2020. Infant mortality has declined from 13.3 of every 1000 new-borns dying within their first year in 1991 to 1.4 in 2020, which, incidentally, is well below the corresponding figure for Denmark.

A closer look at Figure 1 reveals that the process of income convergence has occasionally been disrupted. The rate of economic growth was negative in Estonia in 1999, as the Russian financial crisis impeded trade and finance. Estonia then experienced a large setback in the wake of the global financial crisis, as GDP contracted by around 20 per cent in 2008 and 2009 and economic growth remained low in the following years. Estonia returned to relatively high and stable economic growth from 2017, though the coronavirus pandemic, unsurprisingly, impeded the economy in 2020.

Emigration from Estonia has been smaller than that from many other countries in Central and Eastern Europe. In fact, Estonia has had positive net immigration every year since 2015, typically of 0.2 to 0.5 per cent of the total population. The positive net immigration stems from Estonian emigrants returning home, immigrants from other EU countries, and immigration by specialists in IT and other fields from third countries. The positive net immigration is partly the consequence of the job opportunities and good salaries offered within some sectors. Internal migration has arguably played a more pronounced role than migration in and out of the country. Estonia has, in recent decades, seen a pronounced

relocation of the population from the countryside and the small towns to the capital, Tallinn. Similar trends have been observed in Denmark and most other European countries. The population movements have, in some cases, led to the depopulation of rural areas and have put public service provision under stress in an already sparsely populated country. EU support from the cohesion policy funds has largely been allocated to the less affluent regions of Estonia since 2004, but this has not been enough to arrest the gravitational pull of Tallinn.

The internal migration patterns in Estonia are in part the result of changes in the structure of production and employment opportunities across the country. Table 1 shows the distribution of production or value added in the 10 main industries identified by Eurostat in 1995, 2007 and 2020. It is noticeable that agriculture and industry are playing smaller and smaller roles in the economy, whereas various services are playing larger roles. The boom in the construction sector before the global financial crisis, which broke out in 2008, is also noticeable. The data for 2020 for the IT and communications sector are to some extent influenced by the social distancing measures that followed the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Most Estonian companies are small, but almost 100 companies had a turnover in 2019 of at least 100 million euros. The three companies with the largest turnover are the energy company Eesti Energia, the shipping company Tallink and the retail company Kaubamaja.

	1995	2007	2020
Agriculture etc.	4.7	4.5	2.2
Industry	24.7	20.1	18.6
Construction	6.3	10.5	6.4
Trade and transport	21.1	23.3	20.8
IT and communications	4.5	4.6	8.6
Finance	2.8	4.9	4.9
Real estate activities	10.8	8.9	9.3
Professional services	4.6	7.7	9.6
Public sector	17.9	13.0	17.3
Art and recreation	2.8	2.7	2.5

Table 1: Gross value added in 10 main industries, per cent of total
Source: Eurostat

Estonia has an active start-up scene, especially within information technology and finance. Arguably, the best-known IT firm from Estonia is Skype, which made it possible for users to make video calls from their computer as far back as the first years of the 21st century. The company was founded by one Danish and one Swedish entrepreneur in 2003, and it was sold to Microsoft in 2011. Skype was the first Estonian start-up to attain the status of 'unicorn', which means a company with a valuation of at least US $1 billion. Other unicorns include the money transfer firm Wise (formerly TransferWise), the transportation company Bolt, and the enterprise software company Pipedrive. The organisation Startup Estonia claims that Estonia has the most unicorn companies per capita of any country in the world.

Economic relations between Denmark and Estonia

The economic relations between Denmark and Estonia are relatively weak. Figure 2 shows the imports of goods to Estonia from Denmark and the exports of goods from Estonia to Denmark, both in per cent of the totals. Data are available starting from 2004, when Estonia joined the EU.

Estonian trade with Denmark is a relatively small percentage of total Estonian trade. In 2020, around 1.9 per cent of all imports of goods to Estonia originated in Denmark, while 3.3 per cent of all exports of goods went to Denmark. These data place Denmark just outside the top 10 most important trading partners for Estonia. It is noticeable that while the share of goods imports that come from Denmark has been relatively stable over time, the share of exports going to Denmark has increased somewhat since 2015.

Besides the trade in goods between the two countries, there is also some trade in services such as tourism, financial products and intellectual property rights. However, statistical information on these bilateral flows is not readily available. It is clear, though, that the tourist flows between the two countries were relatively small even before the outbreak of the pandemic.

Figure 3 shows the distribution of the five largest product categories in the trade between Denmark and Estonia. The left panel shows the product categories of exports from Estonia to Denmark as a percentage of total Estonian exports. The dominant product category is wood and wood products, which were 38 per cent of total exports to Denmark. A large part of this category consists of wood pellets, which Denmark buys from Estonia for use in heating and electricity production, as heat and electricity produced in this way do not count towards the Danish CO2 quotas. The second largest category is mineral products, which includes oil and related products, some of which are produced from the oil shale mined in north-eastern Estonia.
The right panel in Figure 3 shows the composition of Estonian imports from Denmark as a percentage of total Estonian imports. Machinery and appliances makes up the largest category, but the traditional Danish exports of foodstuffs and animal products also feature prominently. Danish exports to Estonia are,

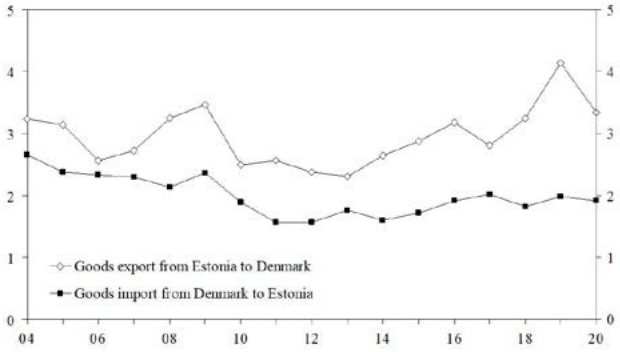


Figure 2: Estonian exports of goods to Denmark and imports of goods from Denmark, per cent of totals
Note: The goods exports from Estonia to Denmark are in per cent of total Estonian goods exports. The goods imports from Denmark to Estonia are in per cent of total Estonian goods imports.
Source: Statistics Estonia

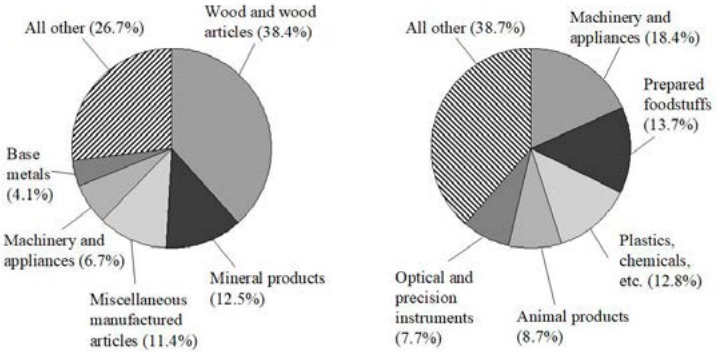


Figure 3: Distribution of trade between Denmark and Estonia, per cent of totals
Source: Statistics Estonia

overall, more diversified than Estonian exports to Denmark are.

Foreign direct investment (FDI) is another area of economic cooperation between Denmark and Estonia. FDI has gone partly into greenfield investments where new production facilities are established, and partly into purchasing significant ownership shares in existing companies. Figure 4 shows the flows of FDI from Denmark to Estonia as a percentage of Estonian GDP. A negative value indicates that Danish companies repatriated or disinvested a larger amount of existing FDI than they put in as new foreign direct investment.

Statistics on FDI flows from Denmark to Estonia are available dating back to the mid-1990s. Large investments are noticeable in the aggregate data on FDI inflows in 2007, 2014 and other years, but substantial repatriations or disinvestments are also apparent in some years after the global financial crisis darkened prospects from 2008. Large Danish companies such as A. P. Møller Mærsk, Carlsberg and Danske Bank have, over time, made substantial foreign direct investments in Estonia.

The flows from Estonia to Denmark are miniscule and of no economic importance for either the Estonian or Danish economies. The Danish-Estonian Chamber of Commerce was established in Estonia in 2007; it seeks to strengthen trade and business ties between the two countries and to support Danish companies and entrepreneurs operating in Estonia.

Economic relations are also tied to the exchange of people between the two countries. As discussed previously, Estonia has not seen sizable emigration, but there were nevertheless around 1,300 people from Estonia living in Denmark in 2020. The number increased gradually until 2014 but has since remained stable. The Embassy of Denmark in Tallinn estimates that in 2020, there were a little fewer than 200 people from Denmark living in Estonia.

Cooperation and future prospects

Estonia and Denmark have had very different historical trajectories, and this has naturally led to different economic developments in the two countries. Estonia has seen remarkable economic growth since the mid-1990s and has rapidly narrowed the income gap vis-à-vis Western Europe, including Denmark. Economic relations between Denmark and Estonia are modest, as might be expected given recent history and geographical distance.

Denmark provided a considerable amount of funding and technical assistance to support the transition process before Estonia joined the EU in 2004. The total support from 1992 to 2003 amounted to 147 million euros, which made Denmark the largest provider of bilateral assistance to Estonia in these years. The bulk of the support went to environmental projects, energy conservation and preparations for Estonia to join the EU and NATO. Economic support from Denmark has been phased out since Estonia joined the EU, as Estonia started receiving support from the EU cohesion policy and structural funds.

Denmark and Estonia cooperate closely within the EU on a range of policy issues and have, on occasion, coordinated positions in areas such as budget policy, energy policies, environmental protection and technological capabilities. Denmark and Estonia also collaborate closely within the 5+3 initiative of the Nordic Council, the Council of the Baltic Sea States, the Nordic Investment Bank, the Nordic-Baltic constituency in the IMF, and numerous other regional and international organisations.

There are reasons to believe that the scope for cooperation will grow in the years to come. The transition process in Estonia is largely complete, and economic and social policies have changed direction since the free-market reforms in the 1990s. This reorientation has brought Estonia closer to the Nordic model of welfare, a development that has been driven by Estonia's membership in the EU and the higher incomes and aspirations of the Estonian public.
Denmark and Estonia share many challenges, including an increased emphasis on environmental policies. There is a need to cut CO_2 emissions and to prepare for climate change, but equally a need

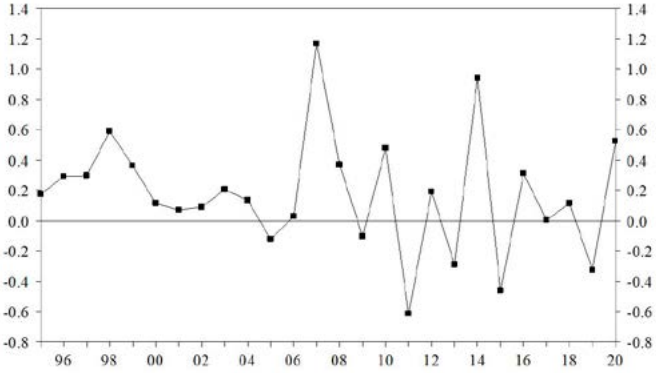


Figure 4: FDI inflows from Denmark to Estonia, per cent of Estonian GDP
Source: Bank of Estonia

to make sure that energy systems are reliable and secure. Denmark and Estonia have very different energy systems, and there is scope for cooperation, trade and joint investment in these areas.

The two countries share various socio-economic trends: the population is aging rapidly in both countries, which puts strains on productivity growth, health care and public finances. Rapid structural change brings economic benefits but may also lead to marginalisation of some segments of society. The gaps in income and opportunities are widening between the countryside and the major cities. Estonia has extensive experience with such issues and has an enviable basic education system that may be an inspiration for other countries, including Denmark.

The two countries are celebrating 100 years of uninterrupted mutual diplomatic relations in 2021. Despite their different historical trajectories, the two countries have become part of a wider region in Northern Europe that is united by cultural affinities and democratic values. The region faces numerous economic, environmental and social challenges in the years to come, and these challenges can only be addressed effectively through continued cooperation. The history of diplomatic ties between the two countries testifies to the commitment of Denmark and Estonia to such cooperation.

Meelis Kiili
Major General

Danish-Estonian military cooperation – Why do we do this?

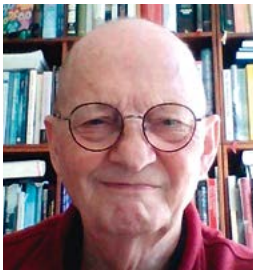
Why do we do this?
When I was a young lieutenant among the first trainees in the Danish-led Baltic Battalion project, our training lessons always ended with the question: why do we do this? The obvious answer back then was to triumph over the enemy. Yet when the project got underway, I started to realise that there was more to that question than initially appeared. Why did the Danes, British and other nations join their efforts to come and train the Baltic officers? Self-interest might play a part, but there is also a sense of a greater cause. To paraphrase Socrates, it is not shameful to have national interests – indeed, if states did not have interests, there would be no states. We Estonians have our interests, and not coincidentally, these tend to be similar to like-minded nations such as the Danes. We have parts of our history in common; we value human life and democracy; and importantly, we share the same planet.

So why do we go to countries far away from home? Why do we put our soldiers' lives at risk in conflicts not of our making? Why should we care? Because there is a greater cause, because our aspiration is peace and prosperity, and because peace, and not war, is fundamental to human nature.

Yet we live in a turbulent world where our aspirations are being challenged. If we can do a bit to make the world a better place to live, to send a message that peace can be achieved and that there is a prospect of security and stability, then we have contributed to a greater cause. One drop does not make an ocean, but many do. So drop by drop, we can make the world a better place to live. We can do it together.

I will always be grateful that the Danes came to our assistance at the dawn of our restored independence, when we were in need. Because of that, we can do the same today at home and abroad. I am confident that the security in our region is solid because we are united and our values are honoured. We can continue to ensure that our people will prosper and be happy.

So why do we do this? We do it because we care.



Michael Hesselholt Clemmesen
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Military assistance to the Baltic States 1994–2004

The article is developed from my feature 'Foreign Military Assistance', published in Hans Mouritzen's anthology *Bordering Russia: Theory and Prospects for Europe's Baltic Rim* (Routledge, 1998).

It gives my personal observations, analysis, and conclusions related to military assistance to the Baltic states during the more than 10 years I served in Denmark and then in the three states.

My service was not that of a normal diplomat. I was sent to the Baltic states by the then Danish defence minister Hans Hækkerup to assist the three states in their efforts to gain NATO membership. I was also to share with them the Nordic states' extensive experience of creating affordable forces for front-line state defence. The then Danish chief of defence, General Jørgen Lyng, made clear to me that he thought the three states had had a rough fate and deserved a better future. We owed them.

The narrative and analysis are based on my firm opinion that the effort small countries make to develop their defence forces can enhance their chances to survive as independent states. It applies to the Baltic states today, as it has applied to Finland, Switzerland, and Israel in the past. An earnest and substantial effort also increases the chances for small states to gain credible security guarantees from foreign states – in the case of the Baltic states, from the West.

This position is not as self-evident as some non-Danes might think. A significant group of Danes, including a number of foreign policy makers, thought and still think that because a small state bordering a great power cannot defend itself for long without outside assistance, the logical thing to do is avoid 'wasting' resources on defence, beyond creating a well-advertised military symbol of themselves and their contributions. This applied to Denmark in the past, when it faced a less-than-friendly Greater Germany and, later, the USSR. And in the 1990s, this notion guided Danish thinking in relation to the Baltic states. Effective defence structures are seen as undermining security by provoking and signalling hostility.

That position ignores the fact that defence forces create conventional denial deterrence and thereby influence the advice given by military professionals of

bigger states, both of potential aggressors and of potential guarantors and reinforcers. It also overlooks the fact that a people demonstrating a clear and tough willingness to defend itself, rather than passively expecting that concerned outsiders carry the burden, is sending a very positive political signal. It has a strong appeal to politicians of states that consider support.

One should also be aware that the deliberate development of the state's self-defence capability is a national project that both shows and reinforces self-confidence, even if it has to be done slowly due to other high-priority elements in state building.

Thus my mission was one of organising military assistance and giving advice on how to develop Western-type, effective self-defence armed forces as inexpensively as possible.

It must be said that the Baltic states are justified in worrying about Russia's future policies and actions: they need guarantees. Russian politicians still show no willingness to accept or make clear to the Russian population that what happened in 1939–1940 was a partial occupation of independent states, followed by a full invasion in 1940, complete with rigged and terror-controlled elections, leading to these nations being forced to join the Soviet Union. When the military emergency in 1939 that had justified the intervention ended in 1944–1945, the political absorption was completed.

The text does not attempt to mirror or represent the official Danish position or that of the three embassies. Some observing the region from the outside may find my description of conditions and hurdles to development overly harsh.

During the Cold War, the Soviet Union was the source of a potential threat against my country. After having lived for a decade in the former Soviet Union, I hate the poisonous beast and its hypocritical totalitarian rule. I hate the material and especially the human damage it did to the three republics.

Hurdles from the Soviet legacy

The problems of the immediate post-Soviet period may seem irrelevant now, nearly three decades later. However, they need to be outlined here, because they should guide any proper assistance to the development of the armed forces.

However, in some fields, the Baltic states had advantages over other Central and East European countries. One such field was the development of a well-functioning bureaucracy. Though is it hard to start from scratch, you are much more likely to maximise the effect of foreign support and succeed within a decade if you do not have to contend with vast conservative structures and ill-suited organisational cultures as, for instance, Poland or Romania did. This applies to both civilian and military bureaucracies related to defence.

Another area of advantage was the relationship between the professional military and political structures. Weak and developing structures are a little

more likely to subordinate themselves to democratic control than strong established structures with a contrary ethos, like the militaries of Poland and Turkey.

The lack of well-equipped military forces in the Baltic states did make the early phases of the build-up difficult and demanding. However, it also meant that they did not have to spend a couple of decades trying to maintain heavy and technical obsolete equipment for more defensively or expeditionary oriented force structures, something that was likely to be in less demand in the future.

The Baltic states understood and accepted the fact that, due to their small size, their populations had to learn to speak Western foreign languages to promote their future in Europe and the West. The development of English language skills in military cadres was their most important objective for interoperability with the West. It is impossible to 'get through' to people beyond just making them copy what you do if you have to work through an interpreter.

If countries such as the Baltic states build up their military forces and procedures from scratch, it is only a matter of controlling the instruction given in the military cadre schools and staffs to ensure that NATO communications as well as operational and logistic procedures are used in the forces. In larger states, where people are much less likely to need foreign languages in their daily life and service, the situation is not likely to be much different – even in the distant future – than it has been in France, Spain, or Italy. In the large, long-established Central and Eastern European forces, the real absorption of new ways of doing things was likely to take great effort for a full generation.

The most important element in the acceleration of reform was to have key military personnel proficient enough in Western languages that they could seek and use professional contacts from their experiences abroad. They had to be able to follow briefings and gain in-depth understanding by active participation in discussion as a necessary foundation for sound change. In the Baltic states, that essential development took place during the 10 years covered by this article.

However, other hurdles listed hereafter applied to all the countries of the former Eastern bloc. In the Baltic states, some of these hurdles to Westernisation were initially very serious, partly because of the lack of state structures. However, soon the fresh start, with fewer burdensome legacy structures and procedures, became an advantage.

The three states had to make significant progress in other areas to convince sceptical Western professional military advisors and politicians that they were natural members of the Alliance. In these other, more general areas there were three types of hurdles on the way to progress: political, cadre background and style, and more purely military. Nearly all the hurdles were the result of the damage done by the communist/Soviet period to man and society.

The first political factor was the widespread attitude that military defence is

hopeless and therefore a waste of money and young men's (especially your own bright sons') time. Because the Baltic states are so small in comparison to Russia, it seemed easier to hope for the best while demanding Western support and aid on the grounds that the West had a moral obligation not to let the Balts suffer again. Such an attitude was clearly present among the population and politicians of all three states, even if it was very rarely presented openly, least of all to foreigners. It was not considered appropriate or in good political taste to publicise one's defeatism.

There were some differences from country to country. In Lithuania (and increasingly so in Estonia), the defeatist attitude was balanced by a determination to ensure that any new invasion would hurt the aggressor for a long time. Even if defence might be hopeless, national honour and self-respect demanded that the unresisting rape of 1939–1940 not be repeated. For Lithuania, this attitude is linked to the pride in the country's great power history.

However, it took time for those in the Baltics to understand and accept that even if a small state could not resist the great power aggressor forever, the ability to deny the territory for a period of time and make the invader pay dearly for the aggression could deter the attack and thus make such future power advances much less likely. After the experiences first in Afghanistan and then in Chechnya, no Russian military planner was likely to underestimate the problems of defeating a well-armed and highly motivated territorial defence effort. Defence endurance could also make it possible for military advisors of Western politicians to consider supporting intervention and security guarantees. The fact that not all Western contacts understood this and gave advice accordingly delayed the realisation of the fact in the Baltic capitals.

The despondent attitude was nurtured by the normally unspoken understanding that part of the large, non-citizen, ethnic Russian population might act not only as a Russian pretext for military intervention but also as a fifth column assisting the invaders. Discussing the building of an effective territorial, 'total' defence structure mobilising the whole society thus opened the question of the objective need to integrate the resident Russians through conscription, something that the political system had not yet matured fully enough to face.

Understanding the links between national security and the minority issue came only gradually. It was very slowly realised how difficult it could be for the West to give full and domestically sustainable security guarantees to countries where any foreign threat was likely to be closely linked to a domestic situation. Unresolved minority issues make it difficult to present the clear-cut circumstances that are necessary when the popular and political will to honour security commitments are to be realised and the risk of war faced.

The above-described 'what is the use' attitude to defence was linked to a fairly widespread understanding that Russia was unlikely to re-invade so soon after withdrawing its last troops from the

Baltic states in 1993–1994. This attitude was also linked to the public awareness in the early 1990s of the urgent threat of the rising crime rate, deep and widespread corruption, and untamed capitalism. These factors taken together led to the highlighting of internal threats in the public debate and some national security concepts. The internal threats to the nation and the state-building process were nearer and hopefully more manageable than any more remote military threat. The interior ministry bureaucracies initially supported placing a priority on fighting these internal threats. In all Baltic states, they were stronger and more influential than the weak defence bureaucracies.

The parliamentary committee in Latvia that dealt with defence against external military threats was also explicitly responsible for legislation related to meeting these internal threats. The Latvian volunteer defence organisation or national guard, the Zemessardze ('Guardians of the Land'), had independent police authority to fight that threat as well. This focus on the internal threat mirrored the concerns of ordinary people. However, during conversations it became clear that it was also a way to avoid facing what was seen as a hopeless cause.

My Baltic contacts during the years covered here emphasised that the state-building was being undermined by both the dependence on foreign energy supply from one source (Russia) and destabilisation through foreign (Russian) or organised (Russian) crime money getting control over other significant sectors of the economy. The big neighbour was seen as more likely to use tools such as the continued corruption of key politicians and destabilisation of the economy, rather than open military action, to undermine the country's newly regained independence.

In retrospect, it became ever clearer to me that a key obstacle to all rebuilding of state institutions was the effect of the general destruction of inter-human relations during the communist/Soviet period. Cooperation between individuals, organisations, and states could never be founded on the notion of trust. Interaction had to be based on a power relationship. In my work with other Central and Eastern European states as Baltic Defence College commandant, I found that most of the organisational and cultural problems were rather similar there. The lack of or misuse of the natural feeling of human solidarity made it very difficult to re-establish structures that depended on social cohesion. It applies to the creation of an honest and effective system for the collection and use of public revenues, as well as to any type of compulsory state service. To a large extent, there were few ethical limits, and it was everyone for himself – the survival of the fittest.

In my field of defence co-operation, before 1995, it was very difficult to achieve stable results, as mistrust of others than oneself, apparent of the social relations of the Soviet times, efforts sometimes even sabotaged, and formal agreements entered into at the ministerial level without any intention of implementing your own part of the deal. Negotiations about necessary co-operation between two

organisations might take place without the actual co-operation ever being discussed. The side that needed support might be too proud to ask for it, and the other side would not offer it without being asked.

Few were willing to take responsibility for decisions that could be, or had proven to be, unpopular. People who should have lent their support to necessary projects waited to show their hand in the hope that someone else might take the blame for failure.

One result of this was that it became very difficult to get projects started and implemented without constant external interest and encouragement. Plans remained 'on paper'. There was little natural drive to implement them and get things done. This was what the leading advisor, General Sir Garry Johnson, referred to as the 'Oblomov' problem, after the Russian literary figure Ilya Ilyich Oblomov, a young nobleman who never got around to implementing the plans he made in the bed that he never left.

To understand what happened after 1991, it is important to understand and accept the significant differences between the three Baltic nations. These differences determined how they reacted to Soviet pressure and destruction in the 35 years after 1944. Their survival strategies differed depending on their perception of how easily the nation would become overwhelmed by Soviet pressure. The more collectively minded Lithuanians withstood the pressure in large 'family' groups, the Estonians did so as self-confident individuals under siege, and the Latvians were often reduced to the mere sabotage of central decisions.
Some of the problems mentioned above were present in all the three societies. As already noted, there was a widespread attitude against making personal contributions to the common good, including being conscripted to the national armed forces. However, small front-line states with low population density can only hope to build a conventional denial-deterrent force through a 'Nordic type' conscription-mobilisation system. If the terrain favours defence, as it does to some extent in the Baltic states (with woods, swamps, and a weak infrastructure in the border regions), defence forces can be relatively lightly equipped (thus making the equipment inexpensive).

For some politicians in the three states, however, this fact was very difficult to accept. Small professional armed forces would be far more popular – and if military defence was hopeless anyway, they wondered, why support an unpopular policy? It was also relevant that short-term conscript units were not very useful as auxiliary police in countering the other, high priority interior threats mentioned above.

Conscription into the Soviet army had been very unpopular in the Baltic Soviet republics, especially in Estonia and Latvia. The Russian army's hazing tradition (known as *dedovshchina*) was brutal to servicemen, especially non-Slavic conscripts. The system was often just a way of acquiring cheap, nearly 'slave' labour; training was limited, and the waste of servicemen's time unlimited.

It was initially difficult for the Western and Northern European military advisors to make the Baltic peoples realise that conscript service in the new independent armies could be very different.

In too many cases, this scepticism was partly justified. In many respects, the armies were still rather unreformed when I first encountered them in 1994–1995.

The memory of Soviet conscription went along with an uncritical attitude to copying all things American. In the defence field, this meant a widespread assumption that, to be efficient, a modern military had to be hi-tech and manned with contract personnel (even though the resulting organisation would be too small for effective defence).

Taken together, these factors made it very difficult for the small group of active pro-defence politicians. They wanted to get new laws passed abolishing the service exemptions that had been introduced in reaction to Soviet conscription. Then even university students would have an equal obligation to serve. Only new laws could form the basis of the reserve mobilisation system necessary for creating a proper territorial defence system.

In the years of preparation for NATO membership, the problem went from difficult to impossible. However, inspired by Finland, Estonia kept conscription. Latvia abolished national military service. Lithuania only returned to training conscripts after 2014, when it became evident that declarations of 'the end of history' were rather premature.

The development of the armed forces in the 1990s was slow due to lack of funds. Fortunately, at the beginning of the next decade, priority was given to the creation of small standing elements. The three re-established states lacked money for any public spending, including defence. The public and political will to create an efficient state revenue and enforced collection system developed only slowly. It was also important that Western economic advice recommended a minimal state sector. Only Estonia had introduced a fairly efficient direct taxation system relatively early. However, among the public in all three states, there was a widespread suspicion that little of any additional collected revenue would be honestly spent for the public good.

In the mid-1990s, both Latvia and Lithuania had insufficient state finances. This meant that the already inadequate funds arrived too late for things such as regular payments of officer salaries and soldiers' rations. I was informed during meetings that in some cases, the defence budget was not even made fully available at the end of the year.

Financial resources were limited, so it became imperative that they were used well. However, this was not always the case. I was kept informed of cases of corrupt behaviour in relation to both construction projects and military equipment procurement.

Other observations

I found that another element shaping Baltic defence politics was the not uncommon view among the public – even in my own country – that national defence was too serious a matter to be left to (party) politicians that one could not trust to act in the national interest. This attitude could not be expected to change until the power of the state president of the government became accepted and routine by the public.

In all three states, it was therefore considered essential to develop generally accepted policy papers in the national security and defence field and follow these up by creating legal and other frameworks for the development of the defence forces. The process needed to define and regulate authority and responsibility.

Initially I found this strange, but then I realised that the process was necessary here. In established states such as Denmark or Norway, the understanding of the implications of geography and political systems developed over years of historical experience, gradually leading to a common understanding of the basic conditions, issues, and roles.

In the Baltic states, the public and the politicians had to start from scratch in the very difficult situation described. They had no common domestic understanding of the conditions and options.

The drafting and political acceptance of the first version of the basic documents was not a simple process. The Latvian 'Concept on Security' came first, in the summer of 1995. However, even if the concept thereafter formed the de facto basis for the subsequent work on defence structures, it was never formally accepted by parliament.

After a very difficult process with conflicting concept proposals, Lithuania reached political agreement on the text of the 'National Security Concept' in the autumn of 1995. It was then to be accepted by parliament within a framework law. However, this never happened due to disagreement within the governing Labour Party. The law only passed in parliament in late December 1996, after the general election and change of government.

Estonia followed with its 'Guidelines of the National Defence Policy', which was passed unanimously by parliament in the late spring of 1996.

The basic documents were developed in the following years. The clarification of the Estonian president's role had to await the 2015 amendment of the 1938 constitution.

The hurdles created by the Soviet legacy and the cadre background and style were in some ways easier to address with respect to time and resources than the political, legal, and organisational problems of post-Soviet states.

It was a major challenge to build ministries of defence using a mix of people with very little formal training in or background knowledge about resource management. Leading a department or

even an office in an effective manner with lateral communication and formal decision levels was difficult. In these areas, it did not matter whether one recruited people with a background in the Kafkaesque Soviet bureaucracies or merely young people without any experience.

Only in Lithuania did the situation differ somewhat. Here, the core of the Ministry of National Defence was built using a highly motivated and capable group of people. They had emerged from late-Soviet-era democratic opposition groups, demonstrating for causes such as environmental protection. In this respect, the first defence minister, Audrius Butkevičius (later sentenced for corruption), served his country well. He was an excellent judge of character. This first group selected, instructed, and found education for the next generation of senior officials.

In the two other states, it was left to the best of the young officials to develop sound and honest defence administrations in direct interaction with the best and longest-serving of the ministers.

In Latvia, the ministry was initially overloaded with Soviet-style bureaucrats who had good formal, but very few real, qualifications for leading the development of a small state ministry of defence. They were followed by a steady trickle of youngsters, too many of whom became frustrated and left just as soon as they had learned some English. Salaries were far better in the private sector. However, some stayed and helped stabilise the administration, such as Edgars Rinkēvičs, later to become a long-serving minister of foreign affairs.

In Estonia, the Ministry of Defence was only created several months after the country regained independence. By then the General Staff had already been established as a rather Soviet-type organisation. The Ministry of Defence came late as a competitor for Estonia's small pool of talented young people who sought public careers. However, it succeeded in attracting the robust and highly competent young historian Margus Kolga. The eventual sound development of the ministry and its relations to the professional military leadership were ensured during the repeated service of Jüri Luik and Sven Mikser as ministers.

The initial turbulence in manning and delegating responsibilities made it fairly complicated to work with the Estonian and Latvian ministries. If one sent a fax or letter there, one could not be sure where it ended up. It was necessary to distribute copies to the action addressees in a follow-up meeting. During those years, I kept a record of all communication over fax or telephone with both the Baltic and Danish contacts. The ministries' filing system was rudimentary at best.

However, five years after the ministries' establishment, their work quickly improved.

The problem of irrelevant background and personality profiles was not limited to the staffing of the ministries. Most Baltic former Soviet officers, especially the Estonians and Latvians, came from

the technical branches, e.g. as engineer officers from the air surveillance, air defence, or rocket forces. Relatively few were educated and trained as infantry, field engineer, or artillery officers, the most relevant backgrounds today. Those with staff education received an extremely thorough but narrowly focused training, in operational planning and leadership procedures. They were used to having plenty of resources, as well as a clearly limited field of responsibility, and receiving orders before acting.

That did not prepare them to work as typical Western-type staff officers in a small country, though, where officers normally have wide responsibilities and very limited resources. The limitations given by the Soviet military culture were particularly unfortunate during the building-up phase of the Baltic states in the 1990s.

In Latvia, and even more so in Lithuania, there was a tendency to recreate a few direct copies of what they knew to be best in the past, such as the Soviet airborne mechanised units. They did not understand the limitations this put on their country's defence structure.

Both Lithuania and Latvia initially allowed retired Soviet officers to supplement their meagre salaries with a pension from Russia. Of course, this practice was soon perceived as unacceptable.

In Lithuania, the development was then facing an additional hurdle, another Soviet legacy. I found that the more senior members of the professional defence leadership were convinced that every military problem had a scientifically correct solution. This dominated both force and command structure development and the foreseen defence operations. The 'brain' at the centre was considered to have the most correct picture. It would order mobilisation, make detailed plans, issue orders, and control the execution closely. There was very little acceptance of low-level initiative and drive. Any Lithuanian military force, then, was likely to be smart-looking and tough. However, the units were dominated by centralised formal discipline and were therefore likely to be in trouble if they met any significant unforeseen problem and had to improvise. Improvisation was crucial to military effectiveness in the defence of Lithuania because of its weak, thinly distributed forces and need for local co-ordination with volunteer defence forces. The centralism was strange when one considers the Lithuanian guerrilla 'forest brothers' traditions and the demands of the National Security Concept. The need to counter this Soviet legacy later prompted an emphasis on German-type Mission Command in the Baltic Defence College education.

In Estonia, the combination of far too few qualified military professionals and the often-poisoned political climate was a major obstacle to defence development. Politicians may have started to grasp the fact that they could not build the army without using military professionals. But during my time, there was little ability or willingness to support the few good experts available, in spite of their pioneering work in the first few years of independence, when they were

led by the Finnish-inspired ex-Soviet tank staff officer Ants Laaneots. Their continued work was hampered by the dispute over government control of the armed forces, in which both sides engaged in a kind of trench warfare. Moreover, the development had the character of a slander campaign, with an anachronistic criticism of the initiative shown by the Laaneots group during the chaos of 1991–1992. This group was later accused of breaking administrative and legal principles.

I found that a favourite pastime within the group was to search for and publicise, through an uncritical press, the possible mistakes of the military cadre. This impeded their development. These problems, unfortunately, dominated the tenure of Johannes Kert, the now deceased lieutenant-general, when he served as chief of the Estonian Defence Forces.

All organisations are seeking independence in the sense that they want to minimise dependence on other organisations and influences in carrying out what they see as their core mission. However, in the Baltic states, as probably elsewhere in the former Soviet Union, the search for full independence went even further. This was due to the interplay of at least two factors. First was the general problem of creating and maintaining good and trustful relations with people whom one did not know. Second was the fact that the waste of resources was the usual state of affairs, thus making it seem quite natural for all organisations to have their own helicopters, communications, armoured vehicles, ships, and so on, rather than pooling common resources. The obstacles to co-operation and co-ordination were partly the result of pre- and post-independence developments in the Baltic states, whose new armed forces were formed from a mix of border guards, officer 'clubs', and, increasingly, armed volunteers from the civilian resistance groups. However, other obstacles were the result of the Soviet legacy.

Before September 1991, the Baltic Soviet republics sought some sovereignty or even full independence by setting up organizational structures to mark the borders in a symbolic way. When independence suddenly came as a result of the Moscow coup, it became a high priority to use any available organisations to achieve control of the borders.

In Estonia, just after the restoration of independence, the transition government had available the unarmed volunteers of the *Kodukaitse (*Home Guard). The Minister of State could therefore re-establish the inter-war *Piirivalve* (Border Guard) to monitor and protect the land and sea borders.

In Latvia, immediately after independence was restored, the already prepared Border Guard Brigade was formed under the Ministry of Defence. Initially, it was treated and funded as the main part of the regular armed forces. In early 1997, the Border Guard was transferred to the Ministry of Interior, leaving the remaining rump of the regular army, previously given a low priority, to develop using the rest of the limited funds available.

In Lithuania, the Frontier Guard Service had been established and deployed to the borders in 1990, following the formal declaration of independence. Initially, it was one of two main components of the regular army. After it was renamed the State Border Guard Service, it was organised as a border police under the Ministry of Interior, as it had been during most of the inter-war period.

Especially in Estonia and Latvia, the governments' focus and ambitions were initially limited to securing the borders, which in Estonia included the long sea border and Lake Peipus.

At first, the only other regular forces (beyond the border protection force) whose establishment was given equally high priority in all three states were national honour guard sub-units. In all three countries, the total regular defence forces became small, numbering 2000–4000 men, which was also limited by the need for conscripted personnel for the higher priority border guards, the Soviet-type paramilitary police unit, and personnel for prison guard service. The number available was also limited due to the generally low efficiency and inequality of the conscription system.

The transition governments' generally low political interest in the rest of the regular forces meant that it was up to the officers who had joined the new states to create what were more or less naval and air force, 'clubs' of interested specialists. The success of these 'clubs' depended on the drive and professionalism of the officers involved, as well as the political effectiveness of their leaders.

In Latvia and even more so in Lithuania, the 'naval clubs' succeeded in building the nucleus of the future navies. One of those was the small, very professional Lithuanian navy created by Commodore Raimundas Baltuška, former navigation chief of the Soviet Baltic Sea Fleet. As the core of his force, he used two Soviet navy frigates acquired in a deal with the Russians. The young Latvian navy had to use former East German vessels as well as Swedish-donated patrol boats. As the Estonian Border Guard naval elements already existed, a regular Estonian navy was created much later, on the basis of German- and Danish-donated vessels.

Only the Lithuanian air force 'club' led by Colonel Zenonas Vegelevičius achieved early significant results by creating a force of utility helicopters, jet trainers, and transport aircrafts with two active bases and one reserve base, as well as a rudimentary air surveillance system. The small air forces of Latvia, and especially Estonia, developed much later.

Even in Lithuania, with its dynamic first defence minister, the element of club-building was strong. With limited money, it was necessary to build on professionalism linked to the enthusiasm of individuals. The units of the regular army 'Iron Wolf Brigade' were modelled upon the best units they knew from the past, the Soviet Airborne Regiments. Here they were scaled down to one-third – battalion – size. This made the units and subunits far too small to fight, as the light infantry that the country needed and the garrison support structures

used amounted to about half of the available manpower.

One of the two Latvian regular battalions created in Suži, near Riga, was based on a similar ambition. The buildup of the other battalion in Alūksne in northeastern Latvia was hampered by bad infrastructure. In Estonia, Colonel Ants Laaneots focused on land forces. He had concluded that the only type of force with effective defence, and therefore deterrent capability, that his country could afford was a territorial defence force more or less inspired by the Finnish model. The regular army units were therefore organised as Western-type size infantry battalion groups in the country's different regions.

In all three states, these regular forces were built from the top in co-operation with the 'clubs' of ex-Soviet regular officers.

The border guards and the regular 'club' initiatives were not alone. Starting in winter 1991, the volunteer defence forces began to grow, inspired by national-conservative activists in political opposition to the transition governments.

In Estonia, the process led to the re-establishment of the inter-war period Defence League (*Kaitseliit*). In the two other states, new organisations were also created. In Latvia, the National Guard was named the Guardians of the Land (*Zemessardze*). In Lithuania, they were first named the Volunteer National Defence Organisation (*Savanoriškoji krašto apsaugos tarnyba, or SKAT*) and later renamed the National Defence Volunteer Forces (*Krašto apsaugos savanorių pajėgos, or KASP*).

The volunteer organisations had originated mostly as a combination of territorial defence structures and nationalist militias. In the chaotic, quickly changing domestic political landscape after 1991, it took a few years to establish a system of political and defence leadership control over these organisations, with a clear and logical division of roles. In Latvia, where the regular structures were the weakest, the process was only completed in 2000, when the *Zemessardze* aviation was integrated into the regular air force.

The volunteer defence organisations still have a significant role in the national defence forces today. In Estonia, they have more than 15,000 active members and serve a territorial defence mission. In Latvia, conscription was not reintroduced after 2014, and territorial defence rests on the 8000 volunteers. In Lithuania, there are 5000 volunteers plus 800 cadre, combining a territorial defence role with being a training organisation for the regular land forces.

What struck any Western military professional observer who visited the Baltic states' military units in the 1990s was the persistence of some of the inherited Soviet mentality and routines. In all three states, the percentage of soldiers on various work detachments, rather than in training, was high. The situation improved earlier in Estonia than in Latvia and Lithuania. In the latter two countries, the number of soldiers on guard duty remained far higher than what was considered necessary in the West.

To some extent, the low intensity of training could be explained by the low level of defence funding in the 1990s and the low staffing level of the units and camp support elements. However, it was also due in part to the difficulty of abandoning the Soviet ways, even if these blocked the effective implementation of any training schemes.

Especially in Latvia and Lithuania, which were not exposed to Finnish influence, it took time and energy to improve the situation and reduce hazing and the collective punishment of soldiers. This again led to a far too high level of suicide incidents and training accidents. Part of the problem was the indifferent conscription system, which sent too many soldiers of low quality to the defence force units. The training was not aimed at developing the soldiers' thinking and their ability for independent action. The typical physical activity was bodybuilding and athletics rather than orienteering and team games. Unit training anachronistically stressed drill and rote learning. That was not what was needed to outfox a stronger invader as an infantry or, later, guerrilla force.

Some of these problems related to cadre limitations. The number, quality, attitude, and type of non-commissioned officers were initially completely inadequate, and the young officers were initially not particularly well prepared by the newly established military academies.

All these problems had been addressed by the end of my time in the Baltic states. In Estonia the development was helped by the strong indirect Finnish influence in the military academy (War School) established in Tartu in spring 1998. In Lithuania, everything changed under the influence of retired US army colonel and later Lithuanian lieutenant-general Jonas Kronkaitis. It started during his time as first deputy minister of national defence 1997–1999 and was consolidated when he then became chief of defence until 2004.

Another problem in the 1990s was that the cadres were often too politicised and 'revolutionary' to accept the authority of formal rank. Officers have to have respect from their juniors to be effective. Natural authority is always important, but in peacetime, formal rank is normally accepted in a military unit. This only developed gradually during my period.

The military infrastructure had to be rebuilt more or less completely. The best military barracks of the Baltic states had been built by the Imperial Russian army around the end of the nineteenth century and during the inter-war independence era. However, the infrastructure had not been repaired or maintained properly during the Soviet era.

The rest were built by unskilled military labour led by engineer units, with the newest being the worst. All the buildings had been left to decay during the last years of Soviet rule. Moreover, in most cases, especially in Estonia and Latvia, when the Russian troops departed in 1993–1994, they smashed anything they could not rip out of the walls to take with them. Whatever they left behind, the local population took as firewood and scrap metal. In order to create a

sound military infrastructure, the Baltic states' governments had to use considerable resources for reconstruction. The work started first in Estonia. In Lithuania, Kronkaitis accelerated the improvements. Latvia started last.

In order to keep a good regular cadre, the forces had to find and repair military flats near the units. The armed forces' families in the 1990s could not afford civilian accommodation.

The situation concerning weapons and other military equipment was very difficult in Estonia and even more so in Latvia. Lithuania acquired some weapons and other equipment from the Russians as a result of the deal that gave the navy the two frigates. The only new or fairly new equipment in the two northern states by the mid-1990s was the Israeli weapons and radios bought by Estonia, plus some confiscated BTR-80 armoured personnel carriers, Russian-produced trucks, and later some heavy mortars that Estonia bought from Bulgaria. Otherwise, the initial armament was limited to AK-47 and AK-74 generations acquired from various sources, including the departing Russian military.

After a couple of years, second-hand equipment donations began coming from various sources. Much of the donated equipment arrived in very limited quantity, often without spare parts or usable manuals. Initially it was limited to 'non-lethal' equipment, such as trucks, so as not to provoke the Russians. This limitation was only lifted following the donation of weapons and other equipment for the Baltic peacekeeping battalion.

The Baltic states initially failed to define and implement any common policy on material, either in relation to their own purchases or to new donated equipment (with the notable exception of the joint Estonian-Latvian purchase of air surveillance radars). In all three states, the purchasing was haunted by the allegations – sometimes justified – of serious corruption, another poisonous element of the Soviet legacy.

Donations and acquisitions worsened the initial lack of standardisation. Even today, the three states have three different field artillery systems. Estonia has towed German and self-propelled, armoured South Korean field artillery. Latvia's is self-propelled, armoured, and American. Lithuania's is self-propelled, armoured, and German. The only change has been that all now mainly use standard NATO calibre ammunition.

The Baltic states' equipment situation was similar to, but even worse than, what the Danish army faced when I was a youth in the military in the 1960s and 1970s. At that time, the dominant equipment was worn-out Second World War vintage, received as military assistance in the early 1950s.

The Partnership for Peace support and the Baltic states

Some of the post-1994 support for the Baltic states took place within the limitations of the NATO Partnership for Peace (PfP) framework. From the Baltic states' perspective, PfP was what the Alliance had offered when

what they needed and sought was Article V guarantees. However, the three states realised that they should use the programme to get closer to NATO and to those guarantees. Within their very limited resources, they did all they could do to meet or exceed the implicit criteria of the programme.

US Secretary of Defence William Perry noted that the Baltic states maintained a model participation in the partnership programme, not only in exercises but also in the real work of peacekeeping in Bosnia and other places around the globe. He believed they had made impressive commitments and had shown that the Alliance could count on them to do their part.

However, the programme became a somewhat mixed blessing for the Baltic states due to its limitations and focus. The purpose of the programme was not to prepare the partner states for NATO membership. It was what the states needed to do to become eligible for membership of a NATO where the members then not only had to contribute to non-Article V operations. They also had to maintain a certain capability for initial self-defence, an ability to receive and co-operate with NATO reinforcements, and – if possible – a capability to reinforce other member states for crisis management or defence. That dilemma would only disappear three years after the NATO Membership Action Plan decision of spring 1999. From 2002 onwards, the emphasis was exclusively on 'the Alliance's new missions'.

However, in some respects the PfP activities did support the development of a capability for military co-operation in Article V operations. A clear priority of the programme was the English language training of defence cadres, which prepared them for co-operation with NATO countries and their armed forces within the partnership framework. Language skills were crucial for the development of the ability to operate in any type of mission. The same could be said about the adoption and integration of NATO standard operational and technical procedures. It applied to the armies, but especially to air space surveillance and control, and naval force elements. Some elements, such as transparency in planning and budgeting, as well as proper democratic control of the defence forces, were relevant no matter which missions were considered.

However, in other areas, the emphasis on PfP activities detracted from the Baltic States' attempts to develop a minimum self-defence capability. Resources were limited, and the three states chose to focus on what other NATO states apparently saw as important. That included participation in exercises focusing on 'soft' operations such as peacekeeping, search and rescue, the clearing of Second World War sea mines, and 'crisis management'.

Eager to score as many points as possible for good PfP behaviour, the Baltic states would participate in peacekeeping and show up at exercises, having to pay expenses that seemed trivial to most outsiders but burdened the then very small Baltic defence budgets.

The focus on PfP activities could be perceived as essential to other partner states seeking NATO membership, such as Poland, that already had a significant self-defence capability. For the Poles, spending money on such things as symbolic participation in exercises was a costly but still directly relevant investment in the future. For the Baltic states, the situation was different, because the activities drained much of the very limited defence budget needed to build a self-defence capability from scratch.

The PfP programme in the Baltic states could not support the development of mobilisation and reserve structures or the development of training centres that could further general instead of specific inter-operability. This was not the fault of the PfP organisation; the purpose and framework of the PfP was already set by the NATO member states. The programme could only assist in removing the aforementioned hurdles in a few areas.

The problem was the ever-growing naïveté about the main challenges that would face NATO in the 20 years from 1994 which the programmes instigated. The Balts themselves were never naïve about what would likely follow Russia's period of weakness. However, if accepting the 'emperor's new clothes' was what it would take to achieve NATO membership, most accepted it, even if some disagreed.

The bilateral support programmes Germany initially donated former East German equipment and sponsored students with various German specialist and general cadre courses. Sweden started programmes to support the policing of the borders. The United States concentrated on the development of the initial contacts, allowing three US states' Army National Guards to establish military liaison teams in the three voluntary defence organisations' headquarters in the Baltic capitals. This support was at first limited to familiarisation with US methods in 'non-lethal' (non-combat) fields.

Very early on, Finland started giving substantial and high-profile support to the Estonian Border Guard and more discreet, but still very effective, training support to the Estonian army. From the start, the key programme was full officer and non-commissioned officer (NCO) training at the Finnish army schools. The Estonians were able to learn to understand instructions in Finnish relatively quickly, as their language was similar. By early 1997, about 30 officers and three times as many NCOs had finished training. This cadre-training programme was, in its combination of quantity and quality, the best support given by any supporting country to a Baltic state during the first five years. The other aspects of Finnish support to Estonia withered away in the two years following the 1993 appointment of Alexander Einseln as Estonian Defence Forces commander. Einseln was a retired US Special Forces officer and a Korean War and Vietnam War veteran. He did not see the Finnish defence model as relevant for Estonia. This may be one reason why he did not properly employ the officers educated and trained in Finland for the good of the Estonian army, and he distrusted the Laaneots cadres. However, this changed when Einseln resigned in December 1995

due to an open conflict with the minister of defence, Andrus Öövel. Einseln's successor, Johannes Kert, made sure that Finland returned to its previous key support role.

The United Kingdom's initial support focused on Latvia, whereas Denmark started in Lithuania. The British focus was natural, as the first defence attaché was Lieutenant-Colonel (later Brigadier) Jānis (John) Kažociņš, a son of Latvian refugees.

The first support was bilateral. Co-ordination began only in 1994, when the Nordic states and the UK agreed to support the establishment of a Baltic peacekeeping battalion. I shall cover this and the other common Baltic projects below.

As mentioned above, the initial bilateral support was very cautious. No supporting states wanted to donate or even sell weapons, and several states limited the training assistance in the Baltic states to non-combat topics. This is why Estonia purchased weapons from Israel. The presence of Russian troops in Estonia and Latvia until the end of August 1994 (one year after they left Lithuania) prompted this reluctance. However, by 1995 and 1996, these reservations had been lifted. The Eastern European states had no reservations about selling weapons, and Poland and the Czech Republic were the first to donate heavy infantry weapons to the Baltic states.

In 1996, the Western policy gradually changed. The first opening was the donation of weapons to BALTBAT from the supporting states. Later followed limited sales, and from 1997 onwards, US, Sweden, and Germany have made substantial donations of weapons and equipment. Limitations on training also gradually disappeared.

Not only did the nature of the support change, but its volume also increased. Danish support grew from a couple of events in 1992 to 30 in 1994, 70 in 1995, about 150 in 1996, and 250 in 1997, the last year in which I was accredited defence attaché to all three states.

That year the programme covered the following areas: full officer education in Denmark; numerous short courses for different levels of officers in the army, navy, air force, and volunteer defence organisations in all three states; specialist courses; naval NCO training, on the job training for civil servants, advisory missions; seminars; and training of units for (and service in) peacekeeping missions.

Some activities recurred each year. New activities were developed as a result of the experience of former participants of the programmes, as well as from the concrete wishes of the Baltic states themselves. In some cases, the activities took place on very short notice, as it was suddenly realised that they were required.

Denmark decided in 1994 that it could achieve at least three important objectives by including troops from the Baltic states in Danish army units involved in UN peacekeeping operations in Croatia and, later, Bosnia. Through this programme, the Baltic and Danish militaries would get a clear understanding of each other, which was necessary for deepen-

ing future co-operation and assistance. Additionally, the Baltic states would gain an opportunity to heighten their international profile, as well as experience in co-operation with international organisations.

By the end of 1997, more than 600 Baltic soldiers had served six-month tours. Eleven infantry platoons (five Lithuanian, four Estonian, and two Latvian) and one company (Lithuanian) had been part of a Danish battalion. In terms of the number of man-days spent away from the Baltic states, this has by far been the largest Western and professional education project by any supporting state. To a large extent, this effort was organised by one dynamic Danish regimental commander, Colonel Jens Christian Lund.

Other states were increasing their assistance at the same time. Polish and Czech support to Lithuania became substantial. Sweden increased its support after a lull that followed the country's initial contribution. Like the Danish programme, the German programme expanded its number of activities.

As mentioned, Finland resumed its comprehensive support programme for the Estonian land forces. The US and UK programmes became stable and substantial, and Norway and the Netherlands started support programmes as well.

The total amount of support grew impressively, and the various programmes addressed most of the aforementioned hurdles. However, all the good intentions sometimes threatened to swamp the Baltic states, because they had very limited ability to finance their portion of the programmes, and because they still had few fully qualified personnel to assign to the programmes.

The supporting states were not very good at co-ordinating their assistance; for prestige, each wanted its own flag and contributions visible. There was a fair amount of jealousy and competition involved. Different models were tested or suggested to improve the coordination of efforts. The UK and Sweden tried to improve the co-ordination of support in the field of defence management, without much success. Finland suggested itself as the co-ordinating nation for all support to Estonia. However, both other supporting states and Estonia deemed this unacceptable. As a compromise, the limited projects where the major contributor could assist the receiving nation in co-ordinating the assistance were clearly identified, thus creating clear guidelines for the support of the contributor. This idea was implemented in relation to the development of the multinational projects.

The minimum that could be expected was to seek a level of mutual information. The local defence attachés of the supporting states therefore met regularly to exchange information about their country's planned co-operation programmes. This made it possible to some degree to avoid unwanted overlap, but very different planning and budgeting procedures (including different budget years), together with differences in openness, impeded significant progress.

Local efforts were supported by the retired Western generals of the International Defence Advisory Board (IDAB), which was chaired by British general Sir Garry Johnson. However, the board was limited by the little time it could spend in each of the three capitals to monitor, listen, and advise.

However, these military co-ordination problems decreased dramatically starting in 2000, as the NATO Membership Action Plans had created a clear 'umbrella' for all the major projects and other support. All that mattered to the three capitals was that which directly enhanced the chances of achieving membership.

In 2002, in the wake of the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States, it became clear that elements for participation in foreign intervention operations were far more important than achieving any initial territorial defence capability.

The multinational projects

As already mentioned, the three Baltic states initially found it difficult to enter a real co-operation. That problem was not new: in the inter-war period, coordination between the three states had been limited to the last months of the independence wars during the winter of 1919–1920.

Both before and after the three states regained independence in autumn 1991, their inability to coordinate was exploited by the Soviet, and later the Russian, leadership.

In the first years after 1991, the three states saw themselves as competitors rather than partners with a shared fate. It is important to understand that the Baltic states were not, and are not, related by culture or language in the way that the Scandinavian states are.

They had only ended up with a shared recent history due to their geographical position as neighbouring countries with borders to the Baltic Sea, as well as their historical fate as part of the Russian Empire when it expanded west at the end of the Great Nordic War and the Third Partition of Poland.
However, as both the East and the West see and treat them as one region, their ability to co-operate and co-ordinate has become crucial to their security.

Initially, full success in military co-operation was limited to two projects: the Baltic Peacekeeping Battalion (BALTBAT) and the much-less-known formal operation between the volunteer defence organisations. It was closest between the Lithuanian and Latvian organisations. Only this co-operation was, and remained, a truly Baltic project, as it did not originate from a political initiative. Instead, it was created as result of the growing contacts and friendship between like-minded political activists.

Elsewhere, the differences, and the Soviet tendency to sign and celebrate fine-sounding declarations rather than implement the text, hindered a deepening practical co-operation.

The idea for BALTBAT was born during a 1993 meeting of the Baltic defence

commanders. The US and Germany later supported the idea by allowing part of their national support to go to the project. However, the UK then joined, and Denmark accepted the role of lead nation, responsible for co-ordination.

To make the co-ordination effective, a steering committee was established with representatives from the supporting states and the Baltic States' defence ministries. The steering committee was supported by a 'Military Working Group', chaired by the Danish army with staff officers from the involved supporting military headquarters.

The project started with English language training. Then cadres were trained for the three national infantry companies at new training centres created at the former Soviet bases of Paldiski, in northern Estonia; Ādaži, in central Latvia; and Rukla, in central Lithuania. The formed companies deployed with supporting states to peacekeeping or stability operations; the Lithuanian company deployed with the Danish battalion in the Implementation Force (IFOR) in Bosnia. The project centre was in Ādaži.

In recent years, the Baltic states' land forces have expanded and developed enough that they now regard the BALTBAT framework as redundant.

The three other common Baltic defence co-operation projects had different roots, but all adopted the formal co-operation and support structures of BALTBAT with a leading support state and ministerial- plus professional-level formal committees.

A Baltic naval squadron became possible when Germany donated vessels of the same mine-hunter class to the three Baltic states' navies. It was logical that Germany would lead and support the project. For the next two decades, the BALTRON framework was used when relevant.

The Baltic Air Surveillance System (BALTNET) that followed in 1996 was created as a US initiative, and the headquarters was established at the Karmėlava airfield (now Kaunas Airport) in Lithuania. It is now an integrated part of the NATO air surveillance system with modern radar. What was originally an all-Baltic air operations centre is now the Lithuanian air operations centre; there is now an Estonian centre in Ämari and a Latvian one in Lielvārde. Each country now has three modern radar stations.

The final common project was the Baltic Staff College (BALTDEFCOL). The purpose of the project was to develop independently thinking and working, professionally minded Western-type staff officers (and young civil servants) who could surmount the Soviet-type hurdles identified early in the article. From the formal international decision to create the college in summer 1997, I was employed as project co-ordinator of the Swedish-chaired preparations for the next two years, until the arrival of the first students. Under Swedish political leadership, I headed BALTDEFCOL as the first commandant, from the idea developed in the winter of 1996–1997 until the end of 2004.

Until the Baltic states took over policy in 2002, the political and operational guiding framework of the BALTDEFCOL had been the territorial defence of the three states. However, the clear expeditionary focus of the Membership Action Plan meant that we had to refocus part of the education, as part of the premise became that the Baltic states were not to worry about their huge eastern neighbour.

Final notes

In spite of hesitation from several other European NATO members, US support gave the Baltic states the sought-after entry into the Alliance in 2004, a few months before I retired.

However, the required focus on expeditionary operations was an obvious problem. The Balts were always aware that the Russian leaders did not accept the Baltic states leaving the Russian orbit. However, the Alliance, led by the US, had asked them to give up whatever territorial defence ambitions they had developed in order to become members; of course NATO would protect them against their eastern neighbour.

The Danish and other Nordic states' efforts to convince the three states to develop affordable self-defence structures had failed. That project had culminated in a Danish-developed defence outline in 1997 and was mirrored in the curriculum and focus of the Baltic Defence College activities during its first three years. In 2014, the Russian occupation of Crimea re-awakened NATO to geostrategic realities. Thus the three states had to try to compensate for the time and defence development lost during the previous 12 years. However, the intensive exposure of all Baltic states' officers to the demands of international co-operation in faraway missions and multinational staffs had an important secondary effect. This meant that the efforts that started in the early and mid-1990s, removing the aforementioned hurdles to development and professional effectiveness left over from the Soviet era, continued in a different way.

Simon Drewsen Holmberg
Director of the Danish Cultural Institute in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania (Belarus and Ukraine)

Danish Cultural Institute – Cultural cooperation with Estonia

It was a mid-day, in the middle of the year, in the mid-1990s. Silvi Teesalu and the Danish Cultural Institute (DCI) were at their first premise, and I, along with the director of the Baltic Media Centre (BMC), Bent Nørby Bonde, met with virtually everybody who had something to give and to get from Estonian Film and TV. Silvi had managed to gather them all and prepare a programme that shaped the next 10–12 years of cooperation. The Estonians were filmmakers from all walks of life. Among them were Peeter Urbla, who, as producer and director with Exit Film, was moving into modern production, and Arvo Iho, a documentary filmmaker and cameraman. Both helped shape my and the BMC's cooperation with Estonian filmmakers, via festivals, co-productions, courses and many other events. All this was brought together by Silvi, who, with this one act, helped establish a great deal of Danish-Estonian cooperation, as she did in so many other ways over the years, until the Tallinn office was rejoined with that of Riga in 2014.

The cultural dialogue between Denmark and Estonia, in 2020, celebrated 30 years of continued cultural exchange with the opening of the DCI's office in Tallinn on 1 November 1990. The story has been described as one of new beginnings, overcoming challenges and navigating the difficult political landscape of post-Cold War Europe. Over the years, numerous contacts, language courses, seminars, meetings, concerts, readings, study trips, performances, publications and more were arranged, with hundreds of cooperation partners. This was accomplished by the Institute's office under the excellent leadership of Silvi Teesalu, who would go on to receive the Order of Dannebrog for her contribution to Danish-Estonian cultural relations.

What used to be a lively and neighbourly connection between Denmark and Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania had, during the Soviet – and, for a few years, German – occupation starting in 1939 started to fade. Contact and visits were nearly impossible, and Denmark's own occupation by Germany meant that the former thriving relationship faded into obscurity. Denmark suffered a much less severe fate than our Baltic friends did; we experienced 'only' five years of occupation, whereas the Baltic people endured 51.

In the 1980s, however, the Iron Curtain started to buckle, and demands for

independence were starting to grow, demands that could be felt across the Baltic Sea in Denmark. Denmark had never recognized the annexation of the Baltic countries by the Soviet Union. Therefore, when the Cold War started to thaw, an attempt to re-establish the diplomatic connections that had been cut by the USSR quickly got underway.

In the rubble of the Berlin Wall and the crumbling of the Soviet Union lay new opportunities for the DCI, and a long-awaited collaboration with the once-again-sovereign Baltic states started to form. As early as 1988, a rapidly growing people's front demanding political, economic and cultural independence from the Soviet Union started to take root. Before the complete collapse of the Soviet Union, Denmark was in the precarious position of still not being able to formally recognize the Baltic states. Here the Danish Cultural Institute came to play a vital part. Uffe Ellemann-Jensen, the Danish foreign minister at the time, suggested creating a private non-governmental, though partially governmentally supported, office in, for instance, Tallinn. A fundraising campaign was then launched by the Danish newspaper *Politiken*, and support for the Baltic initiative started pouring in from all nooks and crannies of private and cultural Danish society. The Danish government pledged to match all donations, which turned out to be unnecessary, as ample funds were raised. The Baltic office opened in Riga, led by the visionary Rikke Helms in 1990, though later that very same year, an Estonian office in Tallinn opened and was made fully independent of Riga in 1997.

In an interview shortly after the fundraising started, journalist Malin Lindgren asked the secretary-general of the DCI at the time, Per Himmelstrup: 'What need do the Baltic peoples have for Danish culture, when it is food, a better economy and independence they need?' Himmelstrup's answer encapsulated the philosophy that the Danish Cultural Institute is built upon:

'The people of the institute do not travel with their suitcases packed with folk dancing, Hans Christian Andersen and Højskolesangbogen. And they do not come to drape tailor-made programs over the heads of the recipient countries. We will raise money to send the experts that the Latvian people want to meet. We will listen quietly, emerge in the respective communities and react to the proposals and suggestions that come to us externally. Our strength is that we also have lived with an aggressive great power as our neighbour. We are partners with similar issues: How does a small country fare in an increasingly internationalised world? How do you keep your language and cultural identity? Here we Danes have a tradition that we do not have to modestly divert our eyes from. For us, culture is not just art, language and literature. It is enlightenment about society, work relations, the environment and teaching. What interests our neighbouring countries is how we have made our place on the tiny spot we occupy on the world map.'

The institute had an office in Tallinn until 2014 and since then has been part of a joint Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian office.

Recent activities in Estonia

The DCI has held hundreds of important activities in Estonia. Here we mention some of the most important. Many of these events are organised in close cooperation with the Embassy of Denmark in Estonia, Ambassador Kristina Miskowiak Beckvard and Minister Counsellor Jens Chr. Andersen, deputy head of mission.

Dannebrog 800 in Tallinn
The Nordic and Baltic countries have always been like distant cousins separated by the Baltic Sea. However, in the case of Denmark and Estonia, history stretches back much further than one might expect. According to the legend, on 15 June 1219, the Danish flag – *Dannebrog* – fell from the sky in Tallinn. During the Crusades in Estonia, Danish king Valdemar II was on the verge of losing the Battle of Lyndanisse near present-day Tallinn when a flag suddenly fell from the sky. Valdemar II's luck immediately changed, and he won the battle. Until 1854, Dannebrog was solely the flag of the Danish king and the Royal Navy. With time, it also became the symbol of the Danish army and the merchant marine. In the end, it became the flag of the entire Danish nation. The word *'Dannebrog'* means 'the cloth of the Danes'. The name of Tallinn is believed to derive from *'Taani linn'* (in Estonian, 'Danish Town'). Furthermore, the coat of arms of the city of Tallinn strongly resembles the Danish flag.

Together with the anniversary of Dannebrog, Denmark celebrated the 100th anniversary of Estonia's independence. Even today, it is very important to maintain our partnership and friendship and continue to emphasize our common mindset and core values based on freedom and independence. The event 'Dannebrog 800 in Tallinn', hosted by the Danish Cultural Institute in close cooperation with the Embassy of Denmark in Estonia, sought out to do exactly that by:

- Marking Dannebrog's 800th anniversary in Tallinn with a series of cultural events and artistic collaborations of the highest quality
- Contributing to the celebration of Estonia's 100th anniversary through dissemination and artistic interpretation of the common Danish-Estonian history
- Creating a push for Danish cultural interests abroad.

As a testament to the importance of these historical ties, Her Majesty Queen Margrethe II attended the event, paying homage to the shred history between our two countries, just as she did on her first visit to Estonia in 1992, after the country had regained its independence. The Danish Cultural Institute and the Danish Embassy in Estonia, had received the incredible honour of preparing the celebration program for this historic visit.

The most comprehensive of the projects was the Danish Queen's Rose Garden, which was inaugurated by Her Majesty Queen Margrethe, Tallinn mayor Mihhail Kõlvart and chairman of the Danish Cultural Institute Carsten Haurum. The opening was very popular, with hundreds of Danes and Estonians lining up together along the garden to behold the beautiful new plants. At the same time,

on 15 June 2019, a memorial plaque was unveiled featuring the Dannebrog flag, the Danish national coat of arms, the city of Tallinn's coat of arms and gilded letters telling about the Dannebrog celebration. The garden was created through close collaboration between the Danish Cultural Institute, the Danish Embassy in Estonia, the city of Tallinn and the country's most skilled gardeners, and the result is now visible to anyone visiting the medieval town: a brand-new landscaped garden by the wall of the Old Town with 800 red and white roses in a beautiful Dannebrog formation. Besides the flowers themselves, the area has been updated with new paths and eight Copenhagen-style benches, which help make the garden an enjoyable place of relaxation for Tallinn's residents and visitors.

Dannebrog was also celebrated in Tallinn with an extensive exhibition of art from the Danish Golden Age from the National Gallery of Denmark (Statens Museum for Kunst). The exhibition *Dannebrog – The Flag That Fell from the Sky: The Golden Age of Danish Art* remained open until 13 October 2019. Many of the exhibited works had never been lent abroad before, including C. A. Lorentzen's iconic *Battle of Lyndanisse* from 1809. The opening at the Baroque castle in Kadriorg – attended by Her Majesty Queen Margrethe and Estonian President Kersti Kaljulaid – was a great success, with speeches and music. The queen and the president were also given a guided tour of the Kadriorg Art Museum by Henrik Holm, who had beautifully curated the exhibition and prepared its detailed catalogue.

Just as Denmark contributed 200 volunteers to the Estonian War of Independence in 1919, 200 Danish soldiers are currently stationed in Estonia to support the country as part of NATO's Forward Presence. Denmark's great efforts in support of the independence of the Baltic countries in 1990–1991, in which, for instance, Danish politicians and the Danish Cultural Institute played a central role, is still clearly remembered. The event 'Great Taste – Zero Waste', on sustainability within the culinary industry, brought together more than 500 direct participants, including public authorities, restaurant owners, chefs and teachers at culinary schools, food suppliers and other stakeholders.

As Estonia has continued to grow and flourish as a country since regaining independence, the Danish Embassy in Tallinn and the Danish Cultural Institute have occasionally been able to focus on smaller issues and events. The Danish Cultural Institute very much believes that art is worth making just for the sake of art. The Papercuts competition saw 174 Estonian children contributing to Danish cultural heritage by sending in their own visual interpretations of Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tales. Through drawings, animations and sculptures, children of all ages let themselves be inspired by the famous Danish author and turned that inspiration into creative expressions. The competition, which also took place in Belarus and Latvia, was a direct response to the Covid-19 pandemic, which meant that

all children had been sent home from school. It was a welcomed and fun activity for the children at a time when playing with friends and social contact had come to a grinding halt. In all, 1226 unique pieces of artwork were sent in from the three countries, and two winners were crowned in each country from different age groups. The competition was a resounding success.

Creativity, Sustainability, Place

The Creative Ports project is intended to improve and encourage cooperation among actors of cultural and creative industries in the Baltic Sea region. Creative Ports is one of the projects that the Danish Cultural Institute has joined, together with 13 other partners from various countries around the Baltic Sea.

Under the framework of Creative Ports, the DCI held the event 'Pitching for a Better Baltic Sea', a competition in which nine start-up companies from the Baltic Sea region pitched their ideas to a jury. The common goal was sustainability, and the competition was fierce. However, a winner had to be chosen, and the Estonian spirit of innovation won out. Henry Ratasepp's presentation on Tartu-based Kira Shoes, a fully vegan, sustainable and durable shoe line made from entirely recyclable material, won over the judges, who crowned the Estonian company the winner of the competition.

The competition was a testament to the ingenuity of the Estonian, Nordic and Baltic people. But it was also a testament to how necessary continued cooperation really is between Denmark and Estonia, and between the Baltic and Nordic countries. We must not only build on our already long-standing history but to ensure its continuation in the future, as well as a greener, safer and more democratic future for our planet. The project 'CircularPlace: Culture and Creative Industries, Circular Economy and Place' aims to do exactly that. By building on the lessons learned from Creative Ports and the 'Pitching for a Better Baltic Sea' competition, it aims to spotlight areas such as culture, sustainability, creative industries and space-making.

CircularPlace will begin in September 2021, and though it is the next project in a long-standing tradition of Danish-Estonian cooperation, it certainly will not be the last.

Mads Michael Hastrup Nilsson
Author,
Administrative Director in Panbaltica

The Danish King's Garden & The Danish Queen's Rose Garden

Excerpt from the Danish book *Estonia Past and Present: Portrait of the Most Nordic Country in the Baltics* [1]

The Danish King's Garden is located by the entrance of the Virgin's Tower *(Neitsitorn)*, reached by walking along the city wall, past the Stable Tower *(Tallitorn)*. Here an opening has been made in the wall, under a sign reading *Taani Kuninga Aed*, which means 'Danish King's Garden' in Estonian. One might think the name of the garden originates from the legend of *Dannebrog* – the Danish flag – falling from the sky in Tallinn.

However, the name actually originates from a decision by the Danish king Erik Menved in 1311, via his governor in Tallinn, Johannes Kanne. The upper part of town *(Toompea)* and the lower part of town disagreed on which side should administer this area (and thus where the city wall should be built). The craftsmen in the lower part of town had used the area up until that point, and the king decided in their favour. Out of gratitude, they named the area the Danish King's Garden. But as Dannebrog fell from the sky in Tallinn in 1219, according to the legend (even if it may well have been in Viljandi 11 years earlier), it is practical to assume that it happened here in the Danish King's Garden.

The Virgin's Tower *(Neitsitorn)* was restored in Soviet times in a way that would not be allowed nowadays. There was not much left of the original medieval tower. In 1820 a two-storey arch-shaped building in the classical style was built whose back side consisted of the outer wall of the original tower. This preserved building was demolished in 1969–1970. Later, the medieval tower (the only square-shaped tower in Tallinn's city wall) was reconstructed on the basis of old drawings. The entire third (top) storey has been rebuilt from scratch. Where the building was originally open on the side facing the garden, it is now covered by a glass wall. When the reconstruction was finished in 1980, a café was opened in the tower.
The café in the Virgin's Tower closed some years after Estonia regained independence, and later, the tower was empty for a long time. The leader of the Danish Cultural Institute in Tallinn, Silvi

[1] Mads Michael Hastrup Nilsson, *Estland før og nu – Portræt af det mest nordiske land i Baltikum* (Tallinn: Panbaltica, 2018), ISBN 9788797096901.

Teesalu, thought the tower here in the Danish King's Garden would be ideal as a home for the Danish Cultural Institute in Tallinn and, in addition, as a Danish-Estonian Cultural Centre offering exhibitions, concerts, and maybe even a Danish restaurant. She presented the idea to a private Danish foundation and was energised by their positive feedback. Around 2008, Danish architect Erik Nobel drew up plans for the renovation of the tower, which had once again become dilapidated. However, there was still a significant obstacle: it was not certain who owned the garden and the tower. A US resident who was a relative of the tower's pre-war owner claimed to own them. The documentation was not conclusive, though. A court case could have dragged on for years. But as the city of Tallinn was also interested in the project and wanted to keep the garden and tower open to the public, it reached a financial settlement with the alleged heir to give up the claim. Then, around 2010–2011, funding was applied for from the aforementioned Danish foundation to renovate the tower, which would cost millions of Danish kroner. The tower would be a Danish-Estonian Cultural Centre managed by the Danish Cultural Institute in Tallinn, which would be guaranteed the right to use the premises for decades to come.

However, somewhat surprisingly, the application was rejected (the foundation has a policy of not divulging the reasons). Therefore the project had to be abandoned. The city was now the owner of the tower and had to find funds for its renovation all on its own. The renovated tower became part of the museum in the nearby tower Kiek in de Kök, and a part of the city wall was reconstructed, permitting a connection between the two towers. A café was re-established in the Virgin's Tower.

But easing the blow, it turned out that the Danish government had granted 20 million Danish kroner (~2.7 million euros) for Danish monuments abroad, of which one million kroner (~135,000 euros) was earmarked for the Danish King's Garden in Tallinn. Parts of the garden were definitely in need of a renovation, and again Danish architect Erik Nobel began preparing this project, which was presented to the city. At the government level, the project was also considered a suitable present from Denmark to Estonia in August 2011, when the three Baltic countries marked 20 years since regaining independence. Representatives of the three countries were invited to an event at the court of HM Queen Margrethe of Denmark. However, shortly thereafter, a new government took office in Denmark and cancelled the grant, as it had other priorities. It also terminated other projects, such as the renovation in France of the war graves of Danes who were forced to fight for Germany during the First World War. The Danish media covered that cancellation more than the one in Tallinn. But without a doubt, the cancellation of the one million kroner project dealt a blow to Denmark's reputation in Estonia. Thus the city of Tallinn's scepticism was quite understandable when it was proposed that funds to restart the cancelled project might perhaps be obtained from private Danish funds.

To add insult to injury, it was decided in Denmark at the end of 2012 that the Danish Cultural Institute in Tallinn (as well as

The Danish Queen's Rose Garden in Tallinn

in Vilnius) should be closed down at the end of 2013 at the latest, leaving the office in Riga to cover all three Baltic countries. Cultural funds were now supposed to be linked to new business opportunities in the BRIC countries, and thus a new office would open in India (however, this was accomplished only in 2018).

But the third attempt to obtain financing in Denmark for the Danish King's Garden in Tallinn actually succeeded. An application was made to Queen Margrethe II and Prince Henrik's Foundation for 100,000 kroner (~13,500 euros) as partial financing for the already prepared project to restore the lower part of the garden. When this was granted, the A. P. Møller Foundation would chip in the rest, up to the amount Denmark had originally promised. The renovation project was carried out in 2013, and HRH Crown Princess Mary visited the garden at the beginning of April 2014 for an inauguration ceremony. A glass sign at the entrance to the garden through the city wall has a text (also in Danish) about the garden and the renovation.
Incidentally, the Estonian head of the Danish Cultural Institute's office in Tallinn from 1990 to 2013, Silvi Teesalu received the Order of Dannebrog in recognition of her efforts to enhance Danish-Estonian cultural relations. So even if the dream of a Danish-Estonian Cultural Centre in Tallinn gave way to the closure of the Danish Cultural Institute's office in Tallinn, at least its energetic leader for 23 years was honoured.

The garden is divided into an upper and a lower part, and the lion's share of the renovation project was in the lower part. But actually, back in 2000, there was another project where the municipality and the Danish Year 2000 Foundation (founded by the *Folketing*, the Danish parliament) shared the costs of a reorganisation of the garden, where new flowerbeds and other elements were laid out in the upper part. At the stairs leading to the lower part of the garden, there is a memorial stone noting that in the Virgin's Tower lived the Estonian painters Paul and Kristjan Raud, who were twin brothers.

In the lower part of the garden (in the now-empty corner by the stairs), the Danish-Estonian Society put up a bronze plaque commemorating the legend of Dannebrog on King Valdemar's Day (15 June) in 1991. However, the plaque was stolen the following summer. A memorial stone was set up in 1994 by the same association to mark the 775th anniversary since the legendary event. As part of the celebration, Danish soldiers of the Hunts-

men's Corps *(Jægerkorpset)*, including the well-known B. S. Christiansen, parachuted over Tallinn with a big Dannebrog, and, in the interest of friendship, also an Estonian flag of the same size. That memorial stone now stands beside a bench at the edge of a small square with tiles in the pattern of Dannebrog. The square was created as part of the most recent renovation in 2013. On the wall at the other end of the square hangs a coat of arms in iron with a crown and a sword. Sculptor Heino Müller made it as a final examination work for the Estonian Academy of Arts. He finished it in 1969 – the 750th year of the Dannebrog legend – and it was put up here back in the Soviet era. On the ledge above it, there is another monument – *Tuli lipp* (A Flag Came) – that, on the initiative of Tallinn, was unveiled on Valdemar's Day 2012 (independently of the Danish-financed project for the renovation of the garden). The monument was made by the Estonian artists Mari Rass and Liina Stratskas, who won the competition announced by the city of Tallinn for a monument for the garden. Dannebrog and the other flags made in metal are meant to symbolise that the other Nordic countries' flags are also cross flags. By the way, in Estonia there have been proposals to change Estonia's flag to a Nordic cross flag with the same three colours as the current flag, usually with a blue field and a black-and-white cross. However, the idea has never been very popular among the people. On Valdemar's Day – 15 June – the now-closed office of the Danish Cultural Institute in the town often celebrated the event in the garden. In some years the Danish Embassy has held an event in the garden on Valdemar's Day.

The 800th anniversary of the Dannebrog legend was celebrated in Tallinn on 15 June 2019. HM Queen Margrethe II visited Estonia for the third time (she and her husband Prince Henrik made a state visit in 1992 and an unofficial visit in 2001). The 2019 visit lasted for two days; her activities included inaugurating a new garden named the 'Danish Queen's Rose Garden', with 800 roses in the Danish colours – red and white – and eight Danish benches of a type also used in Copenhagen. The numbers of roses and benches are, of course, meant to symbolise the number of years and centuries since the legend of Dannebrog and the beginning of the Danish times in Estonia. The plantation was financed by Denmark and is located on the other side of the city wall to the Danish King's Garden, in what is known as the 'Garden of the Commandant'. On the city wall, there is a memorial plaque for the inauguration of the garden with the monogram of the Danish queen, as well as the Estonian and Danish state coats of arms. The memorial plaque was made by Brian Sibola-Hansen, a Danish artist living in Estonia. Aside from the Rose Garden, Tallinn also received another Dannebrog donated by Danmarks-Samfundet, who also donated the Dannebrog given in 1922, which was put up in the Dome Church, where the queen also participated in a service on the second day of her visit.

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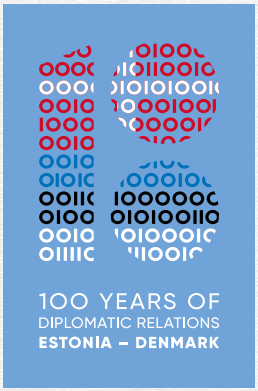

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