

continued.

mit that the decision to ignore Estonia's Russian-speakers is consistent with the economic-political orientation of the concept of the state that Bötter's study adopts.



DESPITE THE CRITICISM I have leveled against Bötter's treatment of his subject matter, the key merits of his thesis still stand. The study constitutes an against-the-tide, even provocative attempt to focus on "hard" economic and political power struggles and competition over resources when analyzing the new Estonia. More precisely, his topic – the relationship between Estonia's political leadership and administration in a "new democracy" – is both topical, and underexplored. The choice demonstrates the author's determination to use his dissertation to examine a socially and politically central macro-issue. The subject is thorny and difficult to work on, something which accounts for a number of the problems he encountered in his study.

An interesting point is Bötter's own position, situated between Estonia and Sweden. As someone who spent his childhood in Estonia and then moved to Sweden in early adulthood, Bötter is neither an insider nor an outsider in relation to Estonia. His position seems to differ from that of the Estonian scholars who see the situation from within, in that he appears to be at a point that offers him an exceptionally independent and profoundly critical look at recent developments. But he also differs from those with a more distant relationship to Estonia, e.g., second-generation emigrants trained in the United States. Bötter's particular position is reflected, in an interesting and intriguing manner, in his unconventional, sometimes even iconoclastic, thinking. Bötter's reasoning is sometimes controversial, but it reflects the author's intellectual independence and his ability to bring fresh perspectives to the analysis of Estonian politics.

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The author of the article was the faculty examiner at Bötter's thesis defense.

Estonian history. The nation as bridge and battlefield

Seppo Zetterberg
Viron historia

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SEPPO ZETTERBERG, professor of history at Jyväskylä University, has written a voluminous work on Estonia's history. The work, which is over 800 pages long, is dedicated to the Estonian people, which have "borne up under its history". No further hints are needed of the author's sympathies for Finland's neighbor nation. Estonia's history is, as Zetterberg describes it, one long story of the will to survive repression and fight for freedom. Zetterberg is an experienced historian and was an Estophile as early as the 1970s; his previous research has revolved around Finnish-Estonian relations and Estonia's recent history. During the 1990s, Zetterberg also worked as Director of Finland's Institute of Culture in Tallinn.

According to Zetterberg, Estonia's history can be understood through two metaphors. The country is simultaneously a bridge and a battlefield. This principal idea permeates the work's eleven central chapters. The narrative progresses in a conventional, chronological manner: from prehistory to the present, but with a primary focus on the Middle Ages ("A part of the old Livonia") and the Swedish and Russian eras. The national awakening and first period of independence are given thorough coverage, as are the decennia following World War II ("The lost independence", "In the grasp of the hammer and sickle"). The last ten pages of the book discuss the era of newly-won independence following 1991. Zetterberg also pays great attention to economic as well as cultural history.

ZETTERBERG'S BOOK IS A monumental scientific work and is an exceptional work in its genre. It fills a large gap: there are few existing synthetic histories of Estonia, and the best ones date back to the 1930s. Zetterberg has been able to take advantage of recent historical research, which has hitherto been available only in the form of unpublished research and conference papers. The author sees himself as a Nordic popular educator. The primary objective of the work is the elucidation of the great historical differences between the countries around the Baltic Sea. The greatest difference between the Nordic nations and Estonia has to do with conditions in the countryside. Sweden and Finland had an independent peasant population which enjoyed political rights. In Estonia, the rural nobility and feudalism dominated, or as Zetterberg puts it: "Estonian collective memory still harbors strong traces of the German proprietors' lash."

Zetterberg admits that concepts such as Estonian and Estonia's history are problematic. The first Estonians (around 3000 BC) were assimilated with the predecessors of the Baltic, North-Germanic and West-Slavic peoples. They established permanent settlements, protected by fortifications, and applied themselves to agriculture. The border situation varied greatly over time. The term "Estonian" was first used in the nineteenth century during the national awakening. The purpose was to make the "un-German" Estonians visible as a modern European people, with a cultural will and identity of their own.

During the Middle Ages, Estonia becomes part of European history. The Estonians were converted to Christianity by German crusaders – this process lasted

up until about 1230. Over the following centuries, Estonia was invaded by Denmark, Poland, Sweden and Russia. Estonia became a leading center for northern Europe's trade network. The towns Tallinn (Reval), Tartu (Dorpat), Viljandi and Pärnu were members of the Hanseatic League.

ZETTERBERG WRITES extensively about the Swedish era (1561-1721), which in Estonian history writing is called "the good old Swedish era". The Swedish regents initiated an extensive program of reforms. They introduced Swedish law, and in 1630 a Court of Appeal was established in Tartu. Two years later, a university was founded in the same town. As a result of investment in popular education, most young Estonians were literate by the end of the 1600s. Trade and industry bloomed and a civil service and state administration was developed.

At the Peace Treaty of Nystad in 1721, Sweden conceded Estonia to Russia. Zetterberg's characterization of the Russian era is relatively neutral. Serfdom was abolished (1820), the peasants' situation improved and a modernization process was initiated. The national awakening received impulses from Europe; the Russification of the late 1800s hastened its development. The "singing" national movement increased in strength, and symbolized a popular will to be free. So-called Young-Estonian elite groups took the lead in culture and politics.

DURING THE 1900S, Estonia was positioned in the shadow of two great powers: Germany and Russia (the Soviet Union). The country balanced between two world wars, several occupations and peace treaties. After World War I, Estonia got a taste of independence, but in 1940 it was united with the Soviet Union. Zetterberg offers a thorough and balanced description of these events, uncovers national and historical myths and analyzes the development of Estonia's history in a broader European context. This is also meant to give us a better understanding of August 20, 1991, when the 1918 Declaration of Independence was restored. For Estonia, this became an important historical and symbolic date. The nation's constitution was reinstated. Estonia got its own currency, a Parliament and a head of state. Estonia became a part of Europe. Again.

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