

Contents

Preface	vii
Introduction	xi
Abbreviations	xxvii
1 Entangled Histories in Northeastern Europe	1
2 The Topography of Resistance and Opposition around the Baltic Rim, 1939–1949	21
3 “Cold Warfare” at the Edge of the Iron Curtain	67
4 In Search of a Common Language	121
5 The Transnationalization of Opposition around the Baltic Rim	161
6 From Individual to Mass-Based Opposition	211
Conclusion	283
Appendix	303
References	311
Index	341
About the Author	349

Preface

I was still an undergraduate when I first learned about Sweden's role in the intricate web of international support for the Polish Solidarity movement; not only during the so-called "legal period" of post-war Poland's first independent trade union, but also after December 13th, 1981, the memorable day when General Wojciech Jaruzelski declared war on his own people by imposing martial law. During an internship at the Polish Institute in Stockholm in fall 2003, while translating wall charts from Polish to Swedish for an exhibition on the topic of official and unofficial Swedish support for Solidarity, I became fascinated by the astonishing dynamics of transnational opposition to Soviet-type Socialism that developed in the wake of the turbulent events in Poland. The idea of writing this book, however, emerged first several years later in Berlin. Aiming to explore the overall dynamics of Cold War politics in neutral Sweden and the peculiarities of East-West relations around the Baltic rim, I decided to broaden the geographical and chronological framework of the project which, in the end, turned into a first attempt to write a historical synthesis of the Cold War in the Baltic Sea Region.

This book revisits a rather peripheral borderland of the European Cold War theater that has not received much attention in the literature on Europe's post-1945 history. Yet, the Baltic Sea Region was, as will be shown, far from being a "backwater" of international politics. The focus on the political activities of Poles and Estonians who had escaped their war-torn and crisis-ridden homelands to Sweden highlights a so far still underexplored aspect of Cold War politics that played out underneath the surface of official East-West relations and international diplomacy. Based on largely unexplored archival collections of individual activists and Polish and Estonian political organizations in Sweden, this book tells the story of their dedicated struggle against the status quo behind the Iron Curtain in changing geopolitical conditions.

Reconstructing the constantly shifting strategies of Cold War Sweden's largest political diasporas in their attempts to bridge the ideological front line that isolated them from their nearby homelands, the following chapters illustrate how Polish and Estonian émigrés coped with geopolitical realities, how they envisioned political change, and how they contributed to accomplishing it. Drawing on the ongoing historiographical debates about the extent and forms of interaction and exchange across the blocs, this book explores, on the one hand, the specificity of political, economic, and cultural relations between the Nordic neutrals and their opposite coasts. On the other hand, the study aims to shed light on how diaspora-homeland relations played out on both sides of the Iron Curtain, and how transnational dynamics of political opposition affected change on a local, national, and international level. This book thus touches upon an array of questions that are vital to understanding a present marked by the formation of countless new diasporas due to unprecedented waves of forced migration.

The luxury of having been able to spend five years on full-time research and writing depended on the generosity of the institutions that funded me. A research grant of the German Historical Institute in Warsaw financed an initial three-month period of archival research in Poland. The German foundation ZEIT-Stiftung Ebelin und Gerd Bucerius awarded me a PhD scholarship within the program "Germany and Her Eastern Neighbors—Contributions to European History," which secured the funding for another year of research in Warsaw. The grants and tuition fees during my time as a PhD candidate at the European University Institute in Florence were covered by the Swedish Research Council, which enabled me to spend my formative years as an early stage researcher in an intellectually highly stimulating—and breathtakingly beautiful—environment. I am also grateful to the Estonian Institute for sponsoring my participation in two summer courses in Estonian language and culture at the universities of Tartu and Tallinn and for the award of an Estophilus grant, which contributed to covering the costs of my year-long research stay as a visiting PhD student at Tallinn University. The Natolin European Center awarded me a Paderewski grant and hosted me on the beautiful campus of the College of Europe in the park of Natolin Palace during a shorter research stay in Warsaw.

At least as important as the material support was the intellectual advice and encouragement I received throughout the years. First of all, I would like to thank my supervisor Philipp Ther, whom I have known since my undergraduate days, for many years of guidance and support. This book would never have been written without his enthusiasm for the project, his inspiring comments, and the fact that he taught me to be more pragmatic. I am also indebted to Kiran Klaus Patel and Federico Romero for the thorough screening of chapter

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The five years I spent thinking, researching, and writing on the topic of oppositional networks around the Baltic rim hold a treasury of impressions, memories, and inspirations. I am privileged to have met people who came to play an important role in my life in the places I used to call home during this period, Warsaw, Florence, and Tallinn; three very different cities that surprised me each in their own way. But even an academic nomad needs a constant in his life. Thus, I want to take this opportunity to express my gratitude for the love, unconditional trust, and moral and practical support I have always received from my parents, Anna Christina Dagnell-Stöcker and Werner Stöcker. It is to them I dedicate this book.