

Foundation of the Baltic Association of the History and Philosophy of Science (BAHPS)

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Abstract: *The first attempt to bring together historians of the natural sciences and medicine was undertaken as early as in 1958, during the Khrushchev Thaw. In June 1958, Prof. Pauls Stradiņš (1896–1958) organized a joint conference in Riga with participants from Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia, and guests from Moscow and Leningrad. A program for collaboration was developed, and the tradition was initiated to hold joint Baltic conferences on the history of sciences, successively held in Riga, Vilnius/Kaunas and Tartu/Tallinn. (As of 2010, there have been 24 conferences.)*

During the period of The Singing Revolution, thanks to Estonian initiative, a joint coordination committee of historians of sciences of the Baltic republics was founded in February 1988 by a decision of the Presidium of the Latvian Academy of Sciences, supported by the Estonian and Lithuanian Academy of Sciences. On October 29, 1990, the Association of the History and Philosophy of Sciences of the Baltic States (BAHPS) was founded in Riga, in a session which took place in the Pauls Stradiņš Museum of the History of Medicine (attended by 33 historians of science). Karl Siilivask, Juozas Algimantas Krikštopaitis and Janis Stradiņš headed the association. Janis Stradiņš was elected its first president.

In 1993, at the 19th International congress of History of Sciences in Saragossa, the BAHPS, a joint organization of three independent countries, was accepted for membership in the International Union of the History and Philosophy of Science (IUHPS).

The article is based on personal recollections about the foundation of the BAHPS and discusses the activities of the association, the primary mission of which is regular organization of the traditional Baltic international conferences of the history of sciences (1991, 1993, 1996, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2006, 2008, 2010).

Keywords: *Baltic Association of the History and Philosophy of Sciences (BAHPS), Baltic conferences of the history of sciences, common roots and research traditions of the Baltics, IUHPS, scientific cooperation of the Baltic republics*

On 29 October 2010, twenty years had passed from the founding of the Baltic Association of History and Philosophy of Science and since its beginning it has been the convener of all the conferences on the history of sciences in the Baltic countries. Such anniversary should not go unmarked, all the more because it was part of the process of restoring the independence of the Baltic States.

At the previous conference in Riga, in October 2008, fifty years of the emergence of the community of the Baltic historians of science was celebrated (Stradiņš, 2010). The first conference of this kind took place on 6–7 June 1958 in Riga and it was organized by Professor Pauls Stradiņš, founder of the Museum of the History of Medicine. The said conference was the start of a 52-year tradition that originated in the brief period of the so-called Khrushchev Thaw. It continued regardless of the unfavorable period for the Baltic States and helped to keep them together. The course of these conferences has been described in detail (Vasilev *et al.*, 1986; Stradiņš, 2010; Viksna, 2010). 1958 saw the establishment of an unofficial Baltic Coordinating Commission on the History of Science and Medicine, which functioned until the years 1962–1965. Afterwards, the branch organizations of the Soviet National Association for the History of Natural Sciences were established in the three Baltic (at that time Soviet) republics. All activities were horizontally coordinated (among the three Baltic republics) and vertically coordinated – with the involvement of the leading Moscow colleagues. Also, during those years, the Baltic scholars actively participated in the IUHPS international congresses of the history of science as members of the Soviet delegations, and in international congresses of the history of medicine (Warsaw–Krakow 1965, Moscow 1971, Tokyo–Kyoto 1974, Bucharest 1981).

In those years Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian national associations of historians of science firmly established themselves and improved their cooperative horizontal relations, strengthening scientific ties among the Baltic republics. Between 1958 and 1987, the three associations held altogether 15 Baltic Conferences on the History of Science and the conference locations were rotated among Riga, Tartu or Tallinn, Vilnius and Kaunas (Stradiņš, 2010; see Appendix below for the list of conferences). The Baltic scholars jointly published collections of articles *Iz istorii estestvoznaniia i tekhniki Pribaltiki*

(10 volumes, 1968–1992) and *Iz istorii meditsiny* (19 volumes, 1957–1991, both in Russian), studied historical evidence of the development of the natural sciences and technology in the Baltic, and during regular conferences marked the anniversaries of Vilnius University, University of Tartu (Dorpat), the Riga Polytechnicum (Technical University) and Academia Petrina in Jelgava (Mitau). The Baltic conferences were well attended by prominent historians of science from Moscow and St Petersburg (Leningrad), from the Ukraine, Belarus, Georgia, etc. and attracted also several colleagues from Poland, the German Democratic Republic, Finland and Bulgaria.

When Gorbachev's perestroika started, the Baltic historians of science got an opportunity to be independent in establishing international contacts. The earliest initiators of the "liberation" were Estonian colleagues: Professor Karl Siilivask, Dr. Karl Martinson and Dr. Helle Martinson from Tallinn. At the very beginning of 1988, an idea was put forward to set up a coordinating committee of the Baltic historians of science that would be entitled to keep up direct relations with foreign colleagues and organizations. The suggestion was initially submitted to the presidiums of the Latvian, Estonian and Lithuanian Academies of Sciences and to the National Committee for the History and Philosophy of Science of the USSR. The Latvian Academy of Sciences was the first to accept the suggestion after a tough debate at the presidium meeting on 11 February 1988. Both documents, the submitted suggestion and the presidium decision, were quite moderate in their language. When talking over the matter, we should remember that all this took place in 1988, before the joint conference of the creative unions in Estonia, a similar plenum of the creative unions in Latvia and the establishment of Sajūdis in Lithuania. Afterwards more radical views were expressed.

However, as soon as the decision was taken, turbulent political time started in the Baltic republics – it was struggle for economic and political independence that ended with restoration of independence and adoption of Declarations of Independence in spring 1990. The issues of the history of science were set aside; these studies slackened their pace as were regarded as marginal and for a couple of years there was no advancement.

On 29 October 1990, the defense of doctoral (Dr. Habil.) dissertation by Mrs. Helle Martinson finally took place at the Promotion Council of the Latvian Institute of Organic Synthesis in Riga. The dissertation, entitled 'Historico-scientific analysis of the development of chemical sciences and industry in Estonia' (Martinson, 1987; 1990), was a fundamental and problem-oriented work refined with forward visions. The official opponents were Mihkel Veiderma,

member of the Estonian Academy of Sciences (who could not be present due to illness), Professor Maria Shimanska from Riga and Karl Siilivask, member of the Estonian Academy of Sciences: Besides, the leading historian of chemistry from Moscow, member of the International Academy of the History of Sciences professor Yuri Solovev and Dr. Sergei Kara-Murza, and Dr. Dmitri Trifonov were co-opted in the Scientific Council and took part in the dissertation defense session (Martinson, 2010, personal communication).

Availing of the opportunity to have so prominent persons together, it was decided to finally establish the Baltic Coordinating Commission on the History of Science and Medicine and, moreover, the independent association, because at that time the Baltic States had already declared their independence (or a firm desire to regain it). We also invited Professor Juozas Algimantas Krikštopaitis, Vilnius, who was at that time Deputy Chairman of the Lithuanian Association of the History of Science, and docent Kārlis Arons, the recently appointed Director of Pauls Stradiņš Museum of the History of Medicine.

Helle Martinson's dissertation defense evolved into a sort of scientific conference – the respondent answered questions for 45 minutes and afterwards a very interesting discussion arose between professor Kara-Murza and the author of this article (I was the Vice-Chairman of the Promotion Council and chaired the session). The discussion topic was the future of science and innovation processes in the Baltic area, and especially in Estonia.

In particular, Dr. Kara-Murza analyzed the case of Hungary and was pessimistic about the future of science in the Baltics; his vision was that many scientists would emigrate to the West, basic science would be replaced by practically oriented science – environmental monitoring, and the like. The main challenges of the coming years, as he saw the crash of science development, would be creating a mechanism for the survival of science, producing “spores” for future science that would recover in the far future. Under the conditions of market economy, native (local) science would become unnecessary for a long time because the enterprises would be able to get high profit without investing in the progress of science and technology, or, if necessary, the technologies could be transferred from abroad. Referring to the example of Hungary he deduced that the first two generations of manufacturers would not be science-oriented. The Baltics would lose the role of an intermediate between Russia and the West, because that role might only be played if the Baltic science were integrated with Russian science. Russia would not need any intermediary: it would create direct relationship with the Western science. He found the optimistic vision, presented in Helle Martinson's dissertation, to be instantly attractive for the Baltic scientists, but he saw it to be unrealistic.

I joined the discussion on behalf of the respondent and rejected Kara Murza's admonition that studies of historical traditions and heritability could not exert influence on future processes. It is particularly important for small countries, as seen from Estonia's and Latvia's prewar experience that maintenance of traditions, particularly during the transition period, favorably influences the minds of the people. Cautious optimism, with particular reference to Estonia, could be much to the point and it might be quite possible that some day one would speak of a special East European science organization model. I found the dissertation by Helle Martinson to be an attempt to view the history of a scientific discipline, namely chemistry, rather statistically determined and, to a lesser extent, personality-driven. Science, however, is interrelated with both socio-cultural situation in general and individualities, too. What we know is that strong individualities, like Karl Schmidt, Gustav Tamman or Victor Palm, are able to make remarkable changes in the world around us. This is the reason why we should, apart from statistical studies, identify and remember great personalities.

I refer to this discussion, written down in my diary (Stradiņš, 1990), in order to show that in the background of the formation of the Baltic Association of the History and Philosophy of Science a heated social debate was taking place. But Helle Martinson herself soon had, as Director of the newly established Estonian Science Foundation, to work on the national science policy that has proven to be the most efficient in the Baltics. In 2009, the Medal of the Estonian Academy of Sciences was awarded to Dr. Helle Martinson "for longstanding and uncompromising activities towards of the Estonian science organization, building of the research support system and protection of interests of science and scientists" (*Estonian Academy of Sciences Yearbook*, 2010, p. 48).

The dissertation defense took place in the morning and the outcome was positive. In late afternoon we, all representatives of the Baltic countries, gathered together in the Museum of the History of Medicine to establish an association. We had very little time, because our host Dr. Kārlis Arons had to catch the evening train to Moscow and then fly to India. We did not invite to the establishing meeting our Moscow colleagues Solovyev and Kara-Murza, so that we could feel more free and avoid long discussions because of time pressure.

The establishing assembly in the museum brought together 33 historians of natural sciences, technology and medical sciences from Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. My speech of introduction was in French, the working language of the International Union of the History and Philosophy of Science (IUHPS), but many audience members could not follow it and I gave a summary of how we could arrange our joint activities in the Russian language.

Professor Karl Siilivask presented a draft decision (in Russian) on the establishment of the Baltic Association of the History and Philosophy of Science and Juozas Krikštopaitis informed about the organizational matters of the forthcoming XVI Baltic Conference on the History of Science. This conference took place in September 1991, and was the first scientific conference jointly organized by the Baltic historians of science, after responding to the failure of the August putsch the Baltic States had achieved independence. Arons, director of the museum, dealt with the current situation in studying the history of medicine in the Baltic republics. The hurried debate speakers were Karl Martinson, Tālivaldis Vilciņš, Jānis Kristapsons, and Marija Šimanska (Stradiņš, 1991a).

Majority of speakers argued in favor of associating not only historians of science, but also scholars in philosophy and methodology of science. The discussion also dealt with the question whether history of the humanities and social sciences should fall within the scope of the association. It was decided that these should be dealt with as far as they solely concern the general history of scientific centers (universities, academies of sciences, institutes and the like), because the International Society for the History of Philosophy of Science does not categorize them as science disciplines. In after years, when the independence was re-established, the role of national sciences strengthened and that position was categorically revised.

The meeting unanimously adopted a *communiqué* on the establishment of the association:

- 1) *The formation of the Association is announced. The Association is comprised of the three presently existing associations of the historians of natural sciences and the registered members of these associations (at that time around 400);*
- 2) *Each national association keeps its independence and free hand, and engages in cooperation and information exchange with the rest of the association members;*
- 3) *The BAHPS maintains scientific and other kinds of relations with similar foreign association and joins the IUHPS as a single unit [indeed, the BAHPS was accepted as a member of this Union at Zaragoza congress in 1993; the unity of three countries eases the membership payments];*
- 4) *The Committee of BAHPS consists of the chairmen, deputy chairmen and scientific secretaries of the three national associations. The Committee is seated, on a rotational basis, in the country which has organized the recent Baltic Conference on the History of Science. The conferences take place every 2–3 years. During this time the chairman of the national association of the presiding country holds also the position of the BAHPS president;*

- 5) At each Baltic conference BAHPS gives overview of the performed work and considers recommendations for the next period;
- 6) The efforts of the Association to achieve its goals:
 - holding regular Baltic Conferences on the history of science;
 - organization of joint conferences, symposiums and meetings dealing with single science disciplines, history of scientific institutions and societies, general problems of science (philosophy of science, science methodology and sociology, “science policy” and others);
 - coordination of joint publishing on the history of science; the association should seek how to transform the collection of articles Iz istorii estestvoznaniiia i tekhniki Pribaltiki (Acta historiae scientiarum Baltica), issued in Riga, into an Association’s almanac, which expenses, upon an agreement, could be jointly covered by the three republics. Similarly, the collection of articles, issued by P. Stradiņš Museum of the History of Medicine, Iz istorii meditsini will be transformed into Acta historiae medicinae Baltica;
 - encouraging works on the history of natural sciences and technics in the Baltic and the contribution of Baltic or Baltic-born scientists to world science to be published abroad;
 - strengthening contacts with foreign scientists, participation in international congresses and conferences devoted to the history of science and medicine; philosophy and methodology of science, collaboration with organizations that study the Baltic problems (for instance AABS in the USA) (Stradiņš 1991b).

The Riga assembly, with participation of authorized representatives of the societies of the historians of medicine of the three Baltic republics, established the Baltic Association of the History of Medicine, which was incorporated, as an autonomous unit, into BAHPS. Two historians of medicine from Estonia and Lithuania – Viktor Kalnin and V. Siūdikas – attended the establishing assembly. The Baltic Association of the History of Medicine has the same objectives as the BAHPS, though specifically in the field of medicine, and an interest to be accepted a full-fledged member to the International Union of the History of Medicine. The BAHPS Committee was commissioned to elaborate the Statutes of both associations, so that they could be adopted at the XVI Baltic Conference on the History of Science.

The BAHPS Committee was set up and its members were: K. Siilivask, A. Kallikorm, K. Martinson (Estonia), A. Buračas, J. A. Krikštopaitis, L. Klimka (Lithuania), J. Stradiņš, A. Krēslīns, T. Vilciņš (Latvia), V. Kalnin, V. Siūdikas, and K. Arons (representatives of the historians of medicine). The presidency

of BAHPS, until the next conference of the Baltic historians of science, was entrusted to Janis Stradiņš.

The Committee of the Baltic Association of the Historians of Medicine included the following members: V. Kalnin, H. Gustavson (Estonia), V. Siūdikas, E. Miežutavičiute (Lithuania), K. Arons, A. Viķsna (Latvia). Kārlis Arons (1933–2005), director of P. Stradiņš Museum of the History of Medicine, became the first president of the association (Stradiņš, 1991a, b).

The creation of a separate Baltic community was acknowledged by the plenary session of the Soviet National Association of the Historians of Sciences and Technology (Moscow, May 1990, spokesperson Janis Stradiņš). In 1993, at the 19th International Congress of the History of Sciences in Zaragoza, BAHPS was accepted for membership in the IUHPS. The main contact person of BAHPS to IUHPS has been Professor Krikštopaitis, who regularly participates in IUHPS congresses and in the activities of European historians of sciences.

On the whole, the basic principles of the BAHPS and its structure have remained valid throughout these twenty years. What has been changed is that the association president has to be from the country that will host the following conference. Besides, a single edition on the history of science is not issued because each country has a one in national language. Also, the Statutes have never been properly elaborated, and its status remains somewhat unclear.

In 2010, at the Tallinn conference four participants of the first general assembly of BAHPS (H. and K. Martinson, J. A. Krikštopaitis and J. Stradiņš) were present.

In the twenty years since the association's establishment, the main activities have been organization of joint Baltic Conferences on the History of Science, and formal and informal contacts of the leadership. Many tasks that were discussed at the establishing assembly, in 1990, have not been executed. For instance, the history of the Baltic scientific centers has not been written and it has not been properly discussed.

Studies of the history of science still remain a nonprofessional activity, and the involved scholars' main interests are focused on the history of native scientific and higher education establishments. In this sense, the recent years have been productive, though the issued books were in national languages. I wish to mention the outstanding monograph by Arvo Tering on students from the Baltic provinces (Estonia and Latvia) studying in foreign universities in the 16th–18th centuries (Tering 2008). The review of research papers 'Ethnic knowledge and genesis of exact sciences in Lithuania' by Professor Libertas

Klimka (2010) and a reference book of Lithuanian historians of astronomy and physics (Makariūniene & Kivilšiene, 2010) deserve special mention. I have written a monograph that covers the early period of the development of science and higher education institutions in Latvia until the end of the 19th century. The book contains some material about Estonia, since both countries once were the part of the former Livonian Confederation and *Ostseeprovinzen*, and also Lithuania (Vilnius) in relation to its influences in Eastern Latvia – Latgale and the Duchy of Courland (Stradiņš, 2009).

Historians of medicine, also from Lithuania and Estonia, are taking part in issuing *Acta Medico-Historica Rigensia* – the recently published edition (2010) was the ninth after 1991 (altogether 28 volumes have been published since 1958). In Lithuania, *Mokslo ir Technikos Raida*, which has an international editorial board, has been issued since 2008. Four volumes of the Biographical Lexicon of Estonian Scientists have been compiled during 1993–2010 by Karl Siilivask and Karl Martinson (compilation of the last volume is in its final stage) (Siilivask, 2000; 2005). Two volumes have been published in book form, the third volume is ready for printing; yet, so far the funds for printing of this monumental book have not been found.

My expectations before the conference were that it would bring new ideas and suggestions on closer cooperation of the philosophers of science and the historians of science, at least within the Baltic, but also with our colleagues abroad. I was thinking about re-establishing a sort of coordination as it once was done. We should more actively consider the initiative, brought forward by the Belgian historian of science Dr. Robert Halleux, to write a collective work *History of European Scientific Community* that has shown no progress after 2000. Admittedly, this project brought about my intention to write a book on the history of regional science in Latvia. In September 2010 my book was awarded the Baltic Assembly Prize for Science (2010), which evidences the necessity of writing generalizing monographs.

A good example of the kind (although describing not the deeper past, but only some crucial decades) is the book *Baltic R&D Systems in Transition. Experiences and Future Prospects* by Jānis Kristaps, Helle Martinson and Ina Dagyte (foreword by Janis Stradiņš). This book was published with the support of the Swedish Salen and Baltic Sea Foundation and the former Swedish Ambassador in Latvia Professor Andreas Ådahl (Kristaps *et al.*, 2003).

At present time the evolution of the history of science is left to take its own course. Various historical data is continuously accumulated but we have too little

common and comprehensive works dealing with the Baltics as an entirety. We have forgotten the Soviet period, though, regardless of the many negative things, it was favorable for the development of science. At that time, “big science”, although isolated from the West, saw, to a certain extent, the development also in the Baltic republics. This experience, both light and dark, should be summarized in the context of the U.S.S.R. and the world science. In Latvia, many emeritus scientists have written their memories that will be valuable in the future.

We could discuss, both formally and informally, our cooperation and involvement of young scholars and advance some new projects of reviewing past for our common future. And in conclusion some remarks.

I am afraid that the unity of the scientists in the three independent Baltic states is weakening after we joined the European Union. Due to language difficulties we do not feel ourselves anymore as a Baltic community. The local scientific communities have become somewhat atomized. The integration of the local centers, thus far, is oriented towards the EU or the Baltic Sea region, but a considerable part of research is still oriented to each of our own countries. The mediator’s role of scientific centers of the Baltic between West and East, i.e. between Germany and Russia, as it functioned in the 18th–19th centuries (and partly even joining the Soviet regime), is practically missing today.

Science in our independent countries has gained another role; there is little interest to this aspect, and we try to define more the national roots of our regional science or the contribution of local scientists to the world science.

In this respect, the activities and further perspectives of the Baltic Association of History and Philosophy of Science should be discussed and, perhaps, reviewed. I believe, however, that its existence is still useful, taking into account that the concept of ‘the Baltic countries’ is more familiar in the world than every single country. The common past could strengthen the Baltic unity and it makes me to reiterate the suggestion about writing a regional history of science in the Baltic states, all three together.

Not only common conferences should be organized, but also regular exchange of information about the on-going work in each of our countries. The Baltic Association should perhaps set up a common webpage where local events (local conferences, seminars, new books, etc.) should be mentioned. For instance, I found out about the appearance of the book by Arvo Tering only recently and occasionally.

I would like to propose to establish a Baltic award (medal or diploma) for the best works on the history of science, medicine, higher education, etc. They could

be awarded commonly by the BAHPS on decision of a competent common jury, judging commission. The Baltic Assembly Awards, which are presented each year since 1994, miss, as a rule, works on the history of science, since there are a lot of various disciplines: ethnography, archaeology, linguistics, history of arts, of literature, of architecture, and others, which are, perhaps, more recognized as the local history of sciences. Therefore we have to take care about ourselves. Of course, such an award could play some symbolic role.

Also, more attention should be paid to the Nordic countries, especially Finland, as well as Germany, Poland, Russia, and all of us from the Baltic countries have to integrate deeper in the international and European community of historians of sciences.

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Appendix

List of the Baltic Conferences on the History of Sciences

1st Conference – Riga, 6–7 June 1958;

2nd Conference – Tartu, 20–21 January 1959;

3rd Conference – Vilnius, Kaunas, 30 November – 2 December 1959;

4th Conference – Riga, 27–29 November 1962;

5th Conference – Tartu, 18–21 June 1964;

6th Conference – Vilnius, 26–27 October 1965;

7th Conference – Riga, 11–13 December 1968;

8th Conference – Tartu, 1–3 July 1970;

9th Conference – Vilnius, 2–4 November 1972;

10th Conference – Riga, Jelgava, 21–23 April 1975;

11th Conference – Tallinn, Tartu, 18–21 October 1977;

12th Conference – Vilnius, 23–26 October 1979;

13th Conference – Tartu, 17–19 November 1982;

14th Conference – Jurmala, Riga, 25–28 February 1985;

15th Conference – Riga, 29 September – 1 October 1987;

16th Conference – Vilnius, 4–6 October 1991;

17th Conference – Tartu, 4–6 October 1993;

18th Conference – Riga, 17–19 January 1996;

- 19th Conference – Vilnius, Kaunas, 15–17 January 1999;
- 20th Conference – Tartu, 30–31 January 2001;
- 21st Conference – Riga, 13–15 October 2003;
- 22nd Conference – Vilnius, Kaunas, 5–6 October 2006;
- 23th Conference – Riga, 9–10 October 2008;
- 24th Conference – Tallinn, 8–9 October 2010;
- 25th Conference – Vilnius, *in spe*, 2012.