



UNIVERSITY OF ICELAND

# The Year 1991, in Retrospect

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# Communism inevitably leads to Crimes

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- If you want communism, practise it yourself (e.g. kibbutzim): do not impose it on others
  - Communism: imposing a single plan on different individuals
  - Violence therefore inevitable, an integral part of the project
  - Communism, as public ownership of the means of production, doomed because the planners cannot acquire and utilise all the knowledge dispersed among individuals, or their different skills and talents
  - Not only a matter of incentives, but also of information
  - To make the project manageable, individuals have to be changed, manipulated, coerced



Prometheus  
becomes  
Procrustes

# Lenin No Better than Stalin (or Mao)

- 1891–2 Famine: Young Lenin opposed humanitarian aid
- The worse it became, the better
- Telegramme 11 August 1918 to Penza Bolsheviks: 'Hang (absolutely hang, in full view of the people) no fewer than one hundred known kulaks, fatcats, bloodsuckers'
- Cruel, bloodthirsty
- The worst get on top





‘Former  
People’ in  
the Soviet  
Union, 1918



Jews in  
Vienna, 1938

# Tragic Fate of Baltic Nations

- Icelanders sympathetic to small nations under communist tutelage
- First publication of anti-communist book club in 1955: *Baltic Eclipse* by Ants Oras
- Received Dr. August Rei against Soviet protests
- My friend David Oddsson as a law student translated book by Andres Küng on Soviet yoke, in 1973
- Leader of Social Democrats, J.B. Hannibalsson, also anti-communist
- New government in April 1991: Oddsson Prime Minister, Hannibalsson Foreign Minister





Coup Attempt in Moscow, 19 August 1991

# Dinner for Foreign Ministers, 25 August 1991

- Oddsson had quietly to prepare the ground
- Spoke to Manfred Wörner, and the Americans
- Hannibalsson eloquent at political meetings



# Oddsson's Quote from Shakespeare

There is a tide in the affairs of men,  
Which taken at the flood, leads on to fortune.  
Omitted, all the voyage of their life  
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.  
On such a full sea are we now afloat.  
And we must take the current when it serves,  
Or lose our ventures.



Reaffirmation of recognition, 26 August 1991



# The Case for Small States

- The larger the economic unit (i.e. the market), the smaller the political unit can be, without losing the benefit of division of labour
- Economic integration thus facilitates political disintegration: large common market makes small states possible
- Small states usually more homogeneous and cohesive, more trust, less outlays on police and the military
- Small states also more peaceful, for same reason
- Usually bureaucracy more transparent, more spontaneous social monitoring, less corruption
- Small states tend to be more prosperous

# The Problem with Small States

- In international affairs, might is often right
- Athenians to Melians 416 BC: 'The strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must'
- Solution: Alliances both with stronger partners (Americans) and among themselves
- Fortune favours not the biggest battalions, but the best shots
- Salamis 480 BC: Greece against Persia
- Finland 1939, in contrast to the Baltic states
- Israel 1949, against the Arab League

# Memory as Identity



- We are what we remember; our identity is determined by our interpretation of history
- Historical consciousness crucial
- The 1991 collapse of Soviet Union seminal event in world history
- National socialism generally regarded as criminal in nature
- Communism should also be regarded that way: Claimed the lives of 100 million and destroyed the lives of many more
- Crucial never to forget those victims and to keep their memory alive

