

# “A Union of Friendship Between Two Entire Nationalities”: The Estonian Swedes and the German-Swedish Bloc in the 1929 Estonian Parliamentary Elections

*Mart Kuldkepp*

University College London, Gower Street, London, WC1E 6BT;  
United Kingdom; m.kuldkepp@ucl.ac.uk

**Abstract.** This is a study of the formation and 1929 electoral campaign of the German-Swedish bloc, an alliance between two of Estonia’s national minority parties. Its success shows that by the end of the 1920s, the two groups’ shared interests were able to transcend even entrenched historical divisions. Nevertheless, the Swedish party’s controversial collaboration with “the Barons” stirred debate and Estonian parties tried to use the controversy to split the Swedish vote. The allies responded by attempting to attract voters from other ethnic groups, including Estonians. The article highlights the importance of minority-to-minority relations in interwar parliamentary democracies and emphasises the significance of minority parties appealing to diverse voter groups.

**Keywords:** Estonian Swedes, Baltic Germans, Estonian politics, 1929 Estonian parliamentary elections

Research on interwar-era Estonian national minority politics has traditionally been dominated by discussions of the 1925 cultural autonomy law: its pre-history, enactment, effects, and international importance.<sup>1</sup> Yet, important as this law was for some of Estonia’s national minorities – the Germans and the Jews – it did not prove to be that for others who failed to make use of its provisions.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, even the minorities that did establish a cultural self-government did not consider the 1925 law to be an end-all settlement of minority affairs in Estonia, leaving no need for further political activism. In fact, the parties representing Estonian national minorities continued their involvement in national-level Estonian politics well after 1925 and up until the end of Estonia’s inter-war democratic period in 1934.

This article seeks to contribute to our knowledge of post-1925 Estonian national minority politics by focusing on a case of cooperation between two of its minority parties: the German and the Swedish. The German-Swedish bloc, as it came to be known ahead of the 1929 parliamentary elections, thus formally brought together two different minority groups in Estonia: the Baltic Germans, who famously had made use of the provisions of the 1925 cultural autonomy law, and the Estonian Swedes, who had not.

Informal collaboration between German and Swedish politicians had already played a significant role in previous Estonian parliaments, including in preparations of the cultural autonomy law draft.<sup>3</sup> When formalised in 1929, however, it proved to be a controversial development. Up until that point, the relations between the two minority groups reflected the pre-independence socioeconomic situation, in which the Baltic German community, dominated by the landed nobility and the urban middle class, had been in a very different position compared to the poor Swedish-speaking farmers and fisherman on Estonia’s west coast and islands. Starting in 1929, the two groups nevertheless decided to join forces, prioritising common interests as national minorities in the Estonian state over historical grievances that the Swedes might have held against the Germans.

- 1 See e.g., D. Smith. *Non-Territorial Autonomy as a Baltic Contribution to Europe Between the Wars*. – *The Baltic States and Their Region: New Europe or Old?* Ed. by D. Smith. Rodopi, Amsterdam, 2005, 211–226; M. Housden, *Cultural Autonomy in Estonia: One of History’s “Curiosities”?* – *The Baltic States and Their Region*, 227–249; D. Smith. *Estonia: A Model for Inter-War Europe?* – *Ethnopolitics*, 2016, 15, 89–104.
- 2 For an analysis of the Swedish case, see M. Kuldkepp. *The Estonian Swedish National Minority and the Estonian Cultural Autonomy Law of 1925*. – *Nationalities Papers*, 2022, 50, 5, 923–941.
- 3 See M. Kuldkepp. *The Estonian Swedish National Minority and the Estonian Cultural Autonomy Law of 1925*, 933–935.

It is important to note that the German-Swedish political cooperation – and inter-minority political cooperation in interwar Estonia more broadly – was framed by a broader issue that affected all three of Estonia’s main minority parties. The Swedish party (The Swedish People’s Union, *Svenska Folkförbundet*, SFF), the German party (The Baltic German Party in Estonia, *Deutschbaltische Partei in Estland*, DPE), and the Russian party (The Russian National Union in Estonia, *Русский национальный союз в Эстонии*, RNSE) all had experienced a decline in their vote share over time,<sup>4</sup> which provided a natural impetus for them to explore possibilities of cooperation both in the parliament and during electoral campaigns.

In the first part of the article, I will give an overview of how the cooperation between SFF and DPE came into being, and how they engaged their own ethnic voter bases ahead of the 1929 parliamentary elections. The second half is devoted to the German-Swedish bloc’s electoral propaganda from three different angles. Firstly, I will discuss the political priorities of SFF and DPE as they were communicated to their two respective voter bases, as well as the propaganda methods and techniques used to encourage turnout. The two chapters thereafter focus on the other two prominent themes in the campaign: that of the reluctant Swedish voter, and that of appealing to voters beyond the Swedish and Baltic German communities. The conclusions section will bring together the most important findings and consider the broader significance of this research.

I will argue that the importance of this case study extends beyond the realm of Estonian national minority politics. While most research on national minorities during the interwar period has concentrated on majority–minority dynamics, the story of the German-Swedish bloc helps to highlight the importance of examining minority-to-minority relationships, particularly within the framework of parliamentarism and electoral campaigns. Moreover, it shows that we should also study the endeavours of national minority parties to garner support from voters belonging to other minority groups, and even from those in the ethnic majority.

4 More detailed, overarching accounts of the Estonian minority parties’ electoral and parliamentary experiences exist only for the Baltic German case. See M. Garleff. *Ethnic Minorities in the Estonian and Latvian Parliaments: The Politics of Coalition. – The Baltic States in Peace and War, 1917–1945*. Ed. by V. S. Vardys, R. J. Misiunas. The Pennsylvania State University Press, University Park, London, 1978, 81–94; M. Garleff. *Die Parteioorganisation der baltischen Deutschen und ihre Beteiligung an der parlamentarischen Arbeit von 1920 bis 1934. – Die deutsche Volksgruppe in Estland während der Zwischenkriegszeit und aktuelle Fragen des deutsch-estnischen Verhältnisses*. Hg. von B. Meissner, D. A. Loeber, C. Hasselblatt. Baltica, Hamburg, 1996, 47–61.

Finally, it is worth pointing out that while my telling of the story of the German-Swedish bloc in 1929 takes the German point of view into account, it nevertheless mainly focuses on the Swedish perspective. Partially, this has to do with the fact that the alliance was significantly more controversial for the Swedes than for the Germans, so its legitimation strategies can be more usefully studied from the Swedish end. But more broadly, it also reflects my longer-term interest in Swedish politics in interwar Estonia, little-studied as it currently is.

## NATIONAL MINORITY POLITICS AND POLITICAL FRAGMENTATION

I have previously argued that Estonian Swedish involvement in national-level Estonian politics had begun to decline already in the early 1920s after a high point in 1917–1919,<sup>5</sup> and that this process was subsequently accelerated when the notion of “cultural autonomy” was given an unsuitable (for the Swedes) interpretation in the 1925 Estonian cultural autonomy law. The Swedish community’s political efforts were thereby deprived of a long-standing slogan and an overarching purpose.<sup>6</sup> The strategy of cooperating with the Baltic Germans towards the end of the 1920s subsequently amounted to an attempt to reboot Swedish politics. It was not an unsuccessful attempt, but its success was moderated by the 1930 death of the long-standing Estonian Swedish national leader Hans Pöhl (1876–1930), and the fact that the democratic period in interwar Estonia came to an end just four years later.

After having held one seat in the Estonian Temporary Diet (*Ajutine Maanõukogu*, 1917–1919), the Estonian Constitutive Assembly (*Asutav Kogu*, 1919–1920) and the first Estonian parliament (*Riigikogu*, 1921–1923), SFF had failed to gain representation in the second Estonian parliament (1923–1926). The immediate reason behind this failure was SFF’s decision to suspend their earlier electoral cooperation with the Christian People’s Party (*Kristlik Rahvaerakond*, KRE) and to participate in the elections with their own lists. This was a risky move, since the number of the Swedish voters (about 8000) was barely enough to reliably cross the electoral threshold, assuming a turnout of 60–70%.

5 M. Kuldkepp. The Political Choices and Outlooks of the Estonian Swedish National Minority, 1917–1920. – *National Identities*, 2021, 23, 4, 409–431.

6 M. Kuldkepp. The Estonian Swedish National Minority and the Estonian Cultural Autonomy Law of 1925, 923–941.

Indeed, SFF failed to gather the requisite number of votes and their candidate, Hans Pöhl, was not elected.<sup>7</sup>

However, at the same time, SFF's difficulties related to a broader development, which was the increasing political fragmentation of the Estonian Swedish voter base. Not only SFF with its "national" platform, but also KRE, the two Estonian agrarian parties (the Farmers, or *Põllumeestekogud*, and the Settlers, or *Asunikud*), the liberal People's Party (*Rahvaerakond*), Labour Party (*Tööerakond*) and the Social Democrats (*Sotsiaaldemokraadid*, SD) had sympathisers in the small Estonian Swedish community.

This fact of life did not chime well with SFF's ideal that all Swedish people should consolidate behind one "national" candidate. SFF itself, too, was clearly not comfortable with the role of being one political party amongst others, instead preferring to see itself as the political wing of the Estonian Swedish national movement. Already in a January 1918 article published in SFF's newspaper *Kustbon*, SFF chairman Hans Pöhl had written that SFF "does not want to be a papacy, like many other parties in this country", but rather a free union to "advance our people's situation in all ways – with freedom and prosperity as goals."<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, it still had to function as a party, especially during election campaigns. Amongst other things, this meant needing to carefully consider its electoral alliances: whichever other political party SFF decided to cooperate with, it had to work both in terms of electoral arithmetic and in being acceptable to Swedish voters.

Solving this problem on a national basis was not easy, since from the point of view of the Estonian Swedish national movement, their closest natural allies – the Estonians – had disappeared by becoming the titular nationality<sup>9</sup> in the country and splitting themselves between various parties with different political views. Working with one of these parties carried the risk of alienating some Swedish voters for political reasons, but also the more general risk that a majority party would not take Swedish minority concerns seriously. This risk could be avoided by instead cooperating with one or more other minority parties, but voter perceptions had to be managed even then, as minority-minority relations were not unproblematic either.

7 M. Kuldkepp. The Estonian Swedish National Minority and the Estonian Cultural Autonomy Law of 1925, 935–937.

8 H. Pöhl. Revolutionen och svenskarne i Estland. – *Kustbon*, 14.01.1918.

9 In this article, the word 'nationality' is used to refer to ethnic nationality, rather than citizenship.

This was particularly the case with the politically (and financially) most powerful national minority party, the right-wing conservative-leaning Baltic German Party in Estonia (originally *Deutsche Partei in Estland*, after autumn 1919 *Deutschbaltische Partei in Estland*, DPE), which represented the Baltic Germans, the former elites of the Baltic Provinces. DPE had existed since 1918, and its membership included most German intellectuals in Estonia, as well as ethnically German bankers, merchants, and industrialists. Many of its influential members were former nobles (“Barons”), who had been associated with the pre-1917 monarchist Estonian Constitutional Party (*Konstitutionelle Partei in Estland*). As recently as 1919, DPE, too, had not yet fully accepted the idea of an Estonian nation state.<sup>10</sup> After autumn 1919, this attitude changed, and DPE was renamed, but it was still viewed with suspicion by many Estonians and also many Swedes. Even though the Baltic Germans now found themselves in the same position, of a disadvantaged minority, that the Estonian Swedes had occupied throughout their modern history, their old reputation was hard to shake off.

By 1929, the latest revision of DPE’s programme had been passed at the end of September 1928. It stated that DPE was working for the benefit of good relations between all nationalities in Estonia, encouraged participation in national and societal life with the goal of keeping Germanness (*Deutschtum*) alive in Estonia, promoted equal rights for Estonians and Germans, and represented the Baltic Germans’ particular interests, especially concerning their rights under the 1925 cultural autonomy law, and regarding the 1919 land reform. During the latter, the Estonian state had requisitioned most formerly Baltic German owned lands, which DPE regarded as illegitimate.<sup>11</sup> At the same time, a significant number of Estonian Swedish farmers had acquired land under the same land reform, meaning that there was an obvious conflict of interest between the two groups.

What DPE clearly shared with SFF, however, was the need to come up with new vote-seeking strategies. Over the ten years of independent Estonia, DPE had been experiencing a steady electoral decline. From gaining four seats and about 20,000 votes in the 1920 parliamentary elections, it had gone to three seats and 16,000 votes in 1923, and to two seats and 13,000 votes in 1926.<sup>12</sup> It was for this reason that it approached

10 M. Graf. *Parteid Eesti Vabariigis 1918–1934 koos eellooga (1905–1917) ja järellooga (1934–1940)*. Tallinn, TPU kirjastus 2000, 244–248.

11 M. Graf. *Parteid Eesti Vabariigis*, 248–249.

12 M. Garleff. *Ethnic Minorities in the Estonian and Latvian Parliaments*, 88–89.

SFF about a possible electoral alliance between the two parties already ahead of the next elections on 15–17 May 1926.

### A SWEDISH PRELUDE: THE 1926 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

For SFF, too, success in 1926 looked even less likely than in 1923, since electoral rules had by then been changed to the disadvantage of smaller parties. Only those that managed to get at least two candidates elected would enter Estonia's 100-seat parliament (an electoral threshold of 2%). It was therefore unthinkable to set up independent lists again, but the question of what to do instead sparked a political debate in *Kustbon*. An obvious option was to form an electoral bloc with one or more other national minority parties. This position was supported by signature E. G. (Erik Gahlnbäck, 1868–1956, the Swedish consul in Tallinn), who argued that “it can only be another minority party, since the others, according to our experience, do not have the same understanding for minority questions.”<sup>13</sup>

Gahlnbäck's views carried weight since he was close to SFF's Tallinn-based main figures Hans Pöhl and Nikolaus Blees (1883–1941) who were certainly more German-friendly than the average Swedish voter. In fact, this was something that had long been found problematic by both Estonian political forces and also some Swedes, especially those in the rural areas.

Already in summer 1919, these tensions had boiled over when the Tallinn newspaper *Sotsialdemokraat* castigated *Kustbon* for apparently having published criticism of the Estonian SD party and their anti-German fervour which had been triggered by the so-called Landeswehr war. *Sotsialdemokraat* suggested that by defending “the Barons”, *Kustbon* was “violating the opinion of the large majority of the small Swedish people” who had suffered under the Barons as much as the Estonians.<sup>14</sup> This intervention was in turn supported by a letter from Vormsi schoolteacher Joel Nyman (1859–1933), printed in the same newspaper. Nyman agreed that German-friendly views in *Kustbon* only belonged to Pöhl and *Kustbon*'s editor Blees, whereas the large majority of the Swedish people were just as bitter towards “the Barons” as were the

13 Erik Gahlnbäck. Riksdagsvalen stå för dörren. – *Kustbon*, 20.01.1926.

14 [Cunax]. Ajakirjandus. Parunid ja Eestimaa rootslased. – *Sotsialdemokraat*, 01.08.1919.

Estonians.<sup>15</sup> For his part, Blees countered in *Päevaleht* that *Kustbon* had both condemned the Landeswehr and praised the bravery of Estonian soldiers, and that Nyman was in fact just personally dissatisfied, since *Kustbon* had refused to print his anti-German rhetoric in unchanged form.<sup>16</sup>

In 1926, when electoral collaboration with DPE was put on the table, Joel Nyman once more warned against this course of action. He argued that the political, social and economic interests of the Germans were too different from those of the Swedes, and anyone who knew the views in the Swedish settlements could predict that such an alliance would end with electoral failure.<sup>17</sup> Yet others rejected the principled positions of both Nyman and Gahlnbäck, and stated that the chosen ally should guarantee the Swedish representative the freedom to act independently in minority matters, but as long as this demand was fulfilled, it did not play a big role who the alliance partner was. Instead, the choice should be made for a party that was likely to bring the Swedes the largest number of votes.<sup>18</sup>

SFF had received alliance proposals from both KRE and DPE, and its leadership now had a decision to make. On 15 February, it was announced in *Kustbon* that after taking in the views of some leading persons in Swedish villages, SFF had concluded that since the largest number of Swedish votes came from the rural population, who had strong religious views, the most suitable course of action was again to conclude an alliance with KRE, who had “already before been an ally, no matter how natural an association with a minority party otherwise would be.”<sup>19</sup> Pragmatic considerations thus proved to be decisive. Although it was not publicly mentioned, it seems likely that the Swedish voters’ distaste towards “the Barons” also played a role in DPE’s offer being rejected.

Renewed electoral cooperation with KRE in 1926 was to proceed on the basis that the Swedish candidate had a free hand in all “national” (i.e., pertaining to the Swedish minority) questions, and that only broad religious and cultural interests would be the common denominator between the two parties. These terms were accepted by KRE and Hans

15 J. Nyman. Eestimaa rootslaste seisukoht. – Sotsialdemokraat, 28.08.1919.

16 Kirjad toimetusele. – Päevaleht, 24.09.1919.

17 J. Nyman. Utdrag ur brev. – Kustbon, 24.02.1926.

18 Riksdagsvalen. – Kustbon, 03.02.1926.

19 Valkampen börjar. – Kustbon, 17.02.1926.

Pöhl was put up as the second candidate on the list in the district of Läänemaa.<sup>20</sup>

To some extent, SFF's alliance with KRE had to be defended. In a letter to *Kustbon*, signature “-n” argued in a rather left-wing spirit that “our starving coastal population which lives literally from hand to mouth can never be fooled into giving their votes to church moguls and factory magnates just to get one man into the parliament.” The only way forward was supposedly a union with other national minorities.<sup>21</sup> The reply that “-n” received was that SFF, having considered the matter, could not find themselves equal to the other national minority parties, for even “the Germans, the only ones who share our interests, are both culturally and materially long ahead of us.” But it was also important to understand that the Swedes were going to have nothing to do with “church moguls and factory magnates”, since the Swedish representative would be free to vote as he pleased in the parliament.<sup>22</sup> Another issue of *Kustbon* contained a whole-page announcement “To the elections!” which once again explained the nature of the alliance between SFF and KRE, and included “the main principles of our Swedish program”: specifically to “culturally, politically and economically secure and further the Swedish race’s existence and advancement.”<sup>23</sup>

Outside of turnout, SFF's main concern was that the poorer strata of Swedish voters could be seduced by the promises of Estonian left-wing parties. *Kustbon* therefore printed alarmist warnings for Swedes not to let any “beautiful speeches” convince them to betray Swedishness.<sup>24</sup> Instead, the community had to “unite for Swedishness”, not sell Swedish votes for “the false promises of agitating strangers” and vote “for the men of Swedishness, who best know our conditions and therefore can best understand us.”<sup>25</sup> For the first time in Estonian Swedish politics, even special propaganda leaflets were printed. These were written by Joel Nyman and called for every Swedish man and woman to act during the coming elections “like a noble, right-thinking member of our community” so that “the current and coming generations should bless your memory.”<sup>26</sup>

But nothing helped, and Hans Pöhl failed to be elected in 1926. SFF's agreement with KRE apparently stipulated that if only one

20 Ibid.

21 Märket -n, skriver. – *Kustbon*, 24.02.1926.

22 [X]. Riksdagsvalen. – *Kustbon*, 10.03.1926.

23 Upp till valen! – *Kustbon*, 12.05.1926.

24 Valagitationen. – *Kustbon*, 28.04.1926.

25 [X]. Riksdagsvalen. – *Kustbon*, 10.03.1926.

26 Upp till valen!: RA (Riksarkivet, Stockholm), Hans Pöhl, Vol 11.

candidate of the first two on the list was elected in the Läänemaa electoral district, the other candidate would be invited to join the parliament later, in the second half of the mandate period. However, it seems that KRE was unwilling to recognise this agreement – if indeed it formally existed – and Hans Pöhl was granted entry to the parliament only towards the very end in October 1928.<sup>27</sup> In a letter to Nikolaus Blee, KRE’s delegate Hendrik Anniko (1867–1954) denied that there was any such obligation and claimed to have decided to leave the parliament for health reasons, allowing Hans Pöhl – a younger man – to step in instead.<sup>28</sup> Although SFF was therefore granted a seat, at least *Kustbon* was sceptical that “these couple of months” would give enough of an opportunity “to even lift a finger in the nationalities question, especially since the government now around the end of the year has its hands full with the budget and other urgent laws.”<sup>29</sup>

Pöhl nevertheless actively participated in the work of the parliament. For example, he suggested amendments to the law on the trade regulations of skippers, which could also affect Estonian Swedish skippers.<sup>30</sup> During debates on the upcoming state budget, he drew the parliament’s attention to the difficult situation of the Swedish coastal population, since they, mainly fishermen, had been granted little or no land in the Estonian land reform. Pöhl also brought up the question of Naissaar (Nargö), an island which had had its Swedish population evacuated during the First World War. Finally, he raised the issue of social assistance to sailors, including Estonian sailors abroad.<sup>31</sup> It is therefore fair to say that although Pöhl’s time as a member of parliament was limited, he did what he could to draw attention to questions important to Estonian Swedes.

27 Svenskarnas representant H. Pöhl gått in i riksdagen. – *Kustbon*, 10.10.1928; De politiska partierna i Estland. – *Kustbon*, 30.01.1929.

28 Anniko to Blee, 16.03.1928: SRA, Hans Pöhl, Vol II.

29 [Öbo]. Tankar angående de stundande riksdagsvalen. – *Kustbon*, 13.02.1929.

30 III Riigikogu protokollid: 1.–8. istungjärg. 7. istungjärg, protokoll nr 188 (29.11.1928). Riigi Trükikoda, Tallinn, 831.

31 III Riigikogu protokollid: 1.–8. istungjärg. 8. istungjärg, protokoll nr 211 (08.02.1929). Riigi Trükikoda, Tallinn, 349–352.

FORMATION OF THE GERMAN-  
SWEDISH BLOC IN THE RUN-UP  
TO THE 1929 PARLIAMENTARY  
ELECTIONS

When the elections to the fourth Estonian parliament in 1929 began approaching, SFF found itself once again faced with the question of whether to continue work with KRE or to find another cooperation partner. An editorial in *Kustbon* argued that continued cooperation with the former ally would have been possible only if the Swedish candidate was placed first on the list in Läänemaa. But if this was not possible, it had to be kept in mind that the Swedish representative had to focus on “the struggle for our Swedish language and our nationality”. Therefore, it was above all the other national minority parties that came into question as cooperation partners.<sup>32</sup>

In the next issue, Erik Gahlnbäck weighed in once again and called for the establishment of a broad political union of Estonian national minorities, consisting of Swedish, Russian, Latvian and Jewish representatives who would jointly make their voice heard in the parliament. According to Gahlnbäck, a Swedish alliance with other minorities was in fact a kind of moral duty, or Swedish voters would need to feel ashamed for having supported “foreign party Baltic German interests” with their national votes.<sup>33</sup>

Another voice in *Kustbon* disagreed and thought that it would be difficult “to find with the Swedish countryfolk sympathy for Estonia’s Germans, or, more exactly, the Baltic nobility” because the soul of the people was still “too deeply wounded.” The author also thought the Swedes did not feel much sympathy for the Russians or the Jews. Instead, he recommended the establishment of some kind of a hybrid political organisation, possibly under the name The Swedish People’s Party and Liberal Farmers.<sup>34</sup> Yet others thought that it had been above all the Estonians with whom the Swedes had long fought for shared goals and aspirations, so the most natural course of action was to conclude an alliance with SD (since “their politics do not allow for any form of oppression”)<sup>35</sup> or with some “liberal centre party.”<sup>36</sup>

32 [Kustbo]. Några tankar angående de stundande riksdagsvalen. – *Kustbon*, 16.01.1929.

33 E. Gahlnbäck. Kring riksdagsvalen. – *Kustbon*, 23.01.1929.

34 [Öbo]. Tankar angående de stundande riksdagsvalen.

35 J. P.-I. Riksdagsvalen och vi. – *Kustbon*, 21.02.1929.

36 Ett ord i valfrågan. – *Kustbon*, 27.02.1929, 30.

This time, however, SFF’s leadership sided with Gahlnbäck, and accepted that since the last two elections with their own lists and together with KRE had failed to produce the desired result, it was worth trying out the third possibility: to take up the offer of cooperation, which the Baltic German party had already made to SFF twice.<sup>37</sup>

The architect behind the DPE proposal was Baltic German lawyer and politician Werner Hasselblatt (1890–1958), who had been a Baltic German representative in the parliament since 1923 and also the author of the final version of the 1925 national minorities’ cultural autonomy law.<sup>38</sup> For DPE, too, finding an ally was a necessity, especially after they experienced a drop in the number of seats held from three to two in 1926: DPE gathered about 13,000 votes, but three seats would have needed about 14,500. Having only two seats meant serious disadvantages in the work of the parliament, as it took three seats to be able to form a faction and therefore have the right to nominate candidates for election to the committees.<sup>39</sup> After the 1926 elections, DPE delegates had been able to circumvent this disadvantage only by forming an ad hoc coalition with the Russian representatives.<sup>40</sup>

The idea of working with the Swedes, the Jews, and the Russians on a more permanent basis to jointly defend national minority interests had been under consideration by DPE leadership for years. The Russians as the most numerous minority group in the country were especially interesting, and starting in 1920, DPE had sought collaboration and possibly joint lists with RNSE. The results were limited, however. In June 1923, Hasselblatt explained to his DPE colleagues that the cooperation of Russian delegates could not be counted on, since they had positioned themselves left of the centre. Instances of joint position-taking in the parliament, while not altogether absent, remained rare.<sup>41</sup>

This left the Swedes as the second-best option for DPE. Unlike the Jews, the Swedes had a history of being represented in the Estonian parliament, and at least some voices in SFF were friendly towards the idea of working with DPE. With the help of Swedish votes, DPE thought it possible to reclaim a third seat in the parliament, while helping a Swedish representative get elected. They therefore approached SFF once more,

37 [Kustbo]. Några tankar angående de stundande riksdagsvalen.

38 About Hasselblatt, see J. Hackmann. *Von der estländischen Kulturautonomie zur nationalsozialistischen Bevölkerungspolitik. – Deutschbalten, Weimarer Republik und Drittes Reich.* Bd 2. Hg. von M. Garleff. Böhlau Verlag, Köln, Weimar, Wien, 2008, 71–107.

39 V. Aman. *En bok om Estlands svenskar 4. Kulturhistorisk översikt.* Kulturföreningen Svenska Odlingens Vänner, Stockholm, 1992, 629.

40 M. Garleff. *Ethnic Minorities in the Estonian and Latvian Parliaments*, 90.

41 M. Garleff. *Die Parteiorganisation der baltischen Deutschen und ihre Beteiligung an der parlamentarischen Arbeit von 1920 bis 1934*, 53–54.

in autumn 1928, with an offer of cooperation.<sup>42</sup> In January or February 1929, SFF's leadership accepted this offer, and rejected a similar one from KRE, which came as an unpleasant surprise to their former ally.<sup>43</sup>

The negotiations between DPE and SFF were led on DPE's side by Hasselblatt and the former German national minister Hermann Koch (1882-1957), and on the side of SFF by Pöhl and Bles.<sup>44</sup> The outcome was a written agreement<sup>45</sup> that specified an intention to collect about 3,000 Swedish and 13,000 German votes from about 30,000 eligible voters.<sup>46</sup> In the districts of Läänemaa and Harjumaa, SFF could put up purely Swedish lists with Swedish candidates. DPE was guaranteed the first, third and fourth places in Tallinn and the first place on the list in Tartu; SFF the second place in Tallinn, the first in Haapsalu and so on. The agreement also stipulated that if an elected candidate was to resign from his seat, a candidate of the same nationality would be sought as a replacement. Once in the parliament, the two parties expected to conclude a further alliance with RNSE. Other than that, the delegates of both parties were to be free "to act and to vote according to personal conviction, and the instructions that their parties, i.e., their voters have given them". The agreement also included an account of the shared political views between the two:

The political aims and wishes include the aspiration for equal rights for nationalities, the struggle [against] corruption, against the reduction of minority rights, for freedom of religious organisations, for law and order; for edifying, positive work in all matters of the state, especially for the securing and maintenance of the independence of the republic; and work for the free chances of development of the Swedish and the German nations in Estonia in the cultural and economic fields.

It is perhaps notable that the DPE–SFF agreement includes no reference to cultural autonomy, testifying to the decreased salience of this issue for the Estonian Swedish community after 1925.<sup>47</sup>

Of the Swedish candidates, Hans Pöhl was placed as the first name in Läänemaa's and Nikolaus Bles as the first on Harjumaa's list.<sup>48</sup> To

42 M. Garleff. *Ethnic Minorities in the Estonian and Latvian Parliaments*, 88–89.

43 Anniko to Pöhl, 03.03.1929; SRA, Hans Pöhl, Vol II.

44 Der deutsch-schwedische Wahlblock. – *Revaler Bote*, 09.03.1929; M. Garleff. *Ethnic Minorities in the Estonian and Latvian Parliaments*, 88–89.

45 Överenskommelse. *Vereinbarung*; SRA, Hans Pöhl, Vol II.

46 *Eur Wahlarbeit*, RA (Eesti Rahvusaarhiiv), ERA f. 1000, n. 1, s. 44.

47 About this decline, see M. Kuldkepp. *The Estonian Swedish National Minority and the Estonian Cultural Autonomy Law of 1925*, 936–938.

48 *Riksdagsvalen*. – *Kustbon*, 14.03.1929.

help the Swedish vote, the Germans decided to not put up their own list in Läänemaa at all.<sup>49</sup>

In *Kustbon*, the pre-election debate was summarised as follows:

All national minorities, including the Swedes, include different elements that, strictly speaking, cannot and do not need to belong to one and the same political party. The common denominator are the cultural and national matters. It is therefore now fully natural, as well as necessary that the Swedes build an electoral alliance on this basis.

Purely Swedish lists [will be put up] in those constituencies where the main numbers of our voters live, that is in Läänemaa and Harjumaa. These lists are a part of our alliance with the other national minorities and guarantee us our mandate. All the misgivings that have been raised against such an electoral bloc should then be irrelevant, since it is not a question of joining any party, but rather that of concluding an electoral alliance.<sup>50</sup>

The German contentedness over a successful deal can be illustrated with an article published by the editor of the Baltic German newspaper *Revaler Bote* and a former DPE member of parliament Axel de Vries (1892–1963). He stated that DPE’s and SFF’s joint submission of candidate lists would not just be the beginning of their electoral cooperation, but also the first stepping stone towards close future collaboration between the Swedish and the German nationalities in Estonia. De Vries was convinced that the German community would warmly welcome the new German-Swedish bloc, and agree that as Germanic tribes, the two were indeed natural allies. Many German families had some Swedish blood in their lineage, or even originated from Sweden, and some Baltic German families had Swedish branches. The culture of both nationalities resided on the same basis – Lutheran Protestantism – and both shared the same cultural interests as national minorities in Estonia, as well as the hope that the Republic of Estonia would also develop “into a true lawful home country” (*zu einem wahren rechtlichen Heimatstaat*) for them.<sup>51</sup>

The Estonian responses will be covered below, but some Swedish newspapers also took note of the formation of the German-Swedish bloc. On 6 May, conservative *Aftonbladet* wrote that the Swedish and German peoples in Estonia had formed an electoral alliance, and congratulated Pöhl on the occasion.<sup>52</sup> On the same day, liberal *Dagens Nyheter* printed a longer article, which likewise relayed the news, but also

49 De Vries to Pöhl, 07.03.1929: SRA, Hans Pöhl, Vol 11; V. Aman. En bok om Estlands svenskar 4, 629.

50 Riksdagsvalen. – *Kustbon*, 06.03.1929.

51 A. de Vries. Der deutsch-schwedische Wahlblock. – *Revaler Bote*, 09.03.1929.

52 *Utlandsnytt i sammandag*. – *Aftonbladet*, 06.05.1929.

raised the question of whether the Germans and the Swedes had enough in common, given that the Germans were on average a very cultured urban population, while the Swedes were simple fishermen and farmers.<sup>53</sup>

## APPEALING TO THE NATIONAL BASES

Most Swedish electoral propaganda was focused on practical policy matters. The informational material that was published in *Kustbon* ahead of the elections included a fairly thorough and balanced overview of Estonian political parties, meant to be read by those Swedes who did not speak Estonian and therefore “either completely lacked an understanding of the parties or have a distorted picture of them.”<sup>54</sup> Hans Pöhl himself published a series of articles on “Our most immediate tasks” through three issues of *Kustbon*, laying out SFF’s priorities in detail. In addition to his usual emphasis on the need to improve Swedish primary schools, he also discussed the need to develop Estonian Swedish navigation, and to establish a retirement home for Estonian Swedes.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, an extract from SFF’s programme was published and distributed as a leaflet listing the party’s intentions in the areas of education, agricultural support for Swedish farmers and fishermen, restoration of the Swedish settlement on Naissaar, and higher wages for the rural proletariat. Beyond that, the leaflet stated that SFF was working for good and just relations between the nationalities, closer cultural contacts with the Nordic countries and so on.<sup>56</sup>

The German voters got their most thorough expose of DPE’s views in a separate booklet, which to some extent also discussed German national minority issues but was in fact mainly devoted to attacking the Estonian parties. It started off by claiming that Estonia’s hard-won freedom from Bolshevik Russia had increasingly been lost to the egoism of the political parties, which undermined the freedom of everyone who did not want to live under party dictatorship. Because of the time spent on constant party quarrels, the laws being passed by the parliament were of low quality and in frequent need of amendments. The parties were also stifling private enterprise, always increasing the role of the state

53 B. W. Svensk-tysk allians i Estland. – Dagens Nyheter, 06.05.1929.

54 De politiska partierna i Estland. – Kustbon, 30.01.1929.

55 H. Pöhl, Våra närmaste uppgifter I–III. – Kustbon, 16.01.1929; Kustbon 23.01.1929; Kustbon 30.01.1929.

56 Svenska Folkförbundets styrelse. Vad vill Svenska Folkförbundet?: RA, ERA f. 1000, n. 1, s. 44.

in the economy, and eventually seeking to take over state resources for themselves. DPE was careful to emphasise that the real problem was not parliamentarism as such, but rather the low quality and egoism of the parliamentarians. Even substantial changes to the constitution and the electoral law would not be able to fix this problem completely. The important work that had been carried out by German delegates in the first years of the Estonian state was no longer possible, as individual members of parliament counted for little, and the parties for more. Both the Estonian and German press, as well as some politicians, had been openly critical of the decline of the reputation of the parliament, but the parties themselves were unlikely to do much to improve the situation.<sup>57</sup>

In DPE’s view, it was in fact likely that everything would get worse during the upcoming mandate period, as there was a threat of a long-term left-wing coalition of “materialistic” parties, i.e. SD and the Settlers. Due to pressure from the public, which was judging the situation correctly, there would also be decisive discussions of constitutional and electoral law reform, during which it was important for German interests to be represented. Some opportunities for improvement might also arise, for example for the expansion of German cultural self-government. In any case, selfless work for nationality and home had to be put above any parties, and DPE was ready to promote this view. But whether the German-Swedish bloc had to remain content with only three seats, or could count on four or more, depended on all Germans turning out to vote.<sup>58</sup>

In both SFF’s and DPE’s messaging to their ethnic bases, concrete issues important for the respective national minority made some appearance but were certainly more prominent in the Swedish case. DPE’s view, even when discussing policy, was significantly broader and critically engaged with national-level Estonian politics as a whole. DPE was also much more tuned to the spirit of the age and ready to harness the then-widespread popular discontent with the constitution, the electoral law, and parliamentary democracy. The problem of the national voter base splitting their vote between different Estonian political parties could thus be counteracted by broad criticism of party politics as such, creating a potential winning formula for DPE and by extension for the whole German-Swedish bloc.

57 *Wie wir die Lage sehen. Was wir tun konnten und tun wollen. Werbeschrift des deutsch-schwedischen Wahlblocks für die Parlamentswahlen 1929. Estländische Druckerei Aktien-Gesellschaft, Reval, 1929, 1–9; 15–16.*

58 *Wie wir die Lage sehen, 10–11; 15–16.*

In terms of propaganda methods and techniques, DPE brought a higher degree of professionalism – and doubtlessly more substantial sums of money – than SFF had ever commanded. Perhaps the most impressive example was DPE’s illustrated weekly magazine *Estländische Wochenschau*, which was launched in March 1929 and was initially meant to be published only up until the elections. However, it proved to be popular enough to survive until the end of the year and come out for several months also in 1930. *Estländische Wochenschau* was a richly illustrated publication focused on light, entertaining reading that also included articles by DPE politicians, election news and political calls to action that were meant to target less willing voters.<sup>59</sup> It also provided introductory articles about Sweden, the Estonian Swedish community, and Hans Pöhl for the benefit of the German reader.<sup>60</sup> DPE made use of its network of supporters all over Estonia to distribute the journal, which cost ten cents a copy.<sup>61</sup>

DPE also produced two different types of large propaganda posters. One of them was in colour with the text “Choose the right way” (*Valige õiget teed. Väljden rätta vägen*) in Estonian and Swedish,<sup>62</sup> the other one in black and white, bearing the slogan “For law and order” (*Õiguse ja korra eest. Für Recht und Ordnung*) in Estonian and German.<sup>63</sup> Other propaganda techniques were also discussed, including propaganda on balloons, posters on the side of trams and buses, audio propaganda through loudspeakers in the streets, propaganda speeches in theatres during the intermission and so on.<sup>64</sup> It is unclear whether any of this came to pass, but there were certainly some campaign events, such as one on 9 May that included a lecture by Hasselblatt, various musical numbers, and free entrance.<sup>65</sup> Another genre that was employed was political agitation poems, one of which was published on a leaflet reminding people to vote that was meant to be distributed during the election

59 Examples of political content: H. Koch. Kulturpräsident zu den kommenden Wahlen. – *Estländische Wochenschau*, 07.04.1929; A. de Vries. Für Volkstum und Heimat, für Ordnung und Recht! – *Estländische Wochenschau*, 21.04.1929; C. Schilling. Für unsere Heimat. – *Estländische Wochenschau*, 28.04.1929; W. Wrangell. Krisis des Parlamentarismus und Wahlpflicht. – *Estländische Wochenschau*, 05.05.1929; W. Hasselblatt. Stark sein! Zum Geleit des Wahlbeginns. – *Estländische Wochenschau*, 12.05.1929.

60 Schwedens Gemeinsinn. – *Estländische Wochenschau*, 14.04.1929; Die alten Schweden als Kulturvermittler. – *Estländische Wochenschau*, 14.04.1929; Die Schweden in Estland. Ein Stamm der sich selbst treu bleibt. – *Estländische Wochenschau*, 14.04.1929; Hervorragende Führer des Schwedentums. – *Estländische Wochenschau*, 12.05.1929.

61 Sehr geehrter Herr... 14.03.1929: RA, ERA f. 1000, n. 1, s. 44.

62 Valige õiget teed: RA, ERA f. 1000, n. 1, s. 44.

63 Õiguse ja korra eest: RA, ERA f. 1000, n. 1, s. 44.

64 Plan für die Wahlarbeiten: RA, ERA f. 1000, n. 1, s. 44.

65 Vortrag in Anlass der bevorstehenden Wahlen mit nachfolgenden musikalischen Darbietungen: RA, ERA f. 1000, n. 1, s. 44.

days.<sup>66</sup> The papers surviving in DPE’s archive reveal that several other poems had also been composed and considered.<sup>67</sup>

In spreading the propaganda, DPE made efficient use of their network of local supporters. Personally addressed letters were dispatched, asking each of them to use their influence to counteract any damaging criticism during the elections, to call on all Germans to vote, and to encourage other kinds of positive collaboration with DPE’s electoral committee.<sup>68</sup> To persuade reluctant voters in urban areas, DPE employed volunteer doorknockers who were meant to visit German and German-friendly households in person, gauge their opinions, and distribute written and oral propaganda.<sup>69</sup> In the towns, DPE was afraid of possibly losing votes to the homeowners’ party (*Üleriiklik Majaomanike Seltside Liit*), so it was important to warn German voters against them.<sup>70</sup>

In the countryside, too, DPE was interested in approaching voters who were not ethnically German but exhibited some form of German identity or German-friendliness. DPE personally contacted German pastors whose congregation members were not on the German national list, but nevertheless seemed to support Germanness through their membership in a German congregation. The pastors were informed that these voters were regarded as important for the Swedish-German bloc’s success, and that there were ongoing attempts to influence them. Even though DPE recognised that the pastors themselves had to remain politically neutral, they nevertheless requested their goodwill towards these activities, if not outright assistance.<sup>71</sup>

Some evidence also exists of German involvement in helping to draft Swedish propaganda. DPE’s surviving archive includes drafts of two leaflets in German clearly targeting Swedish voters. The first one asked the readers whether they want their children to lose their mother tongue, betray their people, and change their nationality – if not, it was imperative to vote for the German-Swedish bloc. The other one admonished the Swedish voters to think about the glorious days of Gustavus Adolphus and Charles XII and, again, vote for the German-Swedish bloc.<sup>72</sup> DPE also planned to establish a special committee that would produce a series of propaganda articles for *Kustbon*, and publish

66 Haben Sie schon gewählt?: RA, ERA f. 1000, n. 1, s. 44.

67 Memento, Die Pirogge, Vision, Die Beutelratte, Entrefilet: RA, ERA f. 1000, n. 1, s. 44.

68 Sehr geehrte gnädige Frau!, 15.03.1929: RA, ERA f. 1000, n. 1, s. 44.

69 Arbeit der Strassenvertrauensmänner: RA, ERA f. 1000, n. 1, s. 44.

70 Die Partei der Hausbesitzer und sonstiger Eigentumsschützer wirbt mit allen Mitteln!: RA, ERA f. 1000, n. 1, s. 44.

71 Sehr geehrter Herr Pastor, 15.03.1929: RA, ERA f. 1000, n. 1, s. 44.

72 Schweden!: RA, ERA f. 1000, n. 1, s. 44.

two whole issues of *Kustbon* as an electoral magazine, sent to all Swedish voters by post for free.<sup>73</sup> In the end, this plan was not put in practice for unknown reasons.

In general, the surviving sources known to me provide only very limited information about the inner dynamics (including differing priorities, or even disagreements) of the German-Swedish bloc. The in-person contacts between SFF's and DPE's leaderships in Tallinn must have been lively during the electoral campaign, but no discussion notes seem to survive if they were kept at all.

On 11 May, as the election days had already begun, Axel de Vries wrote in *Revaler Bote* that DPE's and SFF's electoral propaganda had been more intense than ever before: nearly every German voter had been contacted and called on to participate in the elections, and a good degree of enthusiasm had been generated for the vote. But the Estonian parties had also been unusually energetic and had used other means beyond pure political agitation to engage with voters, including music and cinema. De Vries interpreted this as a sign that the purely political interest in elections was no longer high enough. In some locations in the countryside, whole congregations had requested DPE not to send them any political agitators or had boycotted all campaign events.<sup>74</sup>

## PERSUADING THE SWEDISH VOTER

SFF's decision to go to the country together with DPE was and remained highly controversial. Immediately, critical voices were raised by Estonian parties and in the Estonian press against this merger with "the Barons". Not least, SFF's old ally KRE publicly claimed that the reason why their alliance had ended was that SFF had demanded Hans Pöhl have a higher place on the list, and once this was denied, Pöhl had joined the German party out of spite. SFF protested against these allegations.<sup>75</sup>

Other Estonian parties also sensed weakness. The liberal People's Party's organ *Postimees* wrote on 24 April that Pöhl had "sold his poor coastal people to the Barons" and was now busy working to ensure that all Swedish votes go to the Germans. However, he supposedly still hadn't figured out how to explain to the poor fishermen what they have in common with the former nobility. It was also unclear what Pöhl himself

73 Plan für die Wahlarbeiten: RA, ERA f. 1000, n. 1, s. 44.

74 A. de Vries. In letzter Stunde. – *Revaler Bote*, 11.05.1929.

75 Õiendus: SRA, Hans Pöhl, Vol 11.

would get out of this situation, now that he was undermining SFF’s prospects of success.<sup>76</sup> Labour Party’s *Vaba Maa* and SD’s *Rahva Sõna*, as reported by *Kustbon*, went a step further and claimed that it was in fact their respective parties that were the true defenders of Swedish interests, now that the Swedish political leaders had betrayed their people by concluding an alliance with the Baltic Germans. *Vaba Maa* quite openly stated that it would be wise for the Estonian centre parties to seek closer contact with the Swedish voters.<sup>77</sup>

This was a credible threat. The Labour Party indeed went ahead and produced a leaflet in Swedish, the text of which was seemingly directly inspired by the political debate in *Kustbon*. It argued that SFF’s decision clearly “did not overlap with the general opinion among the Swedish voters”, since the Germans “do not want to learn anything from history, or to forget any of it” and had in the parliament mainly struggled to get back their requisitioned land holdings, something that was not in Swedish interests as they had in part been distributed to the Swedish farmers. Accordingly, the Swedes had much more in common with the Estonians, and as they now deliberated which Estonian party to vote for, the Labour Party (described as a “liberal centre party”) should be the obvious choice.<sup>78</sup> The Settlers and SD also produced electoral propaganda in Swedish, similarly highlighting that by having joined the “Barons”, SFF was no longer representing the interests of the poorer population. At the same time, they also emphasised the benevolence that the Estonians had supposedly always shown to the Swedes and other national minorities.<sup>79</sup>

*Kustbon* hit back by reminding its readers that Estonia’s famously benevolent cultural autonomy law had in fact come about largely thanks to Hans Pöhl, who had fought hard to achieve the passing of this now so famous piece of minority legislation.<sup>80</sup> *Kustbon* also reiterated that the Estonian parties were after the Swedish votes not because of their benevolence, but in order to strengthen their own outcome and weaken that of SFF.<sup>81</sup> The Settlers’ Party and the Labour Party had even prepared Swedish translations of their lists, while SFF’s was only in Estonian.<sup>82</sup> *Kustbon* therefore warned the Swedish voters to be on their guard, in

76 [Peetrus]. Kihutuskõnelejate tüüpe. – Postimees, 21.04.1929.

77 [Kustbo]. De förestående riksdagsvalen. Genmäle. – *Kustbon*, 21.03.1929; Ur den estniska pressen. – *Kustbon*, 21.03.1929.

78 Estlandssvenskarna och de förestående riksdagsvalen: SRA, Hans Pöhl, Vol 11.

79 Våra motståndare och vi. – *Kustbon*, 24.04.1929.

80 Ibid.

81 Varför vilja esterna ha svenska röster? – *Kustbon*, 24.04.1929.

82 Giv akt! – *Kustbon*, 08.05.1929.

case someone tried to give them another list of candidates to vote for,<sup>83</sup> and called for Swedish unity for the sake of national interest:

Those who do not want to vote for a Swedish candidate must be seen almost as traitors to Swedishness. Every sound reason says that if the Swedish votes are split here and there, we will be weakened and no party will have any use of this handful of Swedish votes, which will disperse in various directions. Our strength is only in unity.<sup>84</sup>

The German-Swedish bloc also produced a leaflet, calling on all Swedes to “prove the truth of our Swedishness”, and not let any strangers (i.e., other parties) come between them and “the mother of Swedishness”. With the help of religious allusions to Judas and Cain, the leaflet once again reassured the voters that the Swedes have their own lists, even as members of the German-Swedish bloc, and their representatives have a free hand to protect Swedish interests without any pressure from others. It also invoked Charles XII at the battle of Poltava and concluded with the slogan “Be Swedish!” (*Varer svenske!*).<sup>85</sup>

Divisions in Swedish ranks were real enough. On 21 April, Joel Nyman from Vormsi wrote to Pöhl, first reminding him that Nyman had always been very distrustful of the political union that SFF had now entered into with DPE, and secondly highlighting the need for additional propaganda efforts on the island. A Swedish former communal politician Johan Berggren (1897–1943) had decided to run on the list of SD and was now going around slandering Pöhl for supposedly having been bought by the Germans. Nyman thought that a good number of people believed him. Therefore, it was necessary for someone – preferably Pöhl – to come to Vormsi and organise some agitation meetings, otherwise the result was going to be worse than expected. But as an opponent of the alliance, Nyman did not want to organise these meetings himself.<sup>86</sup>

It is unclear whether any agitation meetings took place, but the German-Swedish bloc did produce a leaflet specifically to address the brewing trouble on Vormsi. Signed by “Vormsi voter” (probably Nyman), it attacked the leaflet by SD, which had suggested that SFF’s alliance with DPE was somehow equal to the reestablishment of the previous centuries’ serfdom. SD had also put Johan Berggren in the third place in their list in Läänemaa, and a couple of other Swedes lower on the same list. But unlike what the socialists were claiming in the leaflet,

83 Några anvisningar angående riksdagsvalen. – Kustbon, 02.05.1929.

84 “Många bäcker små göra en stor å”. – Kustbon, 27.03.1929.

85 Svenska Folkförbundets styrelse. Till Estlands svenska kvinnor och män: RA, ERA f. 1000, n. 1, s. 44.

86 Nyman to Pöhl 21.04.1929: SRA, Hans Pöhl, Vol II.

Berggren was anything but a wise and knowledgeable man, and neither did the other two have anything to recommend them. At the previous elections, the socialists had not gained any seats in Läänemaa outright, and to scrape together enough votes at least one mandate, they had had to top up their result with votes from other districts. Now, they were even less likely to get any seats, as the local party had split, with some of its leaders declaring that they are not going to vote for well-off landed farmers from Vormsi.<sup>87</sup>

DPE was probably well-aware of the difficulties their Swedish colleagues were facing, but from their point of view, the cooperation with SFF was still an unequivocal net positive and helpful also when targeting German voters. DPE claimed that making the new German-Swedish bloc a success was yet another reason why it was important for all Germans to turn out to vote: they could not disappoint the Swedes who had put their trust in the Baltic Germans, and now had to be delivered the seat that they had been promised.<sup>88</sup> It also suggested that the outcome of the elections would determine whether the Germans could count on the cooperation of the Swedes in the future.<sup>89</sup>

However, the alliance could also energise the German voter base in other ways. In their instructions, DPE's door-knockers were told to present the collaboration with SFF as a moral achievement, and evidence that the Swedes believed in German success.<sup>90</sup> De Vries wrote in *Revaler Bote* that the existence of the Swedish-German bloc amounted to something of a confirmation, delivered by the Swedes, that the German party was not alone and isolated but had the ability to cooperate with another political organisation.<sup>91</sup>

## BROADENING THE ELECTORAL APPEAL

The Swedish-German bloc did not remain content to target only ethnically German and Swedish voters. It also showed an interest in attracting the other minority nationalities in Estonia: the Jews, the Latvians, and the Russians. As put by a call for action distributed to

87 Sanningens ord: RA, ERA f. 1000, n. 1, s. 44.

88 Sehr geehrte gnädige Frau!, 15.03.1929: RA, ERA f. 1000, n. 1, s. 44; An alle Wähler: RA, ERA f. 1000, n. 1, s. 44.

89 Briefentwurf für personelle Aufmunterung zu einer aktiven Wahl und Webarbeit: RA, ERA f. 1000, n. 1, s. 44.

90 An die Herrn Vertrauensleute: RA, ERA f. 1000, n. 1, s. 44.

91 A. de Vries, In letzter Stunde.

German voters in Tartu: “German, Swedish and other serious citizens of other nationalities may only vote for the German-Swedish list.”<sup>92</sup> Given that the German-Swedish bloc was the strongest political force in Estonia representing national minority interests, it could indeed credibly claim that a vote for them would go further in helping the cause of all national minorities than any alternative. But at the same time, the German-Swedish bloc went on an offensive against the Estonian political parties, intending not only to hit back at their criticism, but also to pick up some Estonian protest votes. To appeal to the Estonians, it tried to capitalise on the then-widespread criticism of Estonian party politics, and their own – arguably – non-party status.

The contents of the German-Swedish bloc’s propaganda directed at other minority nationalities varied depending on the intended audience. The certainly most business-like example was the leaflet in German meant for Tallinn Jews. It stated that the upcoming parliament was likely to reform cultural autonomy, possibly to the detriment of Jewish rights, and that the German candidate in Tallinn, Hasselblatt, was going to resist any such attempts. The leaflet further explained that the Baltic German party stood for free commerce and trade, resisting the expansion of state-owned enterprises and state control of the economy, which was threatening private business. No mention was made of DPE’s collaboration with SFF.<sup>93</sup> Although only the Tallinn leaflet survives, it is possible that Jewish voters in other Estonian towns were separately targeted.

The leaflet meant for Latvians made a lengthier case: it argued that the Estonian Latvians had this far been voting for various Estonian parties, splitting their vote, and gaining nothing. Now, it was time to realise that Latvians are a national minority just as the Swedes, Germans, and Russians, even if not one numerous enough to be able to have their own representative. To join forces, the Germans and the Swedes had founded an alliance, which was to defend all Estonian minorities not just in the parliament but also internationally, even at the League of Nations in Geneva. It was also the best defender of the rights of Latvians, so voting for it was an act of both self-interest and solidarity with other minorities.<sup>94</sup> Interestingly, this leaflet also happens to survive in a draft in German, which includes the additional statement that the German-Swedish bloc is fighting for “a human-worthy existence also for the

92 An die Wähler!: RA, ERA f. 1000, n. 1, s. 44.

93 Wir wenden uns an unsere Revaler Mitbürger jüdischer Nationalität!: RA, ERA f. 1000, n. 1, s. 44.

94 Uzsaukums. Igaunijas latviešu veletāji!: RA, ERA f. 1000, n. 1, s. 44.

poorest of nationalities in Estonia”.<sup>95</sup> This sentence was omitted in the printed version, possibly out of consideration for the feelings of Latvians.

The German-Swedish bloc’s most left-wing piece of electoral propaganda was its leaflet for Estonia’s Russian voters. Just as with the Latvians, it cautioned them against making the usual mistake of voting for the constantly squabbling Estonian political parties – strength was in the unity of all minority nationalities. The programme, as presented in the leaflet, included equal protection of the rights of Russians, Latvians, Germans and Swedes with no second- or third-rate citizens; a reduction of taxes by reducing government expenditure; struggle against corruption; compulsory religious education in schools; protection of the poor by export controls on foodstuffs and reduction of prices; cheap loans for poor peasants regardless of nationality; and protection of private property and subsidies for poor farmers especially in lean years.<sup>96</sup> Another leaflet specifically targeted ethnically Russian voters in Pärnu, as RNSE had not put up a list there. It noted that the Estonian parties had repeatedly shown themselves indifferent or even hostile to the interests of the national minorities, so it made sense for Russians to vote for the German-Swedish bloc, which stood for the equality of all citizens.<sup>97</sup>

The most obvious differences exist between the Jewish and the Russian leaflets, with the former emphasising free trade and commerce, and the latter arguing for export controls and state subsidies for the poor. What remains constant across all these propaganda materials, however, is the idea that the German-Swedish bloc represents all minority nationality interests, providing an alternative to the Estonian parties, which were unwilling or unable to do so. Furthermore, an extension of this argument was used in propaganda targeting ethnically Estonian voters, making the case that even the latter’s rights and national interests were not well-served by the Estonian parties.

The initiative to gain some Estonian votes originated in DPE, rather than SFF. Early on, DPE had laid out plans to publish booklets in Estonian, append an Estonian call to action to an issue of *Estländische Wochenschau* (this did not happen), and to put up posters in Estonian. DPE even had a special register (*Mitläuferkathaster*) of ethnic Estonians who were likely to vote German and could be targeted by door-knockers.<sup>98</sup> DPE also considered deploying the slogan “A German doesn’t cheat, says

95 Aufruf. Lettische Wähler: RA, ERA f. 1000, n. 1, s. 44.

96 Русские, Латыши, Немцы и Шведы: RA, ERA f. 1000, n. 1, s. 44.

97 Выборы в IV. Государств. Собрание: RA, ERA f. 1000, n. 1, s. 44.

98 Plan für die Wahlarbeiten: RA, ERA f. 1000, n. 1, s. 44.

even the Estonian” (*Ega saks ei petta, sagt selbst der Este*),<sup>99</sup> but there is no evidence of it actually being used in the campaign. What does survive is a copy of a small poster in Estonian, bearing the words “Begone self-interest, begone party conflicts, vote for law and order, vote for neutral, state-minded men from the German-Swedish bloc”.<sup>100</sup>

The German-Swedish bloc’s approach to Estonian voters is most concisely described in a political strategy proposal by Dr Wilhelm Georg Lotz (1884-?), a local DPE activist from Ambla in Järvamaa. Lotz recommended that the Swedish-German bloc target not only half-Germans (*Halbdeutsche*), but also ethnic Estonians with posters and calls to action in Estonian. He thought that these elections were especially opportune for gaining their votes, because newspapers were full of criticism of Estonian parties. Propaganda in Estonian launched about 1-2 weeks before the elections (not too early, or the Estonian parties would have time to respond) could therefore result in gaining some Estonian votes. Lotz proposed that the messaging should emphasise the state-minded constructive work done by German delegates, contrasting it with the demagoguery and corruption of Estonian parties. He also thought that the Swedish connection was helpful, and that allusions should be made to the “good old Swedish times”, the good Swedish-Estonian relations and the upcoming visit of the Swedish king Gustav V (1858–1950) to Estonia. Even the previously unknown name “German-Swedish bloc” would doubtlessly have a positive effect on Estonians.<sup>101</sup>

DPE and SFF seemingly agreed that Estonian voters should be approached from this Swedish angle and produced a leaflet in Estonian. Its contents, worded as if only coming from SFF, explained that its cooperation with DPE was limited, and that SFF had its own lists in Läänemaa and Harjumaa. It also stated that the Estonian Swedes wanted to advance good relations between all nationalities in Estonia, and to function as a bridge connecting Estonia to Sweden and to the other Nordics. As suggested by Lotz, the leaflet also invoked the memory of the “good old Swedish times” and the soon-to-come visit of the king of Sweden to Estonia in June. Finally, it highlighted Swedish achievements in religious and church legislation and their support for the right of Moravian Brethren (*Evangeelne Vennastekogudus*) congregations to own the land under their prayer houses. In conclusion, it claimed that the Swedes did not participate in party conflicts, and all other citizens

99 *Ega saks ei petta*: RA, ERA f. 1000, n. 1, s. 44.

100 *Kadugu omakasupüüded!*: RA, ERA f. 1000, n. 1, s. 44.

101 Lotz to DPE electoral committee, 18.04.1929: RA, ERA f. 1000, n. 1, s. 44.

who were against party squabbles and cared about the future of Estonia should therefore also vote for the Swedish list (without mentioning the Germans).<sup>102</sup> Another leaflet in Estonian also separately addressed the Moravian Brethren and their supporters.<sup>103</sup>

The German-Swedish bloc’s most serious attempt at convincing the Estonian voters was a 14-page booklet entitled “The Autocracy of the Parties or the Freedom of the Citizens?”.<sup>104</sup> First of all, it explained that the Estonian state was in crisis due to its electoral law, which did not allow the voter to vote for a specific candidate, but only for a party list. Conversely, the delegates in the parliament were primarily representing their party interests, not those of the voters. Furthermore, there was no institution of the head of state who could dissolve the parliament, thus handing the “party men” free reign for three years until elections came around again.<sup>105</sup> The booklet then went on to argue that the parties’ unlimited power made them want to regulate everything and destroy the freedom of the citizens. This meant passing many low-quality laws that needed to be regularly reviewed and amended, creating unnecessary work and confusion. Overregulation was also ruining the economy: instead of helping the people to grow their capital, the state was establishing its own firms to compete with private enterprisers, making the state, as per DPE politician Carl Schilling (1872–1941), “the only true capitalist in Estonia”. The high taxes affected the poorer strata the most, and a large part of state income came from alcohol monopoly, which was bad for public health. But this was necessary because party political interests meant the state was in constant need of money. Furthermore, while competing for a chance to be in the government, the parties had caused an endless series of governmental crises. At the same time, state bureaucracy was slow and inefficient, with widespread nepotism and corruption, but nothing could be done about it since the parties did not want to lose the votes of the 50,000 civil servants and their families.<sup>106</sup>

The booklet also pointed out that similar thoughts had already been repeated by senior Estonian political leaders and published in Estonian newspapers. The 1920 constitution, passed by the Constituent Assembly in a half-revolutionary mood, carried some of the blame for the situation. But the main culprit were still the parties, who had not been able to resist the attraction of unlimited power and had become unions

102 Eesti rootslased ja Riigikogu valimised: RA, ERA f. 1000, n. 1, s. 44.

103 Vennaste koguduste pooldajatele!: RA, ERA f. 1000, n. 1, s. 44.

104 Kas erakondade isevalitsus või kodanikkude vabadus?: RA, ERA f. 1000, n. 1, s. 44.

105 Ibid., 1–2.

106 Ibid., 2–7.

of political businessmen. What Estonia needed instead were “neutral, honest and state-focused men” who were ready to enact the true will of the people. Naturally, they needed to be found somewhere outside the parties, i.e., in the German-Swedish bloc, which was “no party in a political sense”, since both the German and the Swedish community included people with various political views. Nevertheless, there was no infighting, because the German-Swedish bloc was not a party, but rather “a union of friendship between two entire nationalities” (*kahe terve rahvuse sõprusliit*). As another nationality, the Estonians, too, deserved to be liberated from party dictatorship and should therefore give their votes to “law, order, and unity”, or in other words to the German-Swedish bloc.<sup>107</sup>

As is readily apparent, the propaganda directed at possible Estonian voters drew heavily on the populist sentiments – especially criticism of parliamentarism and political parties – that were already widespread in the Estonian public sphere. It is difficult to point out the exact parallels and role models for the ideas that it contains, and Estonian populism in the 1920s presently remains an understudied phenomenon. But in all likelihood, there is little that is original about it, except perhaps for the idea that the German-Swedish bloc somehow offered a credible alternative to political parties as such.

The total numbers of leaflets printed in different languages is unknown, but some surviving distribution data indicates that they were fairly substantial. For example, the local DPE chapter in Võru requested 500 copies of German, 500 of Estonian, 100 of Jewish, and 100 of Latvian leaflets, some of which would be sent on to Valga.<sup>108</sup> Whether this propaganda worked in the sense of persuading any of the other minority nationality or Estonian voters to give their vote to the German-Swedish bloc is even harder to say. Yet the intention to collect 16,000 votes as specified in the agreement between DPE and SFF was certainly fulfilled, so it is not out of the question that it could have had some effect.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 8–12.

<sup>108</sup> Glasenapp to Hartje, 22.03.1929: RA, ERA f. 1000, n. 1, s. 44.

## THE OUTCOME OF THE ELECTIONS

The elections to the fourth Estonian parliament (mandate period 1929–1932) took place on 11–13 May 1929. Under their rather populist slogan “For law and order!” the German-Swedish bloc succeeded in gaining three seats in the parliament, one of which went to Hans Pöhl. The elected German representatives were Carl Schilling and Werner Hasselblatt. The total number of votes cast nationally was about 500,000 (about 70% turnout), out of which the Swedish-German bloc collected 16,371.<sup>109</sup>

Without a doubt, the alliance had been a success for both parties. Firstly, Hans Pöhl made it back into the parliament, which was a crucial victory for SFF. Secondly, from DPE’s point of view, help from the Swedes allowed their number of gained votes to go up by 20.9% compared to the result in 1926. The certainty of three seats thus ensured them the ability to form a faction and vote on committee membership.<sup>110</sup> But at the same time, the victory had been hard-won. In their letter of thanks to DPE, SFF leadership wrote that the campaign had been particularly hard for the Swedes, as the Estonian parties had not spared any means to split the German-Swedish bloc. But despite this “often provocative and banal propaganda”, SFF had succeeded in consolidating the Swedish voters behind their candidate and now hoped for good cooperation in the parliament.<sup>111</sup>

Ultimately, the ethnic voters had delivered. As one of local SFF activists, schoolteacher Alexander Samberg (1899–1987) wrote to Pöhl from Vihterpalu, it might have been possible to get more Swedish votes, had the cooperation with the Baltic Germans not been so controversial and possibly suppressed turnout. However, the Estonian parties – SD, the Settlers, the Labour Party, and KRE – had failed to get more than 1,000 Swedish votes altogether, which was not a particularly substantial reward for the intense agitation that they had driven in the Swedish settlements. As Samberg put it, the decision to build a bloc with DPE had been bold, but the right step to take, and the Swedish people could regard it as “a renaissance in their political life”.<sup>112</sup>

In Pöhl’s own letter of thanks to voters published in *Kustbon*, he stated that the Swedish people in Estonia had “again shown proof of their unity and loyalty, and made it clear that they want to live as a

109 Riksdagsvalen. – *Kustbon*, 16.05.1929.

110 M. Garleff. Die Parteiorganisation der baltischen Deutschen, 55; M. Garleff. Ethnic Minorities in the Estonian and Latvian Parliaments, 89.

111 SFF to DPE’s leadership, undated: SRA, Hans Pöhl, Vol II.

112 Samberg to Pöhl, 17.05.1929: SRA, Hans Pöhl, Vol II.

Swedish nation, as a Swedish race that does not want to be dissolved in foreign elements.”<sup>113</sup> De Vries in *Revaler Bote*, too, was pleased with voters recognising that they were not voting in a “party election”, but rather supporting the German cause as a whole, which had made voting for the German-Swedish bloc a national duty for the Germans.<sup>114</sup>

The cooperation between Pöhl and the German delegates continued in the parliament. Thanks to having three seats, the German and Swedish representatives could form a faction and were represented in a total of seven committees. A further parliamentary alliance was formed with the two Russian representatives. They had also had a hard campaign, with many of RNSE’s voters poached by SD and one seat lost compared to the 1926 results.<sup>115</sup>

The German-Swedish cooperation continued even outside of the parliament. From 1929 onwards, SFF’s representatives were present at DPE’s party congresses.<sup>116</sup> On Hasselblatt’s initiative, Pöhl and Hasselblatt also jointly participated in a conference on minority rights (Europäischer Nationalitäten-Kongress) in Geneva in August 1929. In September of the same year, they furthermore planned to engage a representative from Åland and present a joint address at a meeting of the League of Nations, hoping that this would force Sweden to take the lead in advocating the formation of a special national minorities committee.<sup>117</sup> But it was already too late: in January 1930, Hans Pöhl died unexpectedly after a short illness. Nevertheless, DPE kept their promise, and another Swedish representative, Mathias Westerblom (1888–1942), was allowed to replace Pöhl in the parliament.<sup>118</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

This article has considered the origins and formation of the Swedish-German bloc, and its successful participation in the 1929 Estonian parliamentary elections. The success did not come easy. The Swedish decision to cooperate with “the Barons” was seen as controversial both by Estonian political parties and some Swedish voters. Perceiving an

113 H. Pöhl. Tack för trogen vakt! – Kustbon, 24.05.1929.

114 A. de Vries. In letzter Stunde.

115 M. Garleff. Die Parteiorganisation der baltischen Deutschen, 55; M. Garleff. Ethnic Minorities in the Estonian and Latvian Parliaments, 89–90.

116 M. Garleff. Die Parteiorganisation der baltischen Deutschen, 55; M. Garleff. Ethnic Minorities in the Estonian and Latvian Parliaments, 89.

117 Hasselblatt to Pöhl, 08.08.1929: SRA, Hans Pöhl, Vol 11.

118 Riksdagen. – Kustbon, 06.02.1930.

electoral liability, the Estonian parties invested significantly in trying to split the Swedish vote. However, the German-Swedish bloc's intense propaganda efforts aimed at encouraging turnout and keeping national unity allowed it to overcome this risk and to attain the result that was originally planned.

The convergence between a dominant minority group associated with the pre-1918 upper class – the Baltic Germans – and the tiny and poor Swedish minority, which at least in the pre-independence period had certainly had more in common with the Estonians than their Baltic German overlords, serves as an important indication that by 1929, the idea of jointly defending national minority interests had acquired enough salience in Estonia that it was possible to overcome even very real divisions between the different minority groups.

That such joint interests indeed existed, and regardless of the respective minority's engagement with the 1925 Estonian cultural autonomy law, is already proven by this case of successful electoral cooperation. The problem of the political fragmentation of the voter base and siphoning of votes to the Estonian parties affect not only SFF, but also DPE and the RNSE. In the latter's case, it could not be counteracted in the 1929 elections, resulting in further loss of support. In the case of SFF and DPE, mutually beneficial cooperation became a way of at least temporarily resurrecting both.

The other interesting facet of the German-Swedish bloc's 1929 electoral campaign were the Estonian parties' attempt to poach Swedish voters, and, vice versa, the German-Swedish bloc's efforts to attract voters from other minority nationalities, even some Estonians. This meant positioning the bloc as a kind of anti-party and taking advantage of the then-widespread criticism of Estonian parliamentary politics. It is tempting to characterise this side of the campaign as something of a sideshow: if any Swedish votes were indeed lost due to the controversial character of the alliance, they seem to have been just about compensated by votes gained from the other groups. Yet, in the end, it is hard to tell how significant the electoral difficulties might have been, had this compensatory mechanism not existed.

The significance of this case study reaches beyond the history of Estonian national minority politics. It shows that while most research on national minorities in the interwar period focuses on the majority-minority dynamics, attention also needs to be paid to minority-to-minority relations, not least in contexts of parliamentary democracy and electoral campaigns. Furthermore, attempts on the part of national

minority parties to appeal to voters from other minority groups and even the country's ethnic majority, are a notable phenomenon worth studying in its own right.

„KAHE TERVE RAHVUSE  
SÕPRUSLIIT“: EESTIROOTSLASED JA  
SAKSA-ROOTSI BLOKK 1929. AASTA  
RIIGIKOGU VALIMISTEL

*Mart Kuldkepp*

Artikli eesmärk on anda lisa teadmistele Eesti vähemusrahvuspoliitika kohta 1925. aasta vähemusrahvuste kultuurautonoomia seaduse vastuvõtmisele järgnenud perioodil. Käsitlus keskendub kahe tolleaegse vähemusrahvuserakonna, Baltisaksa Erakonna Eestis ja Rootsi Rahva Liidu koostööle 1929. aasta Riigikogu valimiste eel ja ajal. See saksa-rootsi blokk, nagu seda peatselt nimetama hakati, oli Eesti ajaloos ainulaadne valimisliit, kuna tõi ametlikult kokku kaks vähemusgruppi: baltisakslased, kes olid 1925. aasta seaduse alusel asutanud kultuuriomavalitsuse, ning rannarootslased, kes seda teinud ei olnud.

Konkreetselt põhjuseks valimisliidu asutamise taga oli mõlema erakonna ühine huvi häälesaaki suurendada. Rannarootslastel oli juba mitme valimistsükli vältel olnud raskusi, et oma esindaja Hans Pöhl üleüldse Riigikogusse jõuaks, baltisakslaste häältest oli jätkunud viimasel ajal vaid kaheks mandaadiks. Fraktsiooni asutamise õigus ning sellega kaasnevad privileegid (sh võimalus hääletada komisjoniliikmete valimisel) algasid aga alles kolmest mandaadist, mida kahe erakonna koostöös näis olevat võimalik saavutada. Mõlemad olid varemgi teiste poliitiliste jõududega koostööd teinud või teha püüdnud – baltisakslased eestivenelaste erakonnaga, rannarootslased Kristliku Rahvaerakonnaga –, kuid erinevatel põhjustel polnud see täielikult ootustele vastanud.

Rootsi Rahva Liidu otsus loobuda varasemast koostööst Kristliku Rahvaerakonnaga ning luua selle asemel ühine rinne „parunitega“, oli vastuoluline ning selle mõistsid hukka nii eesti erakondade häälkandjad kui ka osa rootslastest valijaid, kelle jaoks oli koostöö baltisaksa erakonnaga kui varasemaid rõhujaid esindava poliitilise jõuga jätkuvalt vastuvõetamatu. Mitmed eesti erakonnad uskusid omakorda, et rootsi valijaid on võimalik üle meelitada ning seetõttu investeeriti märkimisväärselt

agitatsiooni (sh rootsikeelsetesse propagandamaterjalidesse) rannarootsi asundustes. Saksa-rootsi bloki omapoolsed intensiivsed ja rahaliselt kulukad propagandapingutused, et säilitada saksa ja rootsi kogukondades rahvuslik ühtsus ja tagada kõrge valimisaktiivsus, võimaldasid selle riski siiski minimeerida. Nõnda jäi eesti erakondade häälesaak rootslaste seas tõenäoliselt üpris kesiseks, saksa-rootsi blokil õnnestus aga saavutada täpselt see tulemus – 16 000 häält –, mis kahe erakonna omavahelises kokkuleppes oli eesmärgiks seatud.

Fakt, et suurele enamikule rannarootsi valijatest oli seega siiski vastuvõetav Rootsi Rahva Liidu otsus teha koostööd Eesti Vabariigi iseseisvuse eelset ülemkihti esindava baltisaksa erakonnaga, näitab, et 1929. aastaks oli vähemusrahvuste ühiste huvide kaitsmise idee kui selline omandanud Eestis piisavalt laia kandepinna, et võimaldada eri vähemusrühmade vahel eksisteerivate ajalooliste lõhede ületamist.

Seda, et ühised huvid tõepoolest eksisteerisid – seejuures sõltumata konkreetse vähemusrahvuskogukonna suhtest vähemusrahvuste kultuuriautonomiaseadusega –, tõestab juba 1929. aasta eduka valimiskoostöö juhtum ise. Eesti etniliste kogukondade jätkuv poliitiline fragmenteerumine 1920. aastate parlamentaarse demokraatia tingimustes ning ajapikku järjest suurenev häälekadu eesti erakondadele oli probleem, mis ei puudutanud mitte ainult rootsi ja saksa, vaid ka vene erakonda Eestis. Viimane ei suutnud sellele murele 1929. aasta valimiste ajal vastumeedet leida ning tagajärjeks oli Vene Rahvusliidu toetuse jätkuv vähenemine. Rootslased ja baltisakslased suutsid aga sisse seada vastastikku kasuliku koostöö, mis võimaldas vähemalt ajutiselt taaskindlustada nende šanssi Riigikogus tehtavale poliitikale mingitki mõju avaldada.

Nagu juba öeldud, iseloomustasid 1929. aasta saksa-rootsi valimiskampaaniat eesti erakondade võrdlemisi tõsised katsed rootslastest valijate häält püüda ning saksa-rootsi bloki püüdlused neile vastu seista. Märkimisväärsed olid aga ka saksa-rootsi bloki poolt tehtavad pingutused meelitada üle teiste vähemusrahvuste ja isegi eestlastest valijate häält. Eriti sel otstarbel püüti ära kasutada Eesti avalikes aruteludes tol ajal laialt levinud kriitikat Eesti põhiseaduse, valimisseaduse ning justkui liiga võimukate poliitiliste erakondade suhtes. Vastukaaluks esitles saksa-rootsi blokk end omamoodi antiparteina, mis rajanes küll rahvuslikul, kuid mitte poliitilis-ideoloogilisel alusel ning millel oli seega õigus Eesti parlamentaarset poliitikat kritiseerida ja isegi reformida.

Pole päris selge, kui edukas eestlastele suunatud kampaania siiski oli, ning on kiusatus iseloomustada seda pigem mingit laadi kõrvaltegevusena: kui rootsi valijate häält kaotati saksa-rootsi alliansi vastuolulisuse

tõttu, siis teisalt sai neid omakorda kompenseerida teiste rahvusrühmade häälte abil. Lõppkokkuvõttes on siiski raske öelda, kui märkimisväärseks oleksid võinud saksa-rootsi bloki raskused kujuneda juhul, kui sellist kompenseerivat mehhanismi poleks kasutada olnud.

Siinse juhtumiuuringu tähtsus ulatub väljapoole kitsalt Eesti vähemusrahvuste poliitika ajaloost. Esiteks näitab see, et kuigi enamik sõdadevahelise perioodi vähemusrahvusi käsitlevaid uurimusi keskendub enamuse ja vähemuste vahelistele suhetele, tuleb tähelepanu pöörata ka suhetele eri vähemuste vahel – seda muu hulgas parlamentaarse demokraatia ja valimiskampaaniate kontekstis. Teiseks osutavad praegused uurimistulemused, et eraldi tuleks tähelepanuväärseks nähtuseks pidada vähemusrahvuste erakondade katse leida toetust teiste vähemuskogukondade seas ning püüda isegi riigi etnilisse enamusse kuuluvate valijate häält.