

Krista Kodres

REMEMBERING PROFESSOR ENN TARVEL

For a long time, I considered Enn Tarvel a legendary historian, whom I, as a member of a different generation, knew only based on his reputation. The latter was defined by rumours which I probably already heard while studying at the university in the late 1970s. Hence, my knowledge of Tarvel was first associated with his opposition to the medieval historians at the University of Tartu, our Professors Sulev Vahtre and Herbert Ligi. Tarvel was somehow considered a better historian, but I, of course, did not understand these nuances at that time. In hindsight, I realised that the historians at the University of Tartu saw the Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences as a place that was loyal to the authorities. This was, however, mainly due to the activities of Karl Siilivask and Juhan Kahk. There was more respect for Tarvel.

My personal contact with Tarvel came quite late, when we had started the 'History of Estonian Art' project at the Estonian Academy of Arts in 1998 or 1999. We decided to invite Tarvel to compile and edit the first volume on ancient and medieval art, convinced that he could manage it better than anyone else. Later, Tarvel was the one who recommended handing the work over to Kersti Markus. Thus, in the early 2000s, we sat together quite frequently at the Institute of Art History of the Estonian Academy of Arts, discussing the content of the various volumes of art history.

At the end of the decade, Enn and I met again in connection with another venture. It was an ambitious project initiated by German historians with the aim of formulating an overview of the studies of the Early modern period and especially of Reformation in Estonia and Latvia for the German (academic) readers. This was based on a desire to reconsider the writings by Baltic German historians, which were thought to be biased based on their nationality. The project lasted for several years and included numerous discussions on the content of the proposed article compendiums as well as mini-conferences where we presented and discussed the results of our research. All this was very interesting. For me, an added bonus was that I had the opportunity of travelling with Tarvel. The meetings often took place at the University of Greifswald where Professor Werner Buchholz worked. The other project leader was Professor Anton Schindling from Tübingen. As a result of this venture, several volumes were published under the title *Die baltischen Lande im Zeitalter der Reformation und Konfessionalisierung*. The last volume, *Protestantismus in den baltischen Landen und in Litauen. Konfessionen, Ethnien und Politik vom 16. Jahrhundert bis 1918*, was published only recently in 2021.

The train journey from Berlin to Greifswald was quite long. This time was filled with intense, even passionate, conversations with Enn. We talked a lot about history writing: a topic which was at that time becoming an increasingly important field of research for contemporary art history and for me personally. He usually posited that everything in writings about history had to be based on documentary sources. I, on the other hand, supported an interpretation that was more open and also valued hypothesis. Enn never succeeded in making me reconsider, nor did I ever manage to change his mind. However, in the course of our conversations I was always truly astonished by the extent of his knowledge. It was also surprising how at moments of solitude he was all the time pouring over small pieces of paper which turned out to be his tools for learning languages. He used them to learn or practice his Latin and probably other languages, for he also knew Latvian and Polish. We did meet with Enn after our journeys together ended, however I still remember him best as a travelling companion: a wise, witty and eloquent conversationalist and debater, an amicable father figure, and an old school historian par excellence.



FIG. 1. ENN TARVEL ON THE 12TH OF OCTOBER 1970. PHOTO: NATIONAL ARCHIVES, AUGUST TRAAAT.

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