KULTURENS FRONTLINJER
Skrifter från forskningsprogrammet KULTURGRÄNS NORR
38

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Conflict and Cooperation in the North

UMEÅ 2002

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The development of a Saami élite in Norden

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The article draws attention to three overlapping traditions in the emergence of the Saami movement. Each of them (1) has, or has had, a crucial role in the shaping of today''s Saami political movement, and (2) each of them has tended to be more influential in either Finland, Sweden or Norway. Today it is possible, to some degree, to portray the political situation of the Saami in these three countries as the product of the tradition, which at one time or another, was dominant in that country. As these traditions came together in the (Nordic) Saami Council, the change in its organisational system in 1971, as well as certain aspects of the policy of the Saami Council from its establishment in 1956 to the 1970s, will be considered.

INTRODUCTION

Before 1940 Government policy on the Saami, in both Sweden and Norway was based on Social Darwinism. The outcomes were, however, very different.[1] In Norway the main aims were twofold: first to assimilate the Saami into Norwegian culture and to force us to change language, i.e. a policy where the goal was one of cultural and linguistic destruction. The second aim, at least until 1933, was to end Saami reindeer herding in areas where it competed with other businesses.

Swedish policy towards its minorities also restricted the development of Saami culture and business, but in different ways. From around 1900, Social Darwinism led to a paternalistic view of Saami culture, the idea being that it could only survive if protected artificially in the high mountain regions. This was done by strengthening the rights of the reindeer herders, above the demarcation line that had been drawn in the 1860s across northern Sweden, so as to keep apart the farmers in the lower parts of the terrain from the reindeer herders in the upper parts.[2] An educational reform in 1913 strengthened the effect of the frontier between agricultural and reindeer herding areas. A special school was set up for the reindeer herding Saami – the Nomads' School. This was a rudimentary school with much lower aspirations than those of the

Swedish elementary schools in rural areas. All the other Saami groups, who were not involved in herding reindeer, were to go to the ordinary school in the Swedish agricultural communities. The idea was that they should be made more Swedish. Their life as Saami was seen as a sham and doomed to cultural destruction.

What we have here is a repressive segregation of the reindeer herding Saami together with a policy of assimilation for the rest. The authorities defined the 'true' Lapps in such a way that large parts of the Saami population in Sweden fell outside the sphere of interest covered by the policy on minorities. The result has been that Swedish policy towards the Saami has been a policy for reindeer herders. This has not only had political consequences it has also raised difficulties in relation to Saami identity (cf. Mörkenstam in this volume).

Finland was part of the Kingdom of Sweden until 1809, when it had to be given up to Russia. Finland became independent in 1917. The break with Sweden led to the erosion of the Saami rights that had been established under Swedish rule. But the Finnish State did not develop its own policy on the Saami.[3] Unlike in Norway and Sweden where reindeer herding was restricted to the Saami, Finnish farmers were also allowed to engage in it.

The Finnish State ignored rather than attempted to actively assimilate the Saami. But given that the Saami in Finland were a tiny minority – estimated today at between 8000 and 9000 individuals – the pressure towards assimilation was considerable. Changes in policy on the Saami in Norway, Sweden and Finland after 1945 lies outside the confines of this paper. However in so far as state policy on minorities colours the ethnopolitical mobilisation of the Saami, it will be necessary, on occasion, to comment on some of the post-1945 changes in state policy towards the Saami in the three states.

Opposition to assimilation policy in Norway

The Saami in the fjord areas of Finnmark (Norway's northernmost county) came together to oppose the policy of linguistic assimilation. By entering into an alliance with the Labour Party they managed to get one of their number elected to the Norwegian Parliament for the 1906–1909 and 1909–1912 sessions. There was no formal organisation, rather a grouping around Sagai Muittalægje, a north Saami language newspaper that came out in the years 1904 to 1911. After 1912 it took some years before the Saami of northern Norway tried again to organise politically. This was done through mass meetings between 1919 and 1921, organisational activity and by putting up candidates at the parliamentary election in 1921. After that year, however, the movement went on the defensive.

The collapse of the Saami movement in Finnmark can be ascribed to two factors. First, it had been directed against the Norwegian State's linguistic assimilation policy. This had been hardened rather than eased in the years 1900–1930. Opposition to it had failed. Second, economic depression led to many of the Saami activists finding it more worthwhile to join the Labour Party.

It is important to remember that linguistic and cultural assimilation of both the Saami and those of Finnish extraction was the goal of Norwegian policy towards its minorities down to the 1950s. Even if the policy of Norwegianisation was formally ended around 1960, several decades elapsed before a new policy platform on the Saami, was formulated. Despite the fact that the way was now open for a more positive policy on the Saami, the mechanisms required for a new and comprehensive policy were not in place before the 1980s.

The reindeer herders and the authorities

Whilst the Saami in the north fought against the Norwegian state's aims to destroy their language and culture, those in the south sought to protect the interests of reindeer herders on both the Norwegian and Swedish sides of the border. In the very early stages of their campaign, there were discussions as to whether or not to look after the interests of the Saami not engaged in reindeer herding, but, for various reasons, these were suspended.

From the 1880s to the 1930s the question of the reindeer herders was under discussion by the state on both sides of the border. Discussions involved, in part, the laws relating to reindeer herding in each of the two countries, and also the question of the migration of reindeer between them. This last question rose up the agenda after Norway left its union with Sweden in 1905. The leaders of the southern Saami were therefore involved in state and inter-state policy at a high level for several decades and it was this that came to characterise the movement. So, whilst the leaders of the northern Saami acquired considerable skill in relation to the linguistic and cultural policy of assimilation, their counterparts in the south developed judicial skills in relation to reindeer herding. Both groups produced alternative policies to those of the state.

In both Norway and Sweden the southern Saami were able, on one or two occasions, to express an opinion on proposed legislation. The authorities invited them to meetings and they, in turn, took part in Saami assemblies. The Saami took the opportunity to request money for meetings, and got it both in 1917 and 1921 (Norway) and 1918 and 1937 (Sweden). The organisations of the northern Saami, on the other hand, were opposed both openly

and secretly. An important reason for the difference was that the northern Saami concentrated on the ethnic and legal aspects of the Norwegian policy on minorities. This was something the Norwegian state was, under no circumstances, prepared to discuss. When the National Federation of Norwegian Reindeer-herding Saami was set up in 1948, representatives of the local Lapp authorities took the side of those who wanted such an organisation. The downside was that those who wanted an organisation embracing all Saami, irrespective of their means of livelihood, lost out.[4]

THE SAAMI COUNCIL

In the above I have tried to substantiate the argument that the Saami could reckon on less opposition if they set up business organisations, than if they sought to mobilise on an ethnic basis. In the first decade of the twentieth century, the Saami never managed to create other than local bodies, and even these were weak. Because the minority policy in Norway was harsher than in Sweden, it is only in the latter that we find certain continuity in the local Saami organisations. In Norway the Saami had to start afresh after 1945.

It was, then, something of a paradox that the Saami of the Nordic countries managed to establish an inter-Nordic co-operative body – the Saami Council – in the years 1952–56.[5] At the time two reindeer herder organisations were in existence: the National Federation of Norwegian Reindeer-herding Saami (1947/8) and the National Federation of Swedish Saami (1948/50). In Finland there was the Saami Alliance (Sámiid Lihttu), set up in 1945. The membership of all these bodies was exclusively Saami.

The initiative for co-operation amongst the Nordic Saami came from another direction. A proposal to arrange the first Saami Conference was raised at a seminar in Stockholm in January 1952. The delegates were experts in Saami culture, and the theme was domestic handicrafts. The conference must be seen in connection with a series of domestic handicraft exhibitions and seminars, held in the years 1950–52 in Lillehammer, Jokkmokk, Karasjok and, as noted above, in Stockholm in 1952. Cross-border contacts were also created through the Saami youth and cultural colleges, which were set up in the 1940s and 1950s, with the school at Inari in Finland in 1953 being the last. The curriculum included the Saami language, domestic handicrafts and reindeer herding. At the Saami conference in 1953, it was stressed by the leaders of these schools that the schools should provide their pupils with practical skills, social skills and a more positive self-image.[6]

Those responsible for the 1953 conference were described by Bishop Bengt Jonzon as 'Saami cultural organisations', namely Same-Ätnam from Sweden, Lapin Sivistysseura from Finland, and Sámi Searvi from Norway.

At that time all these bodies had non-Saami chairmen. Bishop Jonzon was himself the chairman of Same-Ätnam.

FRIENDS OF THE SAAMI

Of the above mentioned bodies the most interesting is the Lapin Sivistysseura (The Society for the Promotion of Saami Culture) founded in 1932, for this was the model for the other two organisations. It is also the only one that has been thoroughly researched.[7] Sámi Searvi was, it is true, set up by Saami in Oslo in 1948, but it encountered teething problems, and had to be restarted in 1951 – the Saami not being able to keep the organisation in being.

Lapin Sivistysseura recruited mostly amongst people who through research, office or religious and social work, came into contact with Saami and believed that they were under such pressure, that it was necessary to work positively to improve their social and cultural situation. Its first chairman justified the setting up of the society by saying that its task was to save an entire people. Lapin Sivistysseura was involved in a series of activities from publishing to courses, publicity, educational scholarships for Saami youth, and offers of accommodation for Saami students in the Finnish capital Helsinki.

I mentioned the Domestic Handicraft exhibitions that were held between 1950 and 1952. In 1951, Finnish Saami heard that an exhibition was to take place in Karasjok (Norway) in the summer of that year. They sought to provide items from bodies actively engaged in domestic handicrafts. It turned out, however, that the exhibition hall was not big enough for everything, being filled up with items from museum stock rooms. The Finnish Saami were told that it was necessary to exhibit the good arts and crafts of an earlier age in order to provide models to which present day practitioners could aspire. Underlying this was the view that Saami culture was in decline. The same viewpoint was evident in the discussion of the Saami language: it was dying out, mixed up with words taken from the majority languages, and losing its relevance as the old material culture disappeared.

The Saami Council, and the Saami Conference which elected it, came to adopt the same view of the Saami predicament as, for example, that of the Lapin Sivistysseura. Resolutions were formulated that reflected the fact that the Saami Conference was a meeting place for all the different groups that had an interest in Saami questions: researchers, administrators, politicians and pedagogues. The programme of the conference was characterised by formal academic type lectures. There was little political activity. That took place, for the most part, within the Saami Council, and was, therefore, scarcely familiar to all those who attended the conference

For the Saami, the conferences were social and cultural events, with a strong dose of popular, research-based education. History, ethnography, educational and reindeer herding questions received much attention in the formal lectures. The more political discussions were focussed on the possibility of setting aside an area of land that could be defined as Saami. Also discussed was whether or not it was possible to agree on 'who is a Saami', and to agree on a common definition that would apply across the Nordic countries. These questions were closely tied to the commitment to obtain a uniform legal framework for the Saami in Norden. For if specific rights were associated with membership of a national minority then it should be possible to determine who should benefit from them and possibly in which geographical areas they should apply.[8]

MINORITY AS A CONCEPT

The Saami Council came into existence whilst Norwegianisation was still official policy. The signals from researchers and government officials in pro-Saami associations were vague as regards the objectives of Saami politics. For example with the re-organisation of Sámi Searvi in 1951, it was said that one was not opposed to the policy of Norwegianisation, but that one wished to point out its unfortunate consequences. Moreover many friends of the Saami held pretty paternalistic views with regard to them, whilst others associated themselves with quite radical proposals in the state-run Saami committees in Finland (1948–1951) and Norway (1956–1959). Most members of these two committees were members of pro-Saami associations at one time or another.

The minority concept was used early in the 1950s, but usually to underline the fact that the Saami were a tiny ethnic group in Norden. A more principled discussion of the concept first occurred at the joint conference on Saami rights hosted by the Saami Council and the Nordic Council in 1959 and at the Saami conference in 1962. Because the Swedish Saami got their own ombudsman in 1962, attention came, little by little, to revolve around specific court cases. And toward the end of the 1960s the focus shifted towards the problems of democracy within the Saami movement and towards a social policy for Saami.

The Saami organisations seem to have been heavily engaged in philosophising about national minorities. The impulse for this came from several directions. The Saami committee in Finland had, in its report for 1951, proposed arrangements inspired by those enjoyed by Åland within the Finnish state: there regulations governed the sale of land in order to protect the Swedish language community and local autonomy on a number of matters.[9]

The Norwegian Saami Committee allowed itself to be influenced by some of these ideas in its report of 1959, e.g. with regard to the sale of land in a specific area of Inner Finnmark. However, the proposals of neither the Finnish nor the Norwegian committees on this issue were put into effect.

At the joint conference of the Saami and Nordic Councils in 1959, Professor Göran von Bonsdorff from Helsinki compared the proposal of the Saami committee with the arrangements in Åland.[10] He discussed both 'cultural' and 'territorial' autonomy and he had something to say on the committee's proposals regarding the definition of a Saami. One can perhaps say that he was here exploring the wisdom and practicality of the proposals put forward by the Finnish and Norwegian Committees.

In March 1959 a working committee of the Saami Council discussed the definition of a Saami, partly on the basis of a paper from Thor Frette. The paper touched on the possibility of a voluntary register of minorities, with references to arrangements that were in operation in the Danish/German border areas (cf. Rasmussen in this volume). Frette believed, nonetheless, that an important argument for sticking to a language criterion, such as that proposed by the Finnish Committee, was that it was something people would understand. This fits well to the tendency of researchers and pro-Saami groups to see Saami culture as being tied to specific traits. Exactly what the working committee's view of the matter was is difficult to ascertain from the minutes, but the views of individual members can be tracked down elsewhere. They vary somewhat over the question of a voluntary submission to a possible Saami register, combined with 'objective criteria', the most frequently mentioned of these being reindeer herding and/or language. The National Association of Swedish Saami wanted to base a definition on both language and reindeer herding.

A thematic approach to 'minority' as a concept was adopted at the Saami Conference in 1962. The lecture which attracted most attention was that by Terje Wold, the Chief Justice of the High Court, on the protection of minorities in international law. He compared, for instance, the legal protection in Norway accorded to the Saami and the Kven, and came to the conclusion that, in international law, the former were a minority, whilst the latter were to be seen as an immigrant population. Today it is their status as an indigenous people that protects the Saami whilst the Kven have, bit by bit, gained recognition as a national minority in Norway.

Another choice facing the Saami came from Paul Skadegård, the General Secretary of the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN). The Lapin Sivistysseura had been a member of FUEN since 1955 and had also established a series of international contacts, which the Saami Council had made good use of in the 1960s. Skadegård had been a guest at several of the

conferences and invited the Saami Associations to be members of FUEN. The invitation was finally turned down by the Saami Council in 1969. Shortly afterwards the Saami began to make contact with indigenous peoples throughout the world.

The National Association of Swedish Saami

Compared to the situation in Norway and Finland the relatively high level of activity in Swedish Saami circles from the 1940s onwards is remarkable. Several Saami associations were active, as was a Saami association of youth in the 1940s. A new paper was launched in 1943 and from 1945 one can see in the columns of Samefolkets Egen Tidning (published since 1918) indicators of what, around 1950, was to become the Saami Ski Championship. In the 1960s there existed a Saami Ski Association. And in the 1950s one sees, now and again, mention of the 'Lapp Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals'.[11] Such a range of activities was not to be found in Norway and Finland until the 1980s. What happened in Finland was the setting up of branches of the Nordic Saami cultural and professional organisations in the first half of the 1980s.

What emerged as a stroke of genius was that when the National Association of Swedish Saami was established in 1950, the organisation was based on the Saami villages, as prescribed under the Reindeer Herding Act. All reindeer owners and other Saami who belonged to a Saami village were represented by it in the National Association of Swedish Saami. In this way the Association had an organisational base at the local level, which meant it avoided the heavy task of recruiting individuals and creating an organisational network from scratch. This led, however, to the Association being dominated by the reindeer lobby. Some opposition to this was voiced outside the Association but it does not appear to have been very effective. That it was not totally without effect is evidenced by the fact that the National Association of Swedish Saami got only 7 out of 31 seats at the election to the first Saami Parliament in Sweden in 1993. A further three seats went to the Same-Ätnam, the other dominant Saami organisation in the 1960s and 1970s. Two-thirds of the seats went to other bodies. Thus a completely new situation was created by the setting up of the Saami Parliament, with the old Saami organisational structures being put to the test. The bonds between reindeer herding and Saami politics were now loosened somewhat and those who lived outside the Saami village were given new political arenas in which they could participate.

The National Association of Swedish Saami in the Saami Council

The National Association of Swedish Saami got a strong hold on the Saami Council from the start and maintained it throughout the 1960s. The reason for this is simple. The Association had the broadest membership base amongst the Saami of all Saami organisations in the whole of Norden. Besides, the Swedish Saami had the greatest organisational experience despite the restrictions placed on them by the local Lapp authorities. The representatives of the Association were aware of their unique position. At the end of the 1960s the Saami Council began to discuss how to make itself a more representative body. One wanted more local support and more democratic elections to the Saami Conference, since it was this, which elected the Saami Council. The National Association of Swedish Saami did not believe this was a problem for them. It believed the Association to be already the parliament of Swedish Saami and as such fully representative of them. If one looks at the resolutions put before the Saami conferences in 1965 and 1968, one sees that they were dominated by ideas promoted by the Association and which it pushed in its battles with the authorities and the legal system. The Saami Council, for example, inherited the idea that the Lapp Codicil of 1751 was the Saami Magna Carta, a notion put forward by the Association's jurist, Tomas Cramér, on the basis of his legal studies.[12]

Co-operation with the Nordic Council

The Nordic Council – an inter-Nordic body of parliamentarians – provided the model for the constitution of the Saami Council. The interim Saami Council, which did the preparatory work on the constitution, was of the opinion that the Council should direct its political activity at the Nordic Council and at the governments of the individual states. This strategy was pursued right from the start. The Saami Council was involved in putting a proposal to the Nordic Council in 1957. During the following two decades, there was continuous contact between the two bodies. In 1958 the Nordic Council recommended that the three states produce more uniform legislation on Saami questions. In 1959 the Nordic and Saami Councils arranged a joint conference in which Nordic parliamentarians and legal experts took part. The conference produced no great breakthroughs as regards the legal position of the Saami, but it strengthened the self-confidence of the Saami Council and legitimised it politically.

Negotiations on the convention of 1972 regulating reindeer pastures between Norway and Sweden exposed, however, the weaknesses in this strategy. The negotiations started in 1959, but Norway withdrew temporarily in

1961. The Saami Council feared that this would threaten attempts to achieve a more homogenous legislative framework on Saami matters in the Nordic countries and so approached the Nordic Council. The Norwegian Department of Agriculture interpreted this as urging the Nordic Council to take sides against a member state, and that the Saami Council was working against Norwegian interests. The matter also had unfortunate consequences for a Saami lawyer in the Department of Agriculture who was engaged in work on the Saami Council. The Department also punished the Saami Council by not contributing funds to its Norwegian session at the end of the 1960s.[13]

The negotiations also illustrate the relative strengths of the organisations representing reindeer herders in the two countries. The National Association of Swedish Saami had some influence over the Swedish negotiating team.[14] The National Federation of Saami reindeer owners in Norway failed to unite the reindeer owners behind a common policy during the negotiations. The organisation was weak, and particularly when faced with the complicated judicial and political questions which the negotiations brought to the fore. The National Association of Swedish Saami employed a full-time lawyer. Not till the 1970s did the National Federation of Saami reindeer owners in Norway even build up a secretariat.[15]

1971: Ideological re-positioning

One may get the impression that the organisations to be found in the 1950s and 1960s were made up mainly of non-Saami academics and government officials. That was not the case, although the pro-Saami associations were the ones that had the best links to the government network, academic institutions, foreign journals and the university. The pro-Saami associations also had many Saami members. Besides, the reindeer Saami organisations were in the process of being built up and in the 1960s the National Association of Swedish Saami was the strongest of these.

In the 1960s the Saami conference was a mixed body. Alongside the pro-Saami associations, the National Association of Swedish Saami and the National Federation of Saami reindeer owners in Norway, there were representatives from local Saami associations in Finland and, until 1962, a Norwegian county level advisory body, called the Finnmark Saami Council. There were too, a number of non-Saami guests and representatives of organisations with a more or less peripheral connection with Saami affairs, amongst whom were researchers and government officials. At the most popular conferences, the official delegates with voting rights numbered no more than a third or a quarter of the assembly.

The Saami Council always made strenuous efforts to get the support of Saami communities and sited the conferences in places where they hoped to set up local associations. That proved successful in, for example, Tana in 1965. Young activists were involved as soon as possible. As one means to this end the Saami Youth Camps from 1959–1969 were provided. In particular the conference in Nikkaluokta, which was the penultimate camp, is remembered for its political discussions. Young Saami from Norway and Sweden made contact in 1970/71 and came up with a number of ideas, which were put before the Saami conference in 1971. Contact was maintained by, amongst other things, seminars in Uppsala, Oslo, Kautokeino and Tromsø.[16] The period marked an ideological break in both the Saami Council and the Saami movement in Norden.

The ideological platform for this first generation of Saami leaders in the Saami Council was laid down in the politico-cultural programme that was agreed to at the Seventh Saami conference in 1971. The programme set the parameters for future work. It was not a separatist or a nationalistic programme. The opening words of the programme were 'We are Saami and we will be Saami, without being either greater or smaller than other people in the world'.

The programme was, as I read it, clearly set within a minority-rights framework. The Saami are a minority in the individual countries and must strive to get these states to accept and protect our rights. There is no mention in the programme of the concept of an 'indigenous people'. However, in a couple of working groups at the same conference, it was agreed that Saami rights were founded upon our status as an indigenous people. True the reports from these groups received much less attention during the conference than the politico-cultural programme, although the signals were clear. Whilst the politico-cultural programme stemmed, for the most part, from the Saami milieu in Sweden, the ideas in the group reports were developed largely by young Saami in Oslo, Norway, in the winter of 1970–71. In the introduction to one of the group reports one reads: 'How are we to bring about Saami unification as a collective force that can make itself felt?'

The same choices were evident in moves towards international co-operation. Lapin Sivistysseura joined The Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) in 1955. FUEN took part in most Saami conferences down to 1968 and invited Saami organisations to join it. The Saami Council rejected a specific invitation in 1969. The refusal was hardly meant as a rejection of FUEN's policies, but rather a reflection of the fact that the Saami did not feel quite at home there. Several years later the Saami took part in the preparatory work, which led to the formation of the World Council for Indigenous peoples (WCIP).

Johan Klemet Kalstad, who came into Saami politics at the end of the 1960s, tells that, as one of the Saami Council's delegates, he was a guest of FUEN at its congress in Alsace in 1969. He remembers the age difference between the Saami activists and the established academics in FUEN. The language too was different: no talk here of 'a collective force that can make itself felt'. The Saami Council's delegates sensed too that this was a 'different organisation' to their own. As part of the same trip, Kalstad visited Greenland where he met, for the first time, Moses Olsen, who was a central figure in the Greenlanders' opposition to Danish hegemony. 'He was very radical.' It was with radicals such as him that the Saami youth from Norway felt most at home.

ETHNOPOLITICAL RADICALISATION

The radicalisation of Saami students in the second half of the 1960s was naturally not an isolated phenomenon. Such radicalisation had an international dimension. Indigenous peoples all over the world over began to demand control over their own land.[17] These international tendencies were also reflected in the work of the Saami Council. Demands were made for greater legal protection for the Saami's use of natural resources in Norway and Sweden.[18] At the political level the Saami familiarised themselves with the international work on minorities and indigenous peoples. Whilst in the Saami Council work intensified on the formation of the future Saami society.

The theme at the Saami Conference in 1965 was Saami social policy and in 1968, the future of the Saami as a minority in Norden, with such lecturers as Erica Simon from Lyon and Ottar Brox and Per Otnes from Oslo.[19] Simon and Otnes referred explicitly to theories of neo-colonialism.[20] I have already dealt with the ideological shift at the Saami conference in 1971, where, for the first time, reference was made to the Saami as an indigenous people.

The demand for greater Saami influence also occurred within the Saami Council itself. The organisations that were under the control of Saami at the end of the 1960s were those of the reindeer herders in Sweden and Norway. In Sweden, the Same-Ätnam got its first Saami chairman at the end of the 1960s, and in Finland in 1971, an attempt was made to form a new national organisation along the lines of the National Association of Swedish Saami. The attempt failed, but in 1973 the so-called Saami Parliament was set up in Finland. This was a governmental advisory body but came to function as the external arm of the Finnish Saami. Saami students took over the leadership of Sámi Searvi in Norway and renamed it the Saami Association of Oslo. The Saami involved in the take over described it as a coup. The few local Saami associations in Norway joined together in the National Association of

Norwegian Saami in 1968/69. From the start, the Association had a clear ethnopolitical profile. At its first national conference the question was raised as to whether the organisation should proceed through the courts or operate politically on the issue of Saami legal claims. The Association decided to follow the path of negotiation. In Sweden the National Association of Swedish Saami had chosen the legal route. The Association won an important victory in the Norwegian High Court in 1969 in the so-called Altevatn judgement[21]. This resulted in Swedish Saami being granted compensation for encroachment on their pastures on the Norwegian side of the two borders. There has been mixed feelings about the result of what has been called the greatest civil case in Swedish legal history, namely the 'Taxed Mountains Case' (1966–1981).[22]

These changes are reflected in the *modus operandi* of the Saami Council. Here too the Saami conference of 1971 marks a watershed.[23] Earlier conferences, as mentioned above, were general assemblies. Lectures to these assemblies formed the starting point for subsequent discussion. In 1971 a new method of working was introduced: the delegates were divided into working groups, their reports forming the basis of subsequent work by the Saami Council. This was reflected in more focussed work on specific issues. The Conference formulated ambitious goals covering many sectors of society.

Greater financial resources were needed to realise the increase in political ambition. Throughout the whole of the 1970s extensive lobbying was carried out to raise the money for specific institutions and initiatives. Funds from the Nordic Council enabled the Nordic Saami Institute to be set up in 1973, and a number of other organs and institutions were created in the three countries, especially within the educational and cultural sectors.[24]

In the 1970s changes in general Norwegian cultural policy had very positive consequences for Saami culture. A wider interpretation of the concept of culture was launched, so that, in addition to art and high culture, popular culture was given support. This was exploited, in the Saami context, by a start being made on the collection of place name data, courses of different kinds, various types of gathering and concerts. As most of these were organised by local Saami associations, these got a boost that would otherwise have been unthinkable. It is against this background that the post-1970 mobilisation of the Saami in Norway must be seen. I will, therefore, conclude, by focussing just on Norway in a retrospective summary of the Saami movement there after 1945.

A RETROSPECTIVE VIEW

Let me, nevertheless, start by looking a little more closely at developments in Finland. Two features strike one. First, one must take into consideration that in Finland the non-Saami were allowed to herd reindeer. This was not the case in Norway and Sweden. For this reason the Finnish Saami put a lot of effort into getting the authorities to accept that Saami affairs were not just a matter of reindeer herding.[25] The absence of a Saami policy, on the part of the state and outside the reindeer herding questions, led to the special needs of the Saami being neglected. Researcher Ludger Müller-Wille has argued that the pro-Saami organisations in 1932 stemmed from a human rights perspective.[26] I agree with this. Even if the Saami take-over of Sámi Searvi in Norway is often described by those involved as a coup, relations between the friends of the Saami and the Saami themselves were not primarily based on conflict. The role of the pro-Saami in Finland and Norway, was to act as the vanguard in new kinds of organisation, and to be the mainstay for the Saami, when they themselves took over the handling of political developments. They were able to open doors in government departments and in the Nordic Council. The friends of the Saami have, because of their high social status and technical skills, also helped to legitimise Saami demands. I mentioned earlier the conference on Saami rights, held jointly by the Saami Council and the Nordic Council in 1959, as an important milestone in this regard. Besides, many friends of the Saami were in positions where they could influence the authorities' policies on the Saami. However, one could not expect government servants and other public officials to go too far to change public policy, without some indication that the political signals were set at green.[27] It was the Saami elites' demand for reform that brought policy beyond the limits that bound those who worked in public administration.

As both the Norwegian and Swedish states had, from the early 1900s, gathered comments from the reindeer herders on questions concerning their livelihood, there was nothing to prevent the friends of the Saami (e.g. representatives of the local Lapp authorities) in Norway from supporting those who in 1947/48 wanted an organisation of reindeer herders rather than an ethnopolitical organisation. To support the latter would run contrary to Norwegian Saami policy which at that time, formally at least, aimed at the destruction of Saami language and culture. In 1948 the reforms that were being worked on within the Culture Department were still not part of official policy.

The second of the two striking developments in Finland concerns the fundamental nature of changes in the state's Saami policy, once they appeared. Attention in the 1990s was centred on the constitutional situation: in the

1980s there were several radical proposals on Saami land rights.[28] Also in the 1980s there were several important changes in educational and religious policies in the form of subsidies.[29] Finland has a declared goal of signing the ILO convention No. 169. It does not appear that Sweden will do the same. Norway and Finland can be compared on this issue, too. Norway has, in the course of the 1980s and 1990s, carried through far-reaching changes in its Saami policy, on the basis of proposals from two major committees – the one on Saami culture and the other on Saami rights. The latter has not yet completed its work.

Norway differs, however, from Finland and Sweden in two important regards.[30] Saami demands today receive a much more positive reception amongst the general public in Norway than they did in the 1970s, when Saami matters were either hushed up or ridiculed.

If, for example, we look at the policies of the Norwegian Labour Party after 1945, we see that they were based on eradicating social and cultural differences. In comparison with other European countries, the Nordic countries have a firmly rooted national language, a dominant state church and a uniform school system.[31] Of most importance for social democracy was the regulation of relations between capital and labour and that co-operation be underpinned by a strong ideology of national unity. This social democratic ideal of equality came to have consequences that were comparable to those that Social Darwinism had had before 1945. The Saami in Norway learned that economic development in Saami areas was dependent upon one having a command of Norwegian culture, and being willing to modernise the economy. As the collapse of the first Saami movement in Norway in the 1920s could be used in support of this proposition, there were many Saami in the coastal districts of northern Norway who looked sceptically on the new Saami movement.

There are however certain differences between Norway and Sweden. The Swedish welfare state was the product of more effective planning than the Norwegian. Industrialisation was the agent of regional policy both in Sweden and in Norway, but opposition from the regions was stronger in the latter. This worked against both effectiveness and centralisation. It has also been argued that the organisational culture of Norway is more proactive than in Sweden[32]. The referendum on Norwegian membership of the EEC in 1972, nature conservancy movements and popular opposition to Norwegian regional policy form the context for what happened around 1980 – usually tagged the 'Alta-Kautokeino conflict'.

This affair started as a movement against a hydroelectric scheme but it ended up as an alliance between Saami activists, conservationists and political forces on the left of Norwegian politics. The affair received much atten-

tion both in Norway and internationally and directed an embarrassing spotlight on the authorities' Saami policy[33]. Problems of legitimacy arose, which the government solved by setting up two committees in 1980. The debate on the question of Saami rights was common to both. The enormous attention paid to the Alta-Kautokeino affair led many Saami, who previously had been indifferent or hostile to their Saami roots, to re-appraise their position. And the Norwegian State now admits officially to two peoples in the area, the Saami and the Norwegian.

Neither in Finland or Sweden has there been a comparable popular debate on the Saami issue. In Sweden especially there seems to be a strong element of continuity from earlier times with the Saami being associated exclusively with reindeer herding[34].

ENDNOTES

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