

PROFESSOR EDUARD RASKA AS AN OUTSTANDING SCIENTIST AND STATESMAN

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ABSTRACT

Security Spectrum's special issue on criminology is dedicated to Professor Eduard Raska (1944–2008), who would have turned 80 this autumn. Although his life was regrettably short, the scale of what he accomplished in various fields is nothing short of incredible. In this article, we remember our good colleague Professor E. Raska, an outstanding scientist, criminologist, and legal philosopher who made great professional achievements in establishing an independent Estonian law enforcement system.

1. WORK IN THE LABORATORY OF THE SOCIOLOGY OF DEVIANT BEHAVIOUR AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TARTU AND ESTABLISHMENT OF THE TRADITION OF THE BALTIC CRIMINOLOGY SEMINARS

Eduard Raska was born in the small town of Mõisaküla during the Second World War. He graduated from secondary school there in 1962 and then from the Faculty of Law of the University of Tartu in 1970. The topic of his diploma thesis testified to his keen interest in criminology as a novel scientific discipline (Raska, 1970). After graduating from university, he started working as a researcher in a laboratory of criminology. E. Raska defended his candidate's degree (Paksa, 1974) in law in 1974, then worked for many years as a senior researcher at the Institute for History of the Academy of Sciences of the ESSR.

An important turning point in his professional career took place in 1983 when he became the director of the Laboratory of Sociology of Deviant Behaviour (formerly the Laboratory of Criminology) at the University of Tartu. At that time, the University of Tartu took the direction of becoming a research centre, where the abovementioned laboratory became part of the Department of Science. This meant that the previous focus on teaching activities had to be broadened, giving a greater role to research. The University of Tartu did not put the obligation to teach students on the scientific staff as it did on the teaching staff. Scientific units soon achieved relative independence as the research contracts concluded with various partners provided the laboratories with a strong material base.

By that time, a certain upheaval had taken place in the Soviet Union in regard to the attitude towards sociology as an empirical science, which was hoped to provide support for more effective governance by the Communist Party. One of the areas in which major change was underway was crime control, which, in the future, was supposed to rely on science to a much greater extent and thereby become more effective. As early as 1964, a regulation of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (ZK KPSS, 1964) enacted the inclusion of courses of criminology and legal psychology in the curricula of all universities providing higher legal education.

In 1967, thanks to this regulation, the Laboratory of Criminology was established in the Faculty of Law of the University of Tartu. As we know today, the so-called Thaw era was soon followed by deep stagnation, which lasted until 1985 when a new attempt at a comprehensive reform of state life began in the Soviet Union. Thus, in the second half of the 1980s, the 'perestroika' initiated by the General Secretary of the CPSU, M. Gorbachev was in full swing in the Soviet Union. The main goal was the rational transformation of all societal life and the economy to the extent that the empire's potential would find significantly better application than before.

Such was the general socio-political situation in the Soviet Union when Eduard Raska became the director of the newly established Laboratory of Sociology of Deviant Behaviour at the University of Tartu. He defended his doctoral thesis at the Institute of State and Law of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR in Moscow in 1988 and was awarded the degree of Doctor of Law in Criminology (Paska, 1988). Professor Raska's great idea proposed in his doctoral thesis was how to study the spatial distribution of crime and the factors causing differences in crime for more effective crime prevention and control at the local and national levels.

Under the tutelage of Professor Raska, the University of Tartu and the law enforcement agencies of the Estonian SSR signed in 1985 a multilateral cooperation agreement. However, no practical or tangible results in the field of crime control were reached at that time. Changes to crime control remained mostly superficial; strict ideological control over this area was maintained as before by the Central Committee of the Communist Party. Law enforcement agencies continued to conceal empirical data on

crime, which in turn placed strict limits on scientific research conducted by the University of Tartu. The same trouble afflicted the entire totalitarian state because the Red Empire was not reformable and the quest for fundamental reforms led to the collapse of the entire system and the disintegration of the Soviet Union.

In the laboratory directed by Professor Raska, the foundation was laid for an event that later became a tradition: the Baltic Criminology Seminar, which began in 1987 with an informal meeting of criminologists in Tartu County. Back then, around twenty leading scientists in the field of criminological research from the Soviet Union participated in the event. They were united by a new, i.e. social-scientific, view of crime and its prevention as a phenomenon. Such an approach replaced the earlier theoretical-dogmatic understanding of crime as a ‘heavy legacy of capitalism’ that would soon disappear by itself.

Estonia was a suitable place for specialists prone to innovation to gather. Prof Raska and his associates saw crime as a social phenomenon—the result of destructive processes occurring in the social organism. At the first meeting, it was decided to create a network of criminologists with the participation of colleagues from four countries: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Russia (Saint Petersburg). Each country was to organize a seminar once every four years (Raska, 1988). The Baltic Criminology Seminars quickly gained wide national and subsequently international recognition.

The regularly published collections of scientific papers with articles based on conference presentations gained great popularity among professionals. The Laboratory of Sociology of Deviant Behaviour was able to keep its publishing active, and from 1991, more and more articles appeared in English (with Russian summaries) (Saar, 1991). The tradition is alive to this day, and last year (2023), the 35th Baltic Criminology Seminar was held in Tallinn as a joint event of the Academy of Security Sciences and the University of Tartu.

2. FOUNDING OF THE ESTONIAN ACADEMY OF SECURITY SCIENCES

In 1989, another fundamental change took place in Eduard Raska's professional career because he was invited to the position of Legal Adviser to the Office of the Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Estonian SSR. Therefore, immediately before the restoration of Estonia's statehood and during the initial period of national independence, he was engaged in a highly responsible position where he dealt with problems of national security.

At the end of the 1980s, the Red Empire, a colossus on clay feet, became increasingly impoverished and its leadership more ineffective. Shortly before and immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, it was necessary to create law enforcement structures suitable for Estonia as the small independent country. This had to be done during the political whirlwinds of the time when it was not quite clear to anyone what the independent Estonian state would be like. A good example was the foundation of the Estonian police to replace the previous 'Soviet militia'. Eduard Raska chaired the committee of experts that prepared the first draft of the Police Act, which was approved by the Estonian parliament (the Supreme Council) on 20 September 1990. The police began to replace the previous militia. Instead of the authorities that in the past had protected the communist party's power monopoly, the police now had to ensure public order primarily in the interests of the citizens.

However, the most important milestone in Professor Raska's professional life was his leading role in the founding of the Estonian Academy of Security Sciences. He likely received the task of establishing the Academy from politicians even before the formal restoration of Estonian independence. It is known that together with Mr Arnold Rüütel, the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Council, Professor Raska travelled to the United States of America twice, where he visited local police schools and correctional institutions. He presented the concept of the Academy to the government in May 1991. In July of the same year, the government approved Raska's proposal, and on 17 December, by order of the Estonian Government, Eduard Raska was appointed acting rector of the Estonian Academy of Security Sciences.

In January 1992, the founding committee began its work and was first tasked with drafting the statutes. The temporary statutes prepared under Raska's leadership were registered, and the Academy was established by the decree of the Government of the Republic of 15 April 1992 under the administration of the Ministry of Education. During the discussion of the statutes, Rector E. Raska came up with the idea of creating a complex of colleges in the field of public security (e.g. police, corrections), the umbrella organization of which could be the established Academy.

As we know, before the restoration of Estonia's national independence, these fields of training to be covered by the Academy were exclusively under the strict and central control of the Soviet authorities. Now, under the conditions of national independence, and especially in securing this independence, it was necessary to create a training system for law enforcement staff. The Academy was to become the scientific-pedagogical centre of this training system. Here, it must be emphasized that there were no direct examples that the Republic of Estonia, which had just regained its independence, would have been able to copy.

The Academy acquired the territory and buildings of the Military Academy of the Soviet Army in Maarjamäe, a subdistrict in Tallinn, where the Academy is still located today. The primary practical task for the Academy was to speed up the takeover and acceptance agreement to avoid further material damage caused by the departing Russian military. The task was completed, and the agreement was signed on 23 July 1992. From that date onwards, the Academy was the full-fledged owner of this territory. The training process began on 12 October, with the first 185 cadets admitted to the various specialities of internal security.

Finding a suitable place for the Academy in the Estonian educational and criminal justice systems was not an easy task, which is shown, among other things, by the fact that as early as 1993, the Academy was renamed the Estonian National Defence Academy. This was because the simultaneous creation of two higher education institutions – one for public service and the other for the defence forces – was too complicated and costly for the young country. This is how the decision to create a joint educational institution for training officers of the police, customs, pre-trial investigation agencies, corrections, the border guard, rescue services, and defence forces emerged.

This lasted until the Estonian National Defence Academy was renamed the Estonian Academy of Security Sciences by the decree of the Government of the Republic of 4 June 1998. Since this time, the Academy has been a university of applied sciences under the Ministry of the Interior. In the same year, the Estonian National Defence College was established in Tartu, and in 1999, the Government of the Republic decided to cease military training at the Academy's buildings and territory.

A serious issue was the Academy's relations with other Estonian institutions of higher education and the Academy's position in the Estonian education system in general. From the perspective of its profile and the organization of the training process, the Academy was not a competitor to other institutions of higher education in Estonia. The Academy was a completely new phenomenon in the field of higher education. It was an educational and research institution that was called for and set to fill a very important gap in the state structure.

At the same time, due to the logic of the state budget, the new and expensive education centre was a serious competitor to other higher education institutions. Since the Academy was under the administration of the Ministry of Education until 16 May 1995, big problems emerged in understanding what an institution of higher education operating in the field of internal security should be. In particular, the material needs of such an institution of higher education were not understood – why does this education have to be so costly? The realization that learning and training in the security field is much more expensive than studying in a regular institution of higher education arrived only years later. This major change in attitude occurred when the Academy was transferred to the area of administration of the Ministry of the Interior.

In 1993, the Council of the Academy elected Raska as rector for five years, i.e. until 1998. At the same time, he was Chair Professor of Criminology and the Sociology of Deviant Behaviour and gave classes in criminology to cadets. Research and development activities were quickly initiated at the Academy under his leadership, and a publishing department was even founded. The inaugural issue under the name 'Proceedings of the Estonian National Defence and Public Service Academy' was published as early as 1993 (Pihlak, 1993). The collection of articles on criminology compiled by Eduard Raska (Raska, 1994) laid the foundation for the

series on criminology in the Proceedings of the Academy. A total of 21 issues were published in the Proceedings of the Academy of Security Sciences over the years. In 2023, the series was renamed as the English-language magazine 'Security Spectrum: Journal of Advanced Security Research'.

In 1998, Professor Eduard Raska left the Academy and was later active as a lecturer in various Estonian universities. He continued working on the topics of legal philosophy and criminology and publishing scientific papers. He submitted the manuscript of his last book for publication just days before his death. In this book, he succinctly developed his ideas about 'living law', at the centre of which he placed the problem of 'just law'. At the end of his study, he concluded that law and justice is one of the self-regulation mechanisms of the social system that ensures the development of the whole society (Raska, 2010).

CONCLUSIONS

In the spring of 2008, the heart of Professor Eduard Raska stopped beating, and he passed away in the prime of his creative life. The Academy was the last major undertaking for Professor Raska. The difficulties and misunderstandings that had to be overcome when introducing new ideas and concepts at the local and national levels had an impact on his health. It was not easy to find for the Academy a suitable niche as a teaching, training, and research centre. In the early 1990s, security problems were viewed quite differently compared to our current understanding. Today, it seems to us self-evident that dealing with internal security issues requires specific knowledge and skills. The main task of the Estonian Academy of Security Sciences is now to provide such competencies to the next generation of law enforcement professionals.

Today, it can be said that Professor Raska did a great job in his various fields. The number of Professor Raska's achievements is awe-inspiring: the Laboratory of Sociology of Deviant Behaviour of the University of Tartu he established gave rise to Estonian criminology as the scientific discipline we know now; as a legal advisor to the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Estonia, he took

a leading position in shaping the trends in legal policy and developing the criminal justice system of the Republic of Estonia; and at the most important stage of his professional life, he was the founding Rector of the Estonian Academy of Security Sciences.

The development of the Academy since its establishment has been enormous; a modern environment for the training of personnel in the field of internal security of Estonia has now been created. Raska's idea to build an academy as an umbrella organization for different colleges has come true. Today, we can clearly see how good an innovation it was to train all Estonian internal security specialists in one educational institution, where the personal relationships and social capital gained will be useful throughout their professional careers.

If you look at the new building of the Academy, you can see many strong young people – future law enforcement officials and specialists and feel the energy emanating from them. This is a sure sign of the undeniable vitality of Estonia as a country. It is not difficult to imagine our colleague Eduard watching this unfold somewhere and having a little chuckle, as he was wont to do when receiving good news.

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