

**SILENCED ETHNICITY:
RUSSIAN-ESTONIAN INTERMARRIAGES IN SOVIET ESTONIA
(ORAL HISTORY)**

Uku Lember

**A DISSERTATION
in
History**

Presented to the Faculties of the Central European University
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Budapest, Hungary

2014

Supervisor:
Marsha Siefert

COPYRIGHT NOTICE

Copyright of this text rests exclusively with the Author. Copies by any process, either in full or in part, may be made only in accordance with the instructions given by the Author and lodged at the Library of the Central European University. Details may be obtained from the librarian. This page must be part of any such copies made. Further copies may not be made without the written permission of the Author. I hereby declare that this dissertation contains no materials accepted for any other degrees in any other institution and no materials previously written or published by any other person unless otherwise noted.

Abstract

Between 1945 and 1989, the number of Russian-speakers in Soviet Estonia grew from 4% to 35%. This dissertation touches upon the ethno-cultural cohabitation between Estonians and Russian-speakers in Estonia in that period of socialism. It is based on oral history interviews with spouses and children from inter-marriages between “newcomer Russians” and “local Estonians.” The author conducted 95 interviews from the spring of 2009 to the summer of 2011. The study is mainly focused on the inter-married spouses who were born from 1930s to 1950s and on their children who were born from 1950s to 1970s.

The composition of the dissertation is based on two parallel modes of representation. On the one hand, it describes personal and family life-worlds throughout the chapters as different narrative episodes about the same families accumulate. On the other hand, the thematic structure of the chapters is based on topical clusters that emerged from a close reading of life-story transcripts.

Two main arguments are developed in the dissertation. First, I argue that Soviet Estonian society can be understood as divided into two linguistically marked Russian and Estonian cultural worlds. Both worlds offered intermingled but distinct “reservoirs” of ethnic, political, historical and other meanings, personal identification patterns, and past-future horizons. These worlds maintained a balance and parity in Soviet Estonia by offering attractive and diverse ways for individual identification. The Russian world offered more diverse and ambiguous patterns as it was imbued with sometimes contradictory meanings (different registers of Russian culture, other ethnic cultures in the USSR, connections to the Soviet ideology). The Estonian world

offered narrower patterns for individual identification and these were more tightly related to the local Estonian ethnic culture and heritage (however, some working class identifiers differ in that regard). I propose that both worlds should be primarily understood as cultural worlds rather than “ethnic” ones, because they contained varied identification elements.

Second, I argue that the Estonian-Russian cultural divisions were scarcely discussed and debated within the inter-marriages themselves. People did not identify with the conflictual patterns of either cultural worlds in their everyday lives. On the one hand, the relevance of conflicts arising from the social cultural division was reduced in family life, and it was often a practical solution to de-emphasize controversies, as there were no publicly available tools for resolution. On the other hand, silence about the cultural conflicts in intermarriages also indicated the absence of such experiences. People point to the constructive ways of living together without identifying with the forces that pull the society apart. I also propose to distinguish between the performative and constative dimensions of culturally conflictual identifications in the everyday life by showing that even if people “performed” repetitive affirmations of ethno-cultural belonging they did not actually invest in the “constative” meanings that accompanied such repetitions.

Acknowledgements

This journey has been long. I have entered many new worlds on my attempt to convert a life of an economist to that of a historian. Budapest, Ithaca, Tallinn; many old and new friends and colleagues. Numerous people who have shared their hospitality, friendship, support, and time. I thank all of you. There is still so much to discover in Budapest and I must keep coming back. I am grateful that I can maintain contact with members of the Telluride Association from Ithaca and beyond. I am glad to often be in Tartu and Tallinn. I think fondly about my family, their patience with me, and all our family stories.

I would like to thank Istvan Rev and my supervisor Marsha Siefert who have both borne with me for all these years for their constant encouragement. Claudia Verhoeven was of tremendous help and support at Cornell University. Ene Kõresaar and Karsten Brüggemann helped in keeping closer relations with Estonia by hosting me in Tartu University and Tallinn University, respectively. There are very many people who have helped me out at the moments of confusion, with transcriptions, and with reading my pieces – thank you all!

Finally, I would like to extend my warmest and sincerest gratitude to all the people who shared their life stories with me. I hope I have understood some things and that I have treated them accurately, and with respect. I think about many of you often, even if I cannot presently mention all of you by name. Thank you!

Preface

As I write this text in March 2014, events are unrolling daily on Maidan and in Crimea. I hear from Estonia that news from Russia is making the atmosphere in the Russian-speaking border city of Narva tense. I feel that the basic concerns that led me to take up this project in 2007 have not passed. Today, Ukraine witnesses aggravated social clashes based on the diametrically different media portrayals of contemporary events, larger discourses of national histories, and individual memories of the Soviet past. In spring 2007, another post-Soviet identity conflict was unfolding. It was the Bronze Soldier crisis in Estonia that marked an escalation of the tensions between Estonians and Russians-speakers in the form of an intermingling of personal memories and public discourse, historical interpretations and contemporary concerns.

I have a distinct memory of being in the TV room of my school (29th Tallinn Elementary School) watching the adoption of the Language Law of the ESSR on a black-and-white screen. I might have been alone in the room. I had been afraid to miss the event while walking home, so I stayed late at school. I also remember that it was *my* decision to stay (I had to explain my tardiness later at home). The law was passed by the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic Supreme Soviet on the 18th of January, 1989. Estonian was declared a state language; it became a right to arrange official matters in Estonian in the ESSR.¹ I was in the 2nd form, and I turned eight two days after. Some time later in the same year I made a political statement: I came up with a witty sentence, but I did not dare to say it. I agreed with my grandmother that I write the sentence down and then she has a look at it later. So I left the notebook filled on

¹ Information on the webpage of Estonian Ministry of Justice, accessed online 10 Jan 2014: <http://www.just.ee/44104>

the table. It read now and then: “Kustav Naan – tete kõike õigesti. Josep Staalín.” (“Kustav Naan – you do all correct. Iosep Staalín.”)² It was my imaginary misspelt message from Stalin to one of the few Estonian veteran communists, a talented physicist and politician and a convinced anti-nationalist who leaned strongly towards Moscow in the late 1980s.³ Today, it really seems to have been *my* original idea, I mean my original conclusion, based on the information that I had gathered, but it could have also come from the aunt Liivi, our neighbour who worked from home and at whom I spent my many afternoon hours. For many years we used to chat with her about the progress of public events, books and history, and many other less important matters.

A midsummer night the following year, in 1990, we sat at the bonfire in the garden. Guests discussed the future and my mother was resolute: this state cannot end – it is just not imaginable. She does not remember that event and can only vaguely recall her position: “if you tell me so, maybe I said it.” The next year while we were in the car I was possessed with an urgent need to talk about something unimportant; I remember my parents yelling at me simultaneously to shut up while they listened to the radio news – about the countries who had recognised the Estonian independence that day (late August, 1991).

² When grandmother went to see the text later, she left it on the table with corrected spelling that include an untranslatably funny one with Naan's name that she did not comment on at the time.

³ Later I learned that Gustav Naan (1919-94) had been an Estonian who was born and raised in Russia. He was therefore a “Russian Estonian” who came to Estonia in after the World War II. He was a polemical figure who in the conditions of published articles which were “on the edge” of permissible both in the conditions of late Stalinism (on physics) and afterwards (on diverse topics, including love, marriage, natality rates). In by the 1970s he was a generally received as an intriguing Soviet public intellectual. Naan was the editor-in-chief of the first Soviet Estonian Encyclopaedia (8 volumes, 1968-76). He remained a convinced communist and was strongly against the Estonian Independence movement. A novel on Naan: Enn Vetemaa, *Akadeemik Gustav Naani hiilgus ja viletsus* (Glory and Decay of Academician Gustav Naan) (Tallinn: Tänapäev, 2011).

All my grandparents were born in the 1930s. I was already an adult when I learn that they all came from difficult family backgrounds which were rather firmly rooted in the social fabric of inter-war Estonia, preceding the war and potential repressions. My paternal grandmother was not able to go out of the house in winter until she was of school age (in 1941-42) because she had no boots. Relative frankness of my grandmothers also helped me to understand that none of my great-grandparents had not been happily married and that there had been adultery, absence and adoption. However, the past material and familial difficulties were not transmitted to my grandparents, who strived to and did have “complete” families and careers in Soviet Estonia – often through compromise that nevertheless seemed all too natural in comparative context with the past.⁴

I cannot imagine growing up without a constant presence of talks and involvement with history of people and politics. However, the stories of political trauma and Soviet repressions that unrolled in the Estonian public discourse while I was growing up (and that continue to do so to this day) were rarely present in our family. And in addition: there were no Russians for me in Estonia. I mean that I do not have memories of them. In all the family stories there were references only to Russians *in* Russia in the context of abundant travelling and hosting of visitors.

The percentage of Russians and Russian-speakers in Tallinn has remained roughly equal to that of Estonians since the 1970s. I grew up in Tallinn, but prior to my oral history fieldwork for this project I barely knew any Russians. I grew up in the almost exclusively Estonian-speaking garden suburb of Nõmme. In high school, there was a girl who stood out on account of her Russian surname, and at university there

⁴ As I put down these words I also need to censor myself. I cannot and should not write it all down. Sharing “not nice” things makes a reader uncomfortable (“why do I have to read it?” and – I know more than my parents.

was a group of Russians, with whom I did not have much contact. Over these years, I studied Russian, but never spoke a word of it outside of the classroom. In high-school, we followed the curriculum compiled by Juri Lotman and mostly memorized poems by Pushkin (and others) as we were expected to already know the language.⁵

Though I was already interested in history, my curiosity attained a “spatial” dimension in 2000-01, when I undertook train trips to Siberia, China, and Crimea. Looking back, I think that these were essentially “time travels” for me, adventures where I considered the past living in our present. My formal education up to this point had been in economics, and words like 'ideology' and 'nationalism' meant little to me. I knew that Estonia was on the good path of prosperity and progress. *Everyone* knew it. Now, study in the humanities has taught me to be ashamed of an exoticizing affection of “time travel” or of “aimless travel,” in general.

The majority of Estonians “re-discovered” that they lived among Russian-speakers during the escalation of the Bronze Soldier crisis in 2007, though I would like to think that I had such a realization slightly earlier (after all, I submitted my PhD application two months before the Bronze night). This said, it is hard to pin down the moment of my own discovery, because, of course, I had always known that there were speakers of Russian in Estonia – I had been to Narva and to the block-house districts of Tallinn.

Much of what I heard in my oral histories was new to me. While in the process of conducting these interviews, friends who had grown up in other parts of Tallinn shared with me their own memories and experiences of the presence of Russians in their own childhood neighbourhoods. Their stories were mostly negative.

⁵ At that time I also made a personal effort and worked through the Russian study-books from 5-9 form by myself. To be systematic, I tried to memorize all the words in them (I had a permanent feeling of “missing the words”) through endless copying and repeating. I later forgot them.

Also over the course of this project, I became well-known among my friends for my propensity to frequently highlight the vestiges of Estonian nationalism's self-serving aggrandizement.

As I return to the present, then, I am not sure where I truly belong, and I think this uncertainty is a good thing. While it is far from the simplest way to live, the life of a scholar invites, by necessity, an existential state of constant self-doubt. I do know that events in the Ukraine disturb me personally, as they do many people in Estonia. Many Russian-speaking Estonians are also disturbed by these events, but ours is not a same feeling. How they experience the events is by necessity different than how I experience them. This dissertation is a history of these different life-worlds in our shared historical present.

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
(a) historical overview.....	5
(b) conceptual clarifications.....	11
(c) historiography: Estonian memory, socialist ethnicities and subjectivities.....	19
(d) first argument.....	31
(e) second argument.....	38
(f) on methodology.....	42
(g) overview of the dissertation.....	45
Chapter 1. Meetings and marriages: encounter stories.....	47
1.1. Introduction.....	47
1.2. Earlier encounters: late 1940 – early 1960s.....	51
1.3. Encounters through two generations: 1940s – 1970s.....	65
1.4. Later encounters: late 1960 – early 1980s.....	76
Chapter 2. Arrivals, places, and local entanglements.....	89
2.1. Introduction.....	89
2.2. Tallinn and ethnicized flow of time.....	91
2.3. Arrivals to Tallinn: trains, coffee, cleanliness.....	99
2.4. A place of living: Tartu.....	107
2.5. A place of living: Eastern Estonia.....	123
Chapter 3. Time and perceptions of the other world.....	148
3.1. Introduction.....	148
3.2. Uncanny Stalinist foundations of two worlds (1944-53).....	152
3.3. The silent Singing Revolution and its aftermath (1988-92).....	172
Chapter 4. Familial bonds, relations, networks.....	193
4.1. Introduction.....	193
4.2. Family borders and the other world: “meet your mother-in-law”.....	195
4.3. Father, family and children.....	214
Chapter 5. Marking ethnicity: names, passports, schools.....	227
5.1. Introduction.....	227
5.2. A life of entangled cultural belongings.....	231
5.3. Cultural belonging of personal names.....	240
5.4. Passport category Nr. 5: laughter and irony of being categorised.....	254
5.5. School and peers: anchoring cultural belonging.....	265
Chapter 6. Inter-generational transmission of cultural worlds.....	283
6.1. Introduction.....	283
6.2. Soviet melting pots: two families and many pasts.....	289
6.3. Jumps between three generations: grandparents and their stories.....	301
6.4. Distant past in Russia.....	313
6.5. Another Estonian interwar past.....	320
6.6. “Future in the past”: transmission of past and imagination of future.....	326
Conclusions.....	335

Bibliography.....	344
Appendix 1. Note on sources: interviews.....	358
Appendix 2. Family trees.....	361
Appendix 3. Meetings and time.....	372
Appendix 4. Soviet studies of inter-marriage in Estonia.....	373

List of Tables

Table 1. Population, ethnicity, urbanisation in Estonia, 1939 – 1989.....11

Introduction

This dissertation is motivated by an aim to write a history of ethno-linguistic cohabitation in Soviet Estonia since the 1950s that is not state or nation centred but rather built on the unfolding of the relations between its population groups.

After the annexation of Estonia into the USSR, the proportion of Russian-speaking population in Estonia increased from 5% in 1945 to 35% in 1989. Adults among this expanding population group had been immersed into the Soviet life for longer than Estonian locals whose background was attached to the inter-war republic of Estonia; newcomers with diverse ethnic backgrounds were overwhelmingly Russian-speaking and the locals were linguistically and ethnically quite homogeneously Estonian. In general, the linguistic, ethnic, political, gendered, class-based, and other individual identifications among the locals and newcomers were hardly reducible to linear causalities or a clear-cut sense of belonging.¹

Nevertheless, the Estonian-Russian linguistic divide was institutionalised, for example, by the parallel school system and linguistic segregation of many work places. The Soviet Estonian society was quite clearly divided into two linguistically

¹ In the current public and scholarly discourse, three terms are mainly used in reference to the non-Estonian population group in Estonia: “Russian-speakers” (based on language), “Russians” (based on ethnic-cultural reference), “aliens” (in Estonian *muulased* with basic reference to non-Estonians, “the others”). “Russian-speakers” is often the preferred term as it involves a large majority of Soviet era “newcomers” – primarily ethnic Ukrainians and Belorussians, but also most of the other people who came to live in Estonia during the Soviet period – that linguistic term thereby hints to ethnic mixing and blur lines often prevalent in the Slavic community in the USSR. The term “Russians” is an ethno-cultural reference that is either reserved to ethnic Russians or designating the Soviet era Russian-speaking newcomers, at large (especially so in everyday language). In the thesis, I do not firmly distinguish “Russian-speakers” and “Russians” in references to the cultural Russian worlds at large (i.e., when this distinction is not actual). However, in relation to concrete people, their experiences and ethnic self-perceptions, the references to language and ethnic belonging will be distinguished. In addition, it should be noted that in everyday language the ethnic terms are prevalently used in reference to language, other ethnic characteristics, and also to accompanying political ideologies (aligning often “Soviet” with “Russian”).

marked social spaces. Either could be named a whole *cultural world* in its own right as both offered intermingled but distinct “reservoirs” of ethnic, political, historical and other meanings, past-future horizons, and personal identification opportunities.

That realisation provides an intriguing and little researched starting point for studying the divisions and plurality in a late Soviet society in the Estonian example. The dissertation focuses specifically on families that brought together people from both cultural worlds through “Russian newcomer” and “Estonian local” marriages. It constitutes an inquiry into the patterns of individual identifications with the larger cultural patterns.² The thesis is based on 95 oral history interviews, which I conducted with people from different age cohorts, social backgrounds and several generations within “mixed” families in 2009-11.

I will develop two main arguments in the dissertation, one about socio-cultural divisions in late Soviet Estonia and the other about the negotiation of social identification of people who live in inter-ethnic families. These two arguments are foregrounded within debates of contemporary memory culture and ethnicity and subjectivity in the late Soviet Union. I will now introduce the short versions of my two main arguments. Later, after looking at some historiographical debates and clarifying my main concepts, I will return to these main arguments.

First, I will look at how the relationship between Estonian and Russian *cultural worlds* – succinctly distinguished by language – unrolled in Soviet Estonia. I

² The nominal “Russian newcomer” and “Estonian local” categories are references to ethnic and to migratory categories. This nominal way of labelling these marriages as “mixed” marriages represents an institutionalised view “from outside” of individual experiences. However, as I will show, this mixity corresponds to the general division lines of the Soviet Estonian cultural worlds. Ethnic reference in these categories refers also to the Soviet categorisation of population groups based on inherited ethnicity (*natsional'nost'* as passport category Nr. 5). Most of the interviewees for the thesis were nominally belonging to “Russian” and “Estonian” ethnicity at the time of marriage; or were their children. Real ethno-cultural identifications of these people were, however, much more complex; this complexity constitutes the heard of this dissertation.

will argue that both worlds maintained a balance and parity by offering attractive and diverse patterns of individual identification. More specifically, the Russian world offered more diverse and ambiguous patterns of identification as it was imbued with sometimes contradictory meanings. It included references to different registers of Russian and other ethnic cultures in the USSR; its political connotations were connected to Soviet power and ideology but also contained voices of discontent. Simultaneously, I will claim that the ways for individual identification were narrower in the Estonian world as they were more tightly related and limited to the Estonian ethnic culture and heritage. However, especially among the working class and among the people born after the war, there was a tendency to be quite accommodative to the identifications that were related to the Soviet state. With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the radical socio-economic changes, the Russian world in Estonia lost its relative strength as the Estonian socio-cultural dominance was firmly established.

Second, I will look at socio-cultural belonging and identification of individuals who were either spouses or children in inter-marriages. I will argue that the Estonian-Russian cultural divisions were scarcely discussed within marriages, but in some situations such debate could be triggered. This observation will lead me to two complimentary explanations which indicate that the cultural conflict in the society was actualised in families in diverse ways, dependent on concrete people and circumstances. On the one hand, I will show that cultural conflicts were silenced and their relevance for family life was reduced. This happened when family members potentially identified with incommensurable ethnic, historical or political patterns and lacked discursive tools with which to process them; especially, as such debates were also excluded from Soviet public discourse. In the absence of “talking things

through,” silencing and de-emphasizing controversies was a practical solution. On the other hand, I indicate that at other times, silence about cultural conflicts also signified their absence. This means that tensions between the two cultural worlds were not personally experienced and perceived by the people in inter-marriages, who would argue that they did not consider the incommensurable aspects of Estonian-Russian cultural divide relevant for their self-identification. In a way, the interviewees would point to constructive ways of living together without identifying with the forces that pulled society (and potentially their marriage) apart.

Both of these arguments refer to an emergent cultural plurality in people's social identifications and the ways in which cultural worlds were inhabited in late Soviet Estonia . Throughout the dissertation I will argue that such plurality was due to the co-existence of various historical generations with very different formative experiences and cultural traditions but it was also further enhanced by the pluralistic policies of the Soviet State.

In the following introduction I will present a historical overview of the development of the inter-cultural situation in the Soviet Estonia. Next, I will introduce some theoretical concepts that will be used in the study, and after that I will discuss how I contribute to the scholarly debates surrounding Estonian memory studies, late socialist ethnicities and subjectivities. Thereafter, I will further develop the core arguments of the dissertation. Towards the end of the introduction I will give a short overview of the research methodology and of the contents of the dissertation chapters.

(a) historical overview

The land of Estonia was dominated for centuries by the Germans, but occasionally it was also conquered by Danes, Swedes, Poles, Russians. Russian power was fixed in 1709 by Peter the First, but the German landlords remained and they were granted special rights for local administration and religious freedom (the Baltic Special Rule). Estonian-speaking peasants lived under this dual cultural dominance for two hundred years and the overlapping spheres of power confirmed Estonia's position as a modern cultural borderland – “between East and West.” The Estonian territory underwent rapid social and cultural development in the 19th century. Serfdom was abolished in 1816-19, general primary education was established in mid-19th century, and literacy expanded among peasants. These tendencies gave rise to a small middle class of mixed ethnic origins by the second part of the century. Some of these people mobilised the masses of Estonian-speakers for national awakening in the 1860-70s which became a mass movement supported by printing press (high literacy among peasants) and mass gatherings (e.g. song festivals since 1869).

The tendency toward ethno-national consolidation reached new levels with the founding of the Estonian Republic (1918) after the War of Independence (1918-20), which occurred on two fronts: with the local Germans and the Bolsheviks. The Treaty of Tartu between Estonia and the Bolsheviks which concluded the war (2nd of February, 1920) was the first international agreement for the isolated new regime in Moscow. And the fact that Russia had fully and unconditionally recognised Estonian integrity and sovereignty became a cornerstone of Estonian law. The Estonian parliamentary liberal political regime of the 1920s switched to the more “stable” semi-

authoritarian one after the coup d'état by Konstantin Päts in March 1934.³ Päts attempted to restore parliamentary rule with the 1938 elections, at which some opposition was tolerated, but this experiment came to its end with the annexation of Estonia by the USSR in June 1940.

The inter-war Estonian Republic was a nation state, but its society was moderately multicultural: it contained statistically approximately 12% ethnic minorities (8.2% Russian; 1.6% German; 0.7% Swedes; 0.4% Jews).⁴ The coastal Swedes would escape the Soviets and leave Estonia in 1944, the Germans would leave in 1939, and the urban Jews and some Russians would escape the approaching front to inland Russia in 1941; some 1,000 local Jews were killed in the local Holocaust, mostly under accusations of 'communism.' In short, during World War II the ethnic minorities would leave, escape, be deported or killed to such extent that Estonia became an almost mono-ethnic country by 1944.

³ Estonian independence was gained due to a favorable geopolitical situation and fast reactions of the national elite, the newly founded Estonian troops fought a successful Independence War (1918-1920) with the parts of the Bolshevik army, the Baltic German army (Landeswehr) and some of the Russian Whites (Yudenich army). See for example, the classical works: Georg von Rauch, *The Baltic States: Years of Independence, 1917-1940* (London: C. Hurst, 1974, 1987); Anatol Lieven, *The Baltic Revolution: Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, and the Path to Independence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993); Toivo Raun, *Estonia and the Estonians* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1987).

⁴ It should be mentioned that in 1925 the Estonian parliament, which was constituted by 90% Estonians, passed the Cultural Autonomy Law that remained in force until the 1940 occupation and was rather unique in Europe. By law, all the ethnicities, primordially understood, were eligible to apply for cultural non-territorial autonomy if they had at least 3000 representatives in Estonia and if at least half of these ethnic representatives signed the application. Interestingly, the 3000 limit was consciously set so that the Jews would also be eligible as there was debate in parliament about the limit between 4000 and 3000 group members. In the end, the Germans (~1.6% of the Estonian population) and the Jews (0.4%) applied for autonomy. On the other hand, the Russians (~8.2%), clearly the largest ethnic minority, did not manage to politically organise or to agree on the usefulness of cultural autonomy. Russians could be described belonging to three distinct groups. First were the "Old Believers" – the people who had refused to accept liturgical reforms introduced in Russia in the 17th century by Peter the Great and had escaped from the mainland Russia; second were workers, who had arrived in search for a job in the new factories; third were the nobility and bourgeoisie of the Tsarist Russia (often the active "Whites") who had arrived during the Russian Revolution and the Civil War. The data from: Rauch, *The Baltic States: 1917-1940*, 82-85. See Kari Alenius, "The Birth of Cultural Autonomy in Estonia: How, Why, and for Whom?" *Journal of Baltic Studies* 38 (Dec 2007): 445-462; John Hiden and David Smith, "Looking beyond the Nation State: A Baltic Vision for National Minorities between the Wars," *Journal of Contemporary History* 41 (2006): 387-399; David Smith, "Retracing Estonia's Russians: Mikhail Kurchinskii and Interwar Cultural Autonomy," *Nationalities Papers* 27 (1999): 455-474.

The Baltic States were directly affected by the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact (23rd of August, 1939). The Soviet government posed an ultimatum to the three corresponding governments on the 24th of September, demanding acceptance of massive Red Army bases on their lands to “better guarantee the regional security.”⁵ After the Moscow-orchestrated *coup d’etat*, Estonia was annexed to the USSR in August 1940, where it would remain until 1991, excepting the occupation by Nazi Germany in 1941-44. The establishment of Stalinist order was accompanied by vast human losses through executions, deportations, and emigration; naturally, the new regime targeted former elites and intellectuals, but also wealthier peasantry and the guerilla fighters in the forest. Along with world war, the mass deportations of June 1941 and March 1949 serve as major themes by which Estonians remember and measure their personal pasts.⁶ The 1941 deportation targeted the families of national elites (~50% survived) and the 1949 deportation mostly wealthier peasantry (~85% survived).

After 1953/56, the Soviet regime relaxed significantly in Khrushchev’s “thaw,” then stagnated under Brezhnev. However, the tendencies of liberalization were never successfully tamed after the 1950s; the “thaw” lasted longer than in Russia. It was seriously countered only in 1978-79 with new attempts to spread Russian language in education and daily life and with the replacement of liberalised and localised First Secretary of the Estonian Communist Party (Johannes Käbin, in

⁵ Finland refused the Soviet ultimatum and the USSR attacked it in the autumn 1939, Winter War started, and the USSR was expelled from the League of Nations due to its aggression.

⁶ Aigi Rahi-Tamm, “Human Loss,” in *The White Book: Losses Inflicted on the Estonian Nation by Occupation Regimes 1940-1991*, ed. by Vello Salo et al., transl. by Mari Ets et al. (Tallinn: Estonian Encyclopaedia Publishers, 2005), 30, 38.

office: 1950-78) with a Russifying emissary from Moscow (Karl Vaino, in office: 1978-88).⁷

Immigration from the other parts of the USSR began right in 1944 and accelerated after the lifting of restrictions on internal movement of people in the Soviet Union the next year.⁸ Nevertheless, due to massive terror and post-war hardships everyone's primary concern was personal survival and not the influx of Russian-speaking people. The immigration rates increased in the 1960s with the establishment of large all-union enterprises and the centralisation of collective farming. Therefore, even if the number of newcomers decreased by the end of the 1970s and living standards improved rapidly, for Estonians, the "very threat of becoming a minority in 'one's own country'" became widespread and the popular view of an "immigrant as a poorly-educated and uncultured Russian construction worker seemed to loom large."⁹ The general story was that one million inhabitants was the absolute minimum for a nation to survive; Estonians were on the edge.

Throughout the Soviet rule, enforced industrialization created a "Russifying" type of Sovietization in the Baltic states, establishing conditions very distinct from those in the nominally independent "satellite states" in Eastern Europe. The number of Russian-speakers grew from 3-4% in 1945 to ~35% in 1989, in Estonia. But the cause and effect relationship between industrialisation and migration has not been clearly

⁷ On the contemporary history of Estonia, see the classic Romuald Misiunas, and Rein Taagepera, *The Baltic States: Years of Dependence, 1940-1990* (London: C. Hurst, 1993); also Olaf Mertelsmann, ed., *The Sovietisation of the Baltic States, 1940-1956* (Tartu: Kleio, 2003).

⁸ Olaf Mertelsmann, "Ida-Virumaale sisserändamise põhjused pärast Teist maailmasõda" (The Reasons for Immigration in the Ida-Virumaa Region after the Second World War), *Ajalooline Ajakiri* (Historical journal) 2007, 1 (119), 51–74; David Vseviov, *Nõukogudeaegne Narva elanikkonna kujunemine 1944-1970* (Formation of the population of Narva during the Soviet era 1944-1970) (Tartu: Okupatsioonide Repressiivpoliitika Uurimise Riiklik Komisjon, 2001); Andreas Demuth, "Politics, Migration and Minorities in Independent and Soviet Estonia, 1918-1998" (PhD Diss., University of Osnabrück, 2000)

⁹ Misiunas and Taagepera, *The Baltic States: 1940-1990*, 215-216.

established.¹⁰ It is argued that such (im)migration was generally voluntary, especially after the decrease of the Stalinist administrative direction to migration. However, in later years migration was still encouraged by the leading industries within the all-union network that were in search for additional labour force. The higher living standards were a principal attraction for newcomers.

The Estonian demographic revolution happened in the late 1800s¹¹ and by the later 1930s Estonian natality rate was below the natural reproduction level. Demographic revolution in the Russian Slavic regions had started around half a century later and concluded around 20-years later by the 1960s.¹² Therefore, in the post-war decades, the majority of the immigrant population arrived from the Slavic regions of the USSR that were often relatively close to Estonia.¹³ However, by the

¹⁰ The Stalinist regime certainly aimed to fiercely suppress resistance. One can notice Stalinist immigration of Russians into Estonia and the simultaneous deportation of Estonians to Siberia – if the aim had been to really rebuild the War damage and bring “progress” then the intra-republic population shift would have been cheaper and more effective, not to mention the humanistic and emotional side. See: Olaf Mertelsmann, ed., *The Sovietization of the Baltic States, 1940-1956* (Tartu: Kleio, 2003); Mertelsmann, *The Sovietisation of the Baltic States*; Olaf Mertelsmann, “Social and Oral History in Estonia,” *East Central Europe* 34–35 (2007–2008): 63–80;

¹¹ At that time when Estonians moved to the other provinces of the Russian empire (there are around 500 settlements counted). Some of these people returned to Estonia in early 1920s as based on the conditions of the Tartu Peace Treaty, but a majority of them remained in the Soviet Union. Large parts of that population group were a target of the 1937. Stalinist purges in a series of attacks against the potentially unfaithful western borderland nationalities.

¹² J. Hajnal famously argued that since the 16th century until the demographic revolution, the marriage patterns in Europe could be divided into two. Eastern Europe was characterised by early and universal marriage with complex family structures, Western Europe was characterised by late and less universal marriage (more bachelors) with nuclear families. He draws a separation line from Leningrad to Trieste that became famous in demography as “Hajnal line.” See: J. Hajnal, “European Marriage Patterns in Perspective,” in *Population in History* ed. by D. Glass and D. Eversley, 101-143 (London: Arnold, 1965). Estonia is placed in the Eastern margins on the West of the line since the 17th century as the “West European” marriage type prevails: people married later and a number of women remained unmarried for life. Kalev Katus argues that the following demographic revolution in the late 1800s happened largely according to the “French type”: the death and birth rates fell simultaneously and produced low increase in population numbers (as opposed to the “English type” where birth rates remain high for 10-20 years longer). See: Kalev Katus, *Eesti demograafiline areng läbi sajandite* (Estonian demographic development through centuries) (Tallinn: Estonian Interuniversity Population Research Centre, 1989).

¹³ I use here the concepts of “migrant” and “immigrant” consciously in reference to the discipline of demography, but the concept is of course widely used also in political science, sociology and elsewhere. However, it is quite rarely used by Estonians who refer to the population group who arrived to live in Soviet Estonia rather as “Russians.” “Migrant” refers in scientific terms also to other ethnicities and native Estonians who resettled from other parts of the USSR, and it excludes the non-Estonians who had survived the World War II on the spot (mostly the rural Russian old-believers near

1960-70s, their migratory potential sharply decreased and the Estonian migration hinterland shifted further away from Estonia towards the regions with high migratory potential. However, this also decreased the number of migrants.¹⁴ Simultaneously, a large majority of the migratory workforce who moved into Estonia did not stay there but moved further on (it is claimed that up to 70-80% left Estonia after some time). This rotation of people certainly diminished their interest in the local affairs but it also weakened influence on local affairs.¹⁵ Despite the difficult post-Soviet transition years, most of the Russian-speakers who were in Estonia in 1991 have remained there since. In 2000, immigrants constituted 30% of the Estonian population, comprised in equal parts of Estonian citizens, Russian citizens, and stateless residents. The basic demographic changes in Estonia are illustrated by the table below.

the Lake Peipus). However, most importantly, the terms “migrant” and “immigrant” are almost never used by the Russian-speaking population, and if only, then to denote movement across the state borders. With connotations of rootlessness and non-belonging, it is often taken as a threatening and insulting label on behalf of the “Russian newcomers.” I should also note that migration studies use the concept of a “generation” to denote the connection between presence and kinship: 1st generation were migrating as adults, 2nd generation followed parents as children or rather were already born in the new place, 3rd generation are the descendants of people who were socialised locally but who have ancestry abroad. In this thesis “generation” is rather related to discussing kinship relations and common historical experiences of birth cohorts.. An insightful discussion of the connotations of the terms “migrant” is provided in the following dissertation: Elo-Hanna Seljamaa, “A Home for 121 Nationalities or Less: Nationalism, Ethnicity, and Integration in Post-Soviet Estonia” (PhD diss., The Ohio State University, 2012), 46-49. (Abstract is accessible online, 10 Oct. 2013, http://rave.ohiolink.edu/etdc/view?acc_num=osu1345545678).

¹⁴ Luule Sakkeus, *Post-War Migration Trends in the Baltic States* (Tallinn: Estonian Interuniversity Population Research Centre, 1992). See also: Kalev Katus, Allan Puur, Luule Sakkeus, “National minorities in Estonia,” in *The Baltic countries under occupation*, ed. by Anu-Mai Kõll (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2003), 167 – 212.

¹⁵ Misiunas and Taagepera, *The Baltic States: 1940-1990*, 194, 215. For example, in 1963, there were 72 departures for every 100 new arrivals in the Baltic cities. In 1968-69, Estonia received 35 300 immigrants and saw an outflow of 19 700 people.

Table 1. Population, ethnicity, urbanisation in Estonia, 1939 – 1989.¹⁶

Year	Total population (Thousands)	Proportion of Estonians out of total (%)	Proportion of urban population out of total (%)
1940	1 134	88	34
1945	854	97	31
1950	1 097	78	47
1959	1 197	75	57
1970	1 356	68	65
1979	1 464	65	70
1989	1 565	61	75

As previously mentioned, since World War II, then, the Estonian society has been divided in large terms between “local Estonians” and “newcomer Russians” along the lines of Estonian and Russian cultural worlds. In the last twenty years, this division has been further emphasized by the separation of public media consumption: Russian-speakers follow largely media that is produced in Russia and Estonian-speakers follow the local media. In the following part of the introduction I will explain further how I have disentangled the societal and individual perspectives on these different levels of social life.

(b) conceptual clarifications

The premise of *oral history* is showing the possibilities and limitations of individual (or group) negotiation for action and meaning within larger societal frames. In the words of one of its famous practitioners, Alessandro Portelli, the focus of oral history lies on *and* in the phrase “life and times,” on in-betweenness, on balance between the

¹⁶ Based on census data (1959, 1970, 1979, 1989) and population estimates (1939, 1945, 1950). Kalev Katus and Luule Sakkeus, *Foreign-Born Population in Estonia* (Tallinn: Estonian Interuniversity Population Research Centre, 1992), 6. Misiunas and Taagepera, *The Baltic States*, 353-364.

individuals and society.¹⁷ The conceptual apparatus of this dissertation seeks to associate the social situation in (post-)Soviet Estonia (“times”) with the diverse individual perspectives, as they emerge, from life-stories (“life”). This is done in the empirical situation in which the Estonian society was and is culturally divided and this division reflects, although imperfectly, in individual inter-marriage situations. Hence, in the following, I will describe how the oral history of “Russian newcomer” and “Estonian local” families connects to the Russian-Estonian cultural division in Estonian society. I will start from the societal level and move towards individuals.

From the World War II onwards, the Estonian and Russian linguistic realms in Estonia formed large – intertwined but also parallel – systems of identification that offered different horizons of meaning, social action, future, and sense of belonging to people. These two realms were reproductive, structuring, and meaningful environments for individuals and they could therefore be described as distinct *cultural worlds*.¹⁸ As briefly mentioned before, I have named them as *Estonian cultural world*

¹⁷ Alessandro Portelli, “Oral History as Genre,” in *The Battle of Valle Giulia: Oral History and the Art of Dialogue* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), 6. Oral history mostly stays “in between” in order to “to connect life to times, uniqueness to representativeness, as well as orality to writing.” “*Life and times* is a cliché definition of biography and autobiography,” we should turn more attention to the word in the middle, she says. Portelli also lists some other aspects on the side of “life”: privacy, individual, biography, narrative, life-story; and on the side of “times”: public, social, history, document, testimony.

¹⁸ I propose “cultural worlds” as a metaphor for stressing that these constellations contained most of people's day-to-day interactive spaces and experiences, but that they were also limited, interconnected, and porous realms. “Cultural world” has less totalizing connotations than “culture,” it appears less pre-existing and more resulting from human activities. The metaphor of *worlds* is used to characterise ethnic social divisions also prominently in: Rogers Brubaker, Margit Feischmidt, Jon Fox, Liana Grancea, *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town* (Princeton University Press, 2006), 266-268. // There is no need to get involved here in the debate about “what is culture.” However, I propose the following working definition of culture for the background of the discussion of “cultural worlds” by H. Spencer-Oatey: “Culture is a fuzzy set of basic assumptions and values, orientations to life, beliefs, policies, procedures and behavioural conventions that are shared by a group of people, and that influence (but do not determine) each member’s behaviour and his/her interpretations of the ‘meaning’ of other people’s behaviour.” See: Helen Spencer-Oatey, ed, *Culturally Speaking: Culture, Communication and Politeness Theory* (London: Continuum, 2008), 3. For a short overview of definitions of culture, see by the same author: Helen Spencer-Oatey, *What is culture? A compilation of quotations*, GlobalPAD Core Concepts, available online: <http://go.warwick.ac.uk/globalpadintercultural>, accessed: 10 Feb 2014.

and *Russian cultural world*. This is done with the acknowledgement that both worlds offered diverse paths for socialisation and personal identification within themselves; and that they were intertwined and located within other structures, such as the ESSR and the USSR. The borders of these cultural worlds were defined most strongly by the two mutually unintelligible languages that formed two parallel educational tracks. I should stress that these worlds contained the reservoirs of political and ethnic identifications, but they should *not* be understood as political or ethnic worlds. Political ideology and ethnic patterns should rather be seen as active elements within these cultural worlds. This distinction should help to pay attention to the wider social differences and plural identification patters; for example, to ethnic diversity and Soviet ideology within the Russian world and to a more homogeneous ethnic Estonian world that nevertheless contained generational and social class based diversity.¹⁹

Without delving too deep into the theories of “culture,” I would like to distinguish between its contents and borders in order to later continue with the discussion of cultural identification. *Contents* could be understood as the “stuff” of culture – shared meanings and beliefs, histories, narrative templates, language – these are the elements that people socially identify with and through which they enact their social belonging.²⁰ Simultaneously, *borders* would designate the surrounding and

¹⁹ Most of the time, I will not distinguish between the concepts of a “nation” that emphasizes the emergence of modern state-population relations and “ethnicity” that is more about the shared descent, language and “culture” and group memories/histories. Due to the focus of this thesis, I mostly speak about ethnic identification patters – I will make a difference if it is relevant whether this process refers to nationalism or other types of ethnic tradition. // I will also take note that the scholarly debates have moved from the primordial-constructivist divide (“what ethnicity *is*?”) to the debate about the actualisation of ethnicity: when does it matter and to whom? Is the participant (emic) or the observer (etic) perspective more important to make sense of it? See: Stephen Larin, “Conceptual Debates in Ethnicity, Nationalism, and Migration,” in: *The International Studies Encyclopaedia*, ed. by Robert Denemark (Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 438-457; Steve Fenton, *Ethnicity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003); Christian Karner, *Ethnicity and Everyday Life* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007).

²⁰ Looking only at the “contents” of culture has a primordializing tendency due to a danger of buying into the cultural narratives of its intemporality. This is exemplified by the debate around Clifford Geertz’s “culturalist” account of ethnicity that discusses the “primordial” beliefs that actors have. Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973),

maintenance of cultural “stuff.” Cultural borders result of human capacity to make distinctions and to externalise the unknown and the unfitting, to distinguish between “one's own” and the “others.”²¹ The students of culture have argued that attention to borders allows for a more dynamic look at the processual maintenance of cultural boundaries that round up individuals and personal identifications while designating where people should “belong.”²²

In the dissertation, I will pay attention to both the contents and borders of the cultural worlds in Soviet Estonia.²³ I will ask how people relate themselves with the larger elements of cultural “stuff” and how they maintain social belonging by “boundary work” of distinguishing between what/who is “in” and what is “out.”²⁴ For doing that, I will follow Brubaker's and Cooper' call for using the term *identification*

89; *Primordial Loyalties and Standing Entities: Anthropological Reflections on the Politics of Identity* (Budapest: Collegium Budapest, 1994).

²¹ See for a classic: Fredrik Barth, “Introduction,” in: *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, ed. by Fredrik Barth (Boston: Little, Brown, 1969): 9-38. Rogers Brubaker's approach to ethnicity as cognition: Rogers Brubaker, Mara Loveman, and Peter Stamatov, “Ethnicity as Cognition,” *Theory and Society* 33 (2004): 31-64.

²² The dichotomy of contents and border-maintenance has been criticised by pointing to their deep ontological interplay; but also by pointing to the essentialised conclusions that both approaches may result to. Richard Jenkins builds a cultural model for ethnicity. His “basic anthropological model of ethnicity” emphasises the individual and collective identifications with ethnic belongings for self-maintenance; cultural meaning-systems and group boundary-work. Jenkins brings both aspects together in the following manner: “Ethnicity is “a matter of ‘cultural’ differentiation (bearing in mind that identity is always a dialectic between similarity and difference); [...] a matter of shared meanings – “culture” – but it is also produced and reproduced during interaction, [...] no more fixed than the way of life of which it is part, or the situations in which it is produced and reproduced; [...] both collective and individual, externalized in social interaction and the categorization of others, and internalized in personal self-identification.” See: Richard Jenkins, *Rethinking ethnicity*, 2nd ed. (Los Angeles, London: Sage, 2008, 1997), 169.

²³ However, both approaches bear an essentialising tendency of looking at cultures “as such,” as contained wholes. This danger is countered here by an extensive focus on the diverse individual perspectives and on the very intermingling of the presumed Estonian and Russian worlds as the boundary between them would often dissolve and shift in everyday life.

²⁴ Ursula Apitzsch, “Ethnicity as Participation and Belonging,” *Ethnicity, Belonging and Biography*, ed. by Gabriele Rosenthal and Artur Bogner (Berlin: LIT, 2009), 83-96. Lisa Fein, “Symbolic Boundaries and National Borders: The Construction of an Estonian Russian Identity,” *Nationalities Papers* 33 (2005): 333-344. In an Estonian-Russian life-story: Tiiu Jaago, “Cultural Borders in an Autobiographical Narrative,” *Folklore* 52 (2012): 15 – 38. For an overview of studies of social and cultural boundaries: Michele Lamont and Virág Molnár, “The Study of Boundaries in the Social Sciences,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 28 (2002): 167-195; Jimmy Sanders, “Ethnic Boundaries and Identity in Plural Societies,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 28 (2002): 327-357.

over the ambiguous and manifold “identity.”²⁵ Identification signifies the relationships of humans to others and to societal categories; it describes people's sense of belonging as a mixture of rather permanent patterns and situational connections.²⁶ This term also enables to discuss how people see themselves in relation to the cultural world and public discourse in the process of *self-identification*.²⁷

The patterns of identification that were available to individuals in the cultural worlds appeared both in permanent and situational ways. While paying attention to the generally situational, triggered nature of cultural identifications, I came to accept interviewees' stable understandings of their sense of belonging through the interviews. For example, in case of ethnicity, people would often wish to “possess” and “have” ethnicity – they identify themselves and others ethnically in a stable manner and they claim that it matters. Such discursive assertions in life-story telling merit further analysis in the course of the dissertation as dialogical assertions and experiential worlds emerging behind them do not always coincide.

Up to now, I have discussed how I conceptualise cultural worlds and how I look at individual relationships to these worlds in the dissertation. This means that along the Alessandro Portelli's continuum of “life *and* times,” I moved half way from

²⁵ For literature overview and some theoretical discussion of a similar proposal, see: Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, “Beyond “Identity,”” *Theory and Society* 29 (2000): 1-47. “As a processual, active term, derived from a verb, 'identification' lacks the reifying connotations of 'identity.' It invites us to specify the agents that do the identifying. And it does not presuppose that such identifying (even by powerful agents, such as the state) will necessarily result in the internal sameness, the distinctiveness, the bounded groupness that political entrepreneurs may seek to achieve.” (Brubaker and Cooper, “Beyond “Identity,”” 14).

²⁶ Ursula Apitzsch, “Ethnicity as Participation and Belonging,” *Ethnicity, Belonging and Biography*, ed. by Gabriele Rosenthal and Artur Bogner, (Berlin: LIT, 2009), 83-96.

²⁷ Brubaker and Cooper suggest that *self-understanding* means “to characterize oneself, to locate oneself vis-a-vis known others, to situate oneself in a narrative, to place oneself in a category [...] it is a dispositional term that designates what might be called 'situated subjectivity': one's sense of who one is, of one's social location, and of how (given the first two) one is prepared to act. [...] The term 'self-understanding,' it is important to emphasize, does not imply a distinctively modern or Western understanding of the 'self' as a homogeneous, bounded, unitary entity. A sense of who one is can take many forms.” (“Beyond “Identity,”” 14; 17).

the generic “times” to the relationships between individual and social (“and”). Now, I should like to pay more attention to what Portelli calls “life” – to individual human beings. I propose to look at individuals within their personalised webs of social identifications and cultural negotiation with the concepts of life-world and habitus. The notion of *life-world* designates how people build up their understanding of the world in relation to their personal dispositions, values and habits; how they make sense of everyday life and life-course.²⁸ This phenomenological concept originates from the works of A. Schütz and bears similarity to P. Bourdieu’s notion of *habitus* that is “an acquired scheme of values and disposition to action” which enables and restricts the personal horizon and perception of the world.²⁹ Habitus draws attention to the fundamental dispositions (long-lasting identifications) that are often formed and fixed at a rather young age, mostly in the family environment, and that are resistant to later change; it stresses contingencies of the past, relative stability of adult self and limits to individual change. All in all, life-world and habitus take a holistic view of individuals; not only do they point to the irreducibility of life to social categories and

²⁸ Alfred Schütz refers to *life-world* as “the world of everyday, governed by person’s spatially distributed and temporally arranged natural attitudes”; this is the area of reality which is logical and structured for the person. Life-world presents itself “as normal and self-evident, ordered and objective, and as such unquestioned.” Robert Wuthrow et al, *Cultural Analysis. The Work of Peter L. Berger, Mary Douglas, Michel Foucault, and Jürgen Habermas* (London: Routledge, 1984), 32. See also: Alfred Schütz and Thomas Luckmann, *The Structures of the Life-World*, transl. by Richard Zaner and Tristram Engelhardt, Jr. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1990). It could be noted that Jürgen Habermas developed the notion of *life-world* in his framework of theorising the polarization of *system* and *life-world*. System is the area of economic and administrative world; life-world is the area of social and private. Habermas argues that their separation is the result of historical development of modernity. For our purposes this division is not explanatory. See: Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Vol. 1-2 (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989-1991).

²⁹ Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, 1977), 72. *Habitus* is individual’s system of acquired schemes of perception, thought and action in relation to the *field(s)* as social arena(s) of personal struggles. An oft-quoted definition of habitus is the following: “The conditionings associated with a particular class of conditions of existence produce habitus, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organise practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at an end or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them.”

to the contextuality of social identifications, but they also indicate stability and resistance to change in adult subjectivity.

Before finishing this theoretical recourse, I would like to situate the above-mentioned notions within the historical flow of time and family relations which are also within the focus of the dissertation. This will be done with the concepts of birth cohort and generation. *Birth cohort* denotes a group of people born at a delimited time period and restricted to some physical space. Members of such cohorts often experience historical events in similar ways as these affect their outlook on the wider world and their own life course. This observation has given rise to the notion of *historical generation* that was defined by K. Mannheim as a group of people that share a common experience of some bigger socio-historical events which set the social horizons and value dispositions of these people.³⁰

While looking at how the Estonian and Russian cultural worlds were inhabited in Estonia by the inter-married people and their children from the World War II to present, the primary focus of this dissertation is on the spouses who were born in 1930-50s and on their children who were born in 1950-70s. Such are their temporally fixed birth cohorts. At the same time, it is clear that the formative experiences of the intermarried “Russian newcomers” and “Estonian locals” were by definition different: they belong to comparable birth cohorts and to different historical

³⁰ Karl Mannheim, “The Problem of Generations,” in *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1952), 276-320. Mannheim argued that some socio-historical conditions inculcate people’s dispositions much more than stable situations, that young adult age cohort and some members of that cohorts are normally influenced more intensively. In short, *historical generations* with shared dispositions appear in society irregularly, dependent on time, and include possibly only some members of a birth cohort. (Mannheim, “The Problem of Generations,” 310). Some classical overview articles that map the field and historical development of generational studies are discussed in the following articles: Hans Jaeger, “Generations in History: Reflections on a Controversial Concept,” *History and Theory* 24 (1985): 273-292; Alan Spitzer, “The Historical Problem of Generations,” *American Historical Review* 78 (1973): 1353-1385.

generations.³¹ And yet, their children grew up in late socialism and their formative experiences are more uniform even if their life-choices and trajectories would oscillate between the Russian and Estonian worlds.

Historical generation will locate people in time and provide a ground for comparing the experiential differences between the cultural worlds. Generation, however, is a term of multiple usages that all stem from references to the basics of human generativity and reproduction of life.³² In this dissertation I focus on the confluence of familial and social generativity by looking at the negotiation of cultural worlds between the spouses and the transmission of cultural identifications to children. Hence, in addition to temporally fixed historical generations, I will pay attention to *family generations* mostly by looking at family dynamics between *parents* and *children*. Family generation and historical generation are connected by focusing on inter-married spouses (*parents*), born from 1930s to 1950s, and on their *children*, born from 1950s to 1970s.³³

Summing up this conceptual introduction, I would say that I will look at the macro and micro-level cultural identification processes based on the oral histories with people whose marriages are nominally “in-between” the Russian and Estonian

³¹ As the marriages happened normally between people of very similar age groups, these inter-marriages could also be understood as horizontally inter-generational marriages. Such line of

³² The origins of the word refer to the old ideas about human capacity and will for generativity and generationality as the bases for the reproduction of life and the ongoing of history and time – they refer to biological and social aspects of social (re)generation which imbues the term with some ambivalence. See: Jürgen Reulecke, “Generation/Generationality, Generativity, and Memory,” in *Cultural Memory Studies. An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. by Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning, 119-125 (Berlin, 2008). David Kertzer, “Generations as a Sociological Problem.” *Annual Review of Sociology* 9 (1983): 125–149. (Kertzer’s article could also be consulted for further literature and examples.) Jane Pilcher, “Mannheim’s Sociology of Generations: An Undervalued Legacy,” *The British Journal of Sociology* 45, No. 3 (Sept 1994): 481-495.

³³ There will be some exceptions to this general pattern. In some families, inter-marriages happened through several generations; in some other cases, the voices of grandchildren are employed in analysis (for an additional perspective that they offer) and recourse is made to grandparents as influential or meaningful figures in people’s lives. In addition, this systematic overview of historical and family generations should not be seen as locating an “ideal nuclear family” in time (the one with fluent inter-generational transmission, with balanced family roles, or with symmetrical access to ancestry). This thesis aims not to take a normative stance on family systems.

cultural worlds. I will use the idea of “cultural world,” perhaps a less traditional name, to describe the division in Estonian society while trying to avoid the ethnic determinism prevalent in popular discourse. As for individuals, I will discuss their patterns of identification with the available discourses, meanings, dispositions – these could be either received through the public channels or from peers and through inter-generational transmission in the family. In order to locate people both in historical time and in family relations, I use the notions of family and historical generation.

In the following part of the introduction, I will discuss some scholarly debates around the Estonian memory studies, late socialist ethnicities and subjectivities. I will link the possible contributions of the thesis with conceptual framework developed up to now.

(c) historiography: Estonian memory, socialist ethnicities and subjectivities

One of the underlying motivators of this thesis is the fact that the studies of the contemporary history of Estonia and of its present social situation have not looked into the unfolding relations between the “Estonian newcomers” and “Russian locals.” Estonian historiography has not been able to accommodate non-Estonians into its narrative in a cohesive manner; at best, Russian-speakers are given the role of a mass of migrants in the Estonian story.³⁴ The sociological and political science approaches have paid more attention to the Russian-speaking newcomers, but mostly from the perspective of the legacy of the Soviet period for the “nationalizing” Estonian

³⁴ E.g.: On general Estonian historiography: Agu Pajur, Tõnu Tannberg and Sulev Vahtre, eds., *Eesti ajalugu: Vabadussõjast taasiseseisvumiseni* (History of Estonia: from the Independence war to the regaining of the independence) (Tartu: Ilmamaa, 2005). On migration to Estonia during the Soviet period: Olaf Mertelsmann, “Ida-Virumaale sisserändamise põhjused pärast Teist maailmasõda”; Vseviiov, *Nõukogudeaegne Narva elanikkonna kujunemine 1944-1970*; Kristina Kallas, *The Formation of Interethnic Relations in Soviet Estonia: Host – Immigrant Relationships* (MA Diss., Central European University, 2002). In addition, see the literature under the historical overview.

Republic in the 1990s and for the demographical and socio-cultural processes among the Russian-speakers.³⁵ In recent years, the majority of works on the Russian-speaking community in Estonia have evolved around the discussion of the “post-Bronze Soldier crisis” – social representations, historical causes, and the role of external actors, such as the EU and Russia, in influencing the course and conceptualisations of the crisis.³⁶ Most of these works provide the background for a macro-level understanding of the discursive environment in contemporary Estonia.

The researchers of memory cultures in Estonia have since the late 1990s primarily dealt with the ethnically Estonian autobiographers who have responded to

³⁵ David Laitin, *Identity in Formation: The Russian-speaking Populations in the Near Abroad* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998); Anatol Lieven, *The Baltic Revolution: Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, and the Path to Independence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994); Some Estonian sociological studies: Priit Järve, *Vene Noored Eestis: sotsioloogiline Mosaiik* (Russian youth in Estonia: sociological mosaic) (Tallinn: Avita, 1997); Marju Lauristin and Mati Heidmets, *The Challenge of the Russian Minority Emerging Multicultural Democracy in Estonia* (Tartu University Press, 2002); Hallik, *Koos pole lihtne aga eraldi ei saa*; Gerli Nimmerfeldt, “Identificational Integration: Conceptualisation and Operationalisation on the Example of Second Generation Russians in Estonia” (PhD Diss., Tallinn University, 2011); Triin Vihalemm and Anu Masso, “Identity Dynamics of Russian-speakers of Estonia in the Transition Period,” *Journal of Baltic Studies* 34 (2003): 92-116; Triin Vihalemm and Margit Keller, “Looking Russian or Estonian: Young consumers constructing the Ethnic 'self' and 'other,’” *Consumption Markets and Culture* 14 (2011): 293-309.

³⁶ On public representation of memory and on the Estonian “war” on monuments: Meike Wulf, “Politics of History in Estonia: Changing Memory Regimes 1987-2009,” in *History of Communism in Europe* (2010): 245-267. Mälksoo discusses the Estonian-Russian foreign policy confrontation in the 2007s Bronze soldier crisis, Maria Mälksoo, “Liminality and Contested Europeaness: Conflicting Memory Politics in the Baltic Space,” in *Identity and Foreign Policy: Baltic-Russian Relations and European Integration*, ed. by Eiki Berg and Piret Ehin (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 65-83. Marek Tamm and Pille Petersoo, eds, *Monumentaalne konflikt: mälu, poliitika ja identiteet tänapäeva Eestis* (Monumental conflict: memory, politics and identity in contemporary Estonia) (Tallinn: Varrak, 2008); Siobhan Kattago, “Commemorating Liberation and Occupation: War Memorials Along the Road to Narva,” *Journal of Baltic Studies* 39 (2008): 431 – 449. // On the intertwining nature of politics, public and historical memories in Independent Estonia (mostly from the ethnic Estonian perspective): Marek Tamm, “In Search of Lost Time: Memory Politics in Estonia, 1991–2011,” *Nationalities Papers* 41 (2013): 651-674; Meike Wulf and Pertti Grönholm, “Generating Meaning Across Generations: The Role of Historians in the Codification of History in Soviet and Post-Soviet Estonia,” *Journal of Baltic Studies* 41 (2010): 351-382; Pääbo compares presentation of information in high-school history books: Heiko Pääbo, “Potential of Collective Memory Based International Identity Conflicts in Post-Imperial Space. Comparison of Russian Master Narrative with Estonian, Ukrainian and Georgian Master Narratives” (PhD diss., Tartu University, 2011); Martyn Housden and David Smith, eds, *Forgotten Pages in Baltic History. Themes of Diversity and Inclusiveness* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2011); Eva Clarita Pettai, *Memory and Pluralism in the Baltic States* (Routledge, 2011)

the calls of various autobiographical competitions.³⁷ This dissertation builds also on the body of knowledge that has been gathered around generational differences in the memories of socialism based on the large number of Estonians' autobiographies and on oral history interviews.³⁸ It could be observed that the focus of Estonian memory studies is drifting from traumas and suffering in Stalinism towards a more nuanced look at the whole period of socialism,³⁹ even if a large bulk of the scholarship continues to deal with Stalinism and/or the totalitarian paradigm. In addition, these studies are to a large extent exclusively about ethnic Estonians. The studies of the Russian-speaking population are continuously focused on the macro-level sociological processes, and so the history of that diverse community in the 20th century Estonia continues to be unwritten.

³⁷ For a review of Estonian autobiographical collection and interpretation, see the following introduction to a collection of 25 autobiographies of Estonians: Tiina Kirss and Jüri Kivimäe, "Estonian Life Stories and Histories," in *Estonian Life Stories*, ed. and transl. by Tiina Kirss, compiled by Rutt Hinrikus, 1-31 (Budapest, New York: Central European University Press, 2009). The following PhD thesis includes quite extensive overview of Estonian autobiography collections and studies: Ene Kõresaar, "Memory and History in Estonian Post-Soviet Life Stories: Private and Public, Individual and Collective from the Perspective of Biographical Syncretism" (PhD Diss., Tartu University, 2004). The following review discusses some developments in biographical research rather from the perspective of social history: Olaf Mertelsmann, "Social and Oral History in Estonia," *East Central Europe* 34–35 (2007–2008): 63–80.

³⁸ Among these approaches, two stand out more prominently. Ene Kõresaar argues that public Estonian memory culture was in syncretic relationship with the memories of the older Estonians (1920s generation), by this template the Stalinist era was conceptualised as "national rupture" that was followed by the colonisation of the land that effectively destroyed the nation's normal course of life. See: Ene Kõresaar, *Elu ideoloogiad. Kollektiivne mälu ja autobiograafiline minevikutõlgendus eestlaste elulugudes* (Life ideologies. Collective memory and autobiographical assessment of the past in the memoirs of Estonians) (Tartu: Eesti Rahva Muuseum, 2005). In English: Kõresaar, "Memory and History in Estonian Post-Soviet Life Stories." // Aili Aarelaid-Tart conducted thematic biographical interviews with Estonians and with some Russians, she focused on the Soviet experiences of Estonians and on the experiences of collapse of the Soviet Union of the Russian-speakers by putting forward the idea of "cultural trauma" paradigm in order understand these experiences. Aili Aarelaid, *Ikka kultuurile mõeldes* (Still thinking about the culture) (Tallinn: Virgela, 1998); Aili Aarelaid-Tart, *Cultural Trauma and Life Stories* (Vaajakoski: Kikimora Publications, 2006). See also articles in: Ene Kõresaar, Epp Lauk, and Kristin Kuutma, *The Burden of Remembering: Recollections and Representations of the Twentieth Century* (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2009); and: Li Bennich-Björkman and Aili Aarelaid-Tart, *Baltic Biographies at Historical Crossroads* (New York: Routledge, 2012); Aili Aarelaid-Tart, *Nullindate kultuur II: põlvkondlikud piitimused* (Zeroes culture II: generational testimonies) (Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus, 2012).

³⁹ For example, see: Kirsti Jõesalu and Ene Kõresaar, "Continuity or Discontinuity: On the Dynamics of Remembering "Mature Socialism" in Estonian Post-Soviet Remembrance Culture," *Journal of Baltic Studies* 44 (2013): 177-203.

This thesis will take quite a different approach from the former works. It is focused on the inter-connections of the Estonian and Russian cultural worlds and it privileges a grass-roots perspective. The dissertation differs from the former studies of memory cultures in Estonia also by its methodology – it is an oral history. In addition, its focus shifts from Stalinist after-life towards an attempt to examine the last decades of the Soviet experience in their “own terms” – not as squeezed between the Stalinist repressions (“traumas”) and the repressions from late 1980s onwards (“biographical boom”). The thesis remains bound to an ethnic place (Estonia) and to some local concerns but it is looking for the opportunities to be accommodative to Estonia's discursive other.

In addition to the mentioned gaps in Estonian historiography, the project is also motivated by the realisation that the experiences and subjectivities in the period of late socialism are generally understudied and -theorised and that their discussions are often caught up in Western discourses and narratives of the local elite on the “end of history,” which see the period through the lens of its eventual demise. Alexei Yurchak has called historians to follow the example of post-colonial theorists and to “provincialize” the Western master narrative of history in order to look at late socialism in its own right and to avoid using dichotomous characterisations such as communist-capitalist, free-totalitarian, resistance-collaboration.⁴⁰ This proposal is

⁴⁰ Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 8. See also the discussion of following sources, below: Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000, 2008). Some other works that have gone explicitly against dichotomous approaches, have been: Neringa Klumbyte and Gulnaz Sharafutdinova, *Soviet Society in the Era of Late Socialism, 1964-1985* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2013); Sergei Oushakine, “Terryfying Mimicry of Samizdat,” *Public Culture* 13 (2001): 191-214. // Dipesh Chakrabarty (*Provincializing Europe*, 27) critiqued the Western post-colonial historiography for reducing the historiographies of its others into “variations on a master narrative that could be called ‘the history of Europe.’” He calls for decentering and “provincializing” the master narrative of Europe in post-colonial historiography. In post-colonial theory and in world systems theory it has been shown that local elites have often many stakes in rather confirming than emancipating their locale. This is the case in Eastern Europe in which Western discourses that are often based on Soviet dissidents' narratives

seminal for understanding the diverse patterns of ethno-cultural cohabitation in late Soviet Estonia.

Curiously, the wider scholarly debates on Soviet ethnicities and late socialist experiences rarely intersect, even though discussions about the USSR during the late socialist years of the Cold War were primarily on ethnic topics up to the beginning of 1990s. In the following pages, I would like to bring some streams of both ideas together.

However, in relation to an earlier period of socialism, I will start from the well known works of I. Halfin and J. Hellbeck on the relationship between the Soviet public discourse and individual identifications in the Stalinist 1930s.⁴¹ These authors argue that the patterns for individuals' self-understanding were at the time essentially consumed *within* and limited to the public discourse; that there were no discursive identification patterns outside the omnipresent public frames of possible speech.⁴²

have been adopted with little criticism. // Sergei Oushakine ("Terrifying Mimicry," 192, 206) analyses dissidents' anti-soviet discourse in late socialism and argues that it belongs to the same discursive milieu as the soviet political discourse. He further asserts that this was not the language of the majority of population: "The oppositional discourse in a sense shared the symbolic field with the dominant discourse: it echoed and amplified the rhetoric of the regime, rather than positioning itself outside of or underneath it." Dissidents were "ontologically proximate" to the regime they chose to mirror. // Klumbyte and Sharafutdinova (*Soviet Society*, 4) build largely on Yurchak's ideas in order to "transcend the binaries of domination/resistance and socialism/liberalism and attend to multiple circulations of power. Rather than establishing Western liberal traditions as a blueprint against which the Soviet model was measured [they] focus on similarities and interconnections."

⁴¹ For example, see: Igal Halfin, "Looking into the Oppositionists' Souls: Inquisition Communist Style," *The Russian Review* 60 (2001): 316-339; Igal Halfin, *Terror in My Soul: Communist Autobiographies on Trial* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003); Jochen Hellbeck, "Working, Struggling, Becoming: Stalin-Era Autobiographical Texts," *The Russian Review* 60 (2001): 340-359; Jochen Hellbeck, *Revolution on My mind: Writing a Diary Under Stalin* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), 2006.

⁴² Halfin and Hellbeck build on (late) Foucault's ideas of dynamically agentive and coercive (discursive) power; however, being guided by the autobiographical sources and by the selected socio-demographic sample (younger urban people) they end up describing linguistic hegemony for human experience with no opportunities for "external" experiences in a manner similar to Foucault's earlier writings that saw power functioning in much more hierarchical manner. Indeed, some critics have noted that the conviction that there was "no way out" of Stalinist discourse moves actually closer to the "totalitarian" understanding of Soviet citizens as framed and coerced by the regime; in this manner Halfin and Hellbeck move farther away from Stephen Kotkin's study of Magnitogorsk that depicts Stalinist "pragmatic selves." See: Katharina Uhl, "Oppressed and Brainwashed Soviet Subject' or 'Prisoners of the Soviet Self'? Recent Conceptions of Soviet Subjectivity," *Bylye Gody* 2 (2013): 4-10; Alexander Etkind, "Soviet Subjectivity: Torture for the Sake of Salvation?" *Kritika: Explorations in*

Halfin and Hellbeck name the emergent individual work on *oneself* in relation to the Soviet public discourse as a distinct “Soviet subjectivity.” The idea of “Soviet subjectivity” is important for the current thesis in its consideration of the generational diversity and familial transmission of dispositions in Soviet Estonia among the large influx of “newcomers” after the World War.

The ideas about a total immersion in authoritative discourse have not been maintained for the post-Stalinist experiences of people who grew up after World War II. Individuals' self-understanding in late socialism has rather been labelled as “banal” and “normal” subjectivity; these concepts refer to improvements in living conditions, rise of consumerism and appreciation of personal life together with the rise of welfare; they also indicate that the wide-spread acceptance of the Soviet regime had become established as everyday normality.⁴³ A. Yurchak brings the arguments about Soviet subjectivity to another level by introducing the idea of performative and constitutive discursive relationships. He claims that in late socialism people lived essentially *outside* of the constitutive relationship with the political discourse due to a “performative shift.” He argues that the foundational reason for performing authoritative political (speech) acts after the demise of Stalinism had become *performative* rather than *constative* with respect to truth value. “Doing” became more

Russian and Eurasian History 6, (2005): 171-186.

⁴³ In their extensive overview of the recent Western studies of Stalinism, Choi Chatterjee and Karen Petrone outline four distinct modes of the Soviet self that emerge from the literature: totalitarian, pragmatic, normative, and banal. The first three they identify as belonging to Stalinist subjectivity and the “banal” subjectivity they relate with subject identifications in late socialism. See: Choi Chatterjee and Karen Petrone, “Models of Selfhood and Subjectivity: The Soviet Case in Historical Perspective,” *Slavic Review* 67 (2008): 982-983. (1) *Totalitarian* self is related to the totalitarian school of Soviet studies that pictures atomized individuals who lack agency at a background of fear and state coercion; (2) *pragmatic* self emerges from the works of the revisionist school that stress the ways how agents “dodged, wheedled, cajoled, bribed, [...] both internalised and resisted the Soviet norms of selfhood”; (3) *normative* self – is related to authors connected to cultural and linguistic turns in studies of socialism and describes how subjects actively worked on becoming more similar to what the ideology asked them to be; (4) *banal* self depicts the “unbearable ordinariness of the self outside the revolutionary narrative,” that is the everyday practices and domesticity outside the revolutionary and utopian discourse.

important than “understanding,” for example, when citing slogans and quotes, or when attending meetings and parades.⁴⁴ Furthermore, mass participation in the reproduction of the Soviet system and its authoritative discourse in a performative way led to its simultaneous “internal displacement” through the opening of “other” spheres of life that were not aligned with the Soviet discourse. By performing the official discourse, people found constative meanings elsewhere – in *deterritorialised milieus*.⁴⁵ The people who participated in these milieus were in a particular relation to the authoritative discourse, in a relationship of “being *vne* [aside].” Yurchak summarises the idea in the following manner: “[Deterritorialized public was] simultaneously inside and outside of the rhetorical field of that discourse, neither simply in support nor simply in opposition to it. This relation actively defied boundaries and binary divisions, becoming a dynamic site where new meanings were produced.”⁴⁶

The ideas of “Soviet subjectivity” in Stalinism and of the “performative shift” in late socialism have met with praise as well as criticism. Some have raised concerns

⁴⁴ Yurchak argues that under many other circumstances authoritative ideological discourse would be checked for its truth value, but this was not a case in late socialism. For example, under Stalinism ideological discourse was questioned and controlled by the “supreme editor” himself – by Stalin; during the perestroika the external questioning of discourse was reintroduced by the involvement of wide public into ideological debates about the fundamentals of Soviet system. (Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*, 292)

⁴⁵ “[In late Socialism] the normalised and fixed structures of [authoritative] discourse became increasingly frozen and were replicated from one context to the next practically intact. [...] Eventually, the replication of the fixed and normalised forms of discourse became an end in itself, and the constative meanings of these discursive forms became increasingly unimportant. [...] The paradox of late socialism stemmed from the fact that the more the immutable forms of the system’s authoritative discourse were reproduced everywhere, the more the system was experiencing a profound internal displacement. This displacement of the system was in turn predicated on mass participation in the reproduction of the system’s authoritative forms and representations, enabling the emergence of various forms of meaningful, creative life that were relatively uncontrolled, indeterminate, and “normal” (i.e., not perceived as out of the ordinary or alternative). Having this normal life was in turn predicated on participating in the performative reproduction of the system’s authoritative forms and representations. Reproducing the system and participating in its continuous internal displacement were mutually constitutive processes.” (Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*, 283).

⁴⁶ “Both the publics of *svoi* and the relationship of being *vnye* were constitutive and indivisible elements of the Soviet system, not its opposites. They were enabled by Lefort’s paradox of Soviet ideology and the effects of the paradoxes of the Soviet state’s cultural policy that, along with the propaganda of the leading role of the party, also advocated the values of critical thinking, personal creativity, inquisitiveness, and education and explicitly and implicitly sponsored these pursuits in financial, temporal, and other terms.” (Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*, 288)

about their generalisability – they are both based on urban samples and are focused on the young people of the era in question. Yurchak's work is based on the generation of urban elites that was born after the war. The protagonists in the book, the author claims, were “not like” the “activists” or “dissidents” who remained in constitutive relationship with authoritative discourse; nevertheless, these latter groups were also part of the same age cohort. Therefore, “performative shift” could rather be taken as an ideal type and a description of some tendencies among the youth in the central Russian towns in 1960-70s. Yurchak does not mention authoritative discourse of ethnicity in the USSR, but one cannot really consider late socialism in Estonia without the debate on soviet ethnicities.

The scholarly discussion of ethnicities in the USSR has stressed the “affirmative” construction of many ethnicities in the 1920s along with the creation of the ethno-federal state structure. At that time, tens of ethnic cultures were empowered with state support, and even if the number of “flourishing” nationalities was administratively reduced in the 1930s, the basic principles that supported the reproduction of ethnic cultures remained in effect until the collapse of the Soviet Union.⁴⁷ Since the 1930s, Russian language and culture was in a dual relationship with

⁴⁷ Yuri Slezkine stressed first the idea that the Soviet leaders' belief in the “primordial” essence of the national consciousness that caused the need to take this phenomenon seriously and even pay it some respect. “Affirmative action” towards nationalities was based on Lenin's idea of ethnicities as given historical realities which had to be accommodated in order to eliminate the fears of Russian Chauvinism; only after that could the nationalities really draw together and merge in communism. See: Yuri Slezkine, “The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism,” *Slavic Review* 53, No. 2 (Summer 1994): 414-452. These arguments were developed further by Terry Martin who described the Soviet policies of “affirmative action” in the 1920s and the changes in the policies in the 1930s in their uneasy balance and appreciating the coercive nature of the regime and the politics of terror. Continuous belief in “primordial” essence was combined with appreciating Russians as “first among equals” in the 1930; the appreciation of “nationalist culture and language” was not confused with the omnipresent suspicion towards the non-Russians and the periphery. See: Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001). See also: Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005); Ronald Suny and Terry Martin, eds., *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); Peter Blitstein, “Cultural Diversity and the Interwar Conjuncture: Soviet Nationality Policy in Its Comparative Context,” *Slavic*

the general ethnic situation: by far the biggest and most dominant, it was seen as a “glue” of the Soviet world, but in comparison with many other ethnic realms it remained simultaneously less empowered in structural terms until the end of the USSR.⁴⁸

Nevertheless, whereas affirmative policies remained in place throughout late socialism especially with regard to the cultures of “titular” nationalities that held union republic structures, perhaps some simultaneous Russifying and Sovietizing policies of the time have not received enough scholarly attention. Dmitry Gorenburg draws attention to the fact that there appeared a contradictory political tendency which “accelerated” the merger of nations by tightening the cohesion of the Soviet state since the 1950s.⁴⁹ Gorenburg reminds us that since the Khrushchev's school reforms, “socialism spoke Russian” in the Soviet union and in many regions it became increasingly harder to acquire education and arrange daily matters in other languages.⁵⁰ These socio-empirical developments were aligned with the public

Review 65, No. 2 (Summer 2006): 273-293.

⁴⁸ The tendencies of spreading Russian nationalism as an intellectual-led and state-supported legitimisation project of the 1960-70s have been noted, as well as the historically “Russian” origins of the many Soviet practices. The “village prose” movement of nationalists offered an alternative populist aesthetic that would stimulate loyalty to the homeland and undermine the allure of the West in the 1960-70s. See: Yitzhak Brudny, *Reinventing Russia: Russian Nationalism and the Soviet State, 1953-1991* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998); Geoffrey Hosking, *Rulers and Victims: the Russians in the Soviet Union* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006).

⁴⁹ Gorenburg shows that the Western scholars might underestimate the extent of ethnic assimilation in the late Soviet Union. This may be due to three reasons: First, the emergence of strong nationalist movements in the 1980s fostered the understanding that the ethnic identities were not effectively assimilated; second, relatively the assimilationist policies were in effect for a relatively short time (from late 1950s to early 1980s) and were just starting to show their effects by the 1980s; third, the construction of census questions on language and ethnicity resulted in the underestimation of linguistic Russification. See: Dmitry Gorenburg, “Soviet Nationalities Policy and Assimilation,” in *Rebounding Identities: The Politics of Identity in Russia and Ukraine*, ed. by Dominique Arel and Blair Ruble (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 277.

⁵⁰ Gorenburg, “Soviet Nationalities Policy and Assimilation,” 281-282. Outside of “national homelands” it was possible to study in Russian only and in regions parents were strongly encouraged to “choose” Russian language for the instruction of their child. In addition, whereas ethnic groups continued to identify with their titular nationality, many people used Russian language and were immersed in Russian culture in everyday life. This led to a “two-generational” assimilation process, often through inter-marriages, which had just started to show its effects by the 1980s.

political statements in which the Soviet leaders also spoke about a voluntary but inevitable rapprochement (*sblizhenie*) of Soviet ethnicities and the emergence of supranational Soviet people (*sovetskii narod*) based on the Leninist idea that class-solidarity would eventually overrule other forms of identification upon arrival to communism.⁵¹

This should not be seen as an entirely “empty” discourse (i.e., solely performative, without constative importance). R. Suny has shown that since the emergence of Soviet subjectivity in the 1930s and the heroic efforts in the Great Patriotic War, many people developed not only an “imagined-constructed” but also an “affective” relationship to the Soviet state. This was an emergent civic identity along the lines of the “Soviet people” discourse, but not limited to it. Suny claims that “millions of people felt attachment to the Soviet Union, ready to defend it, die and kill for it, and embrace it as *Rodina* (Motherland).”⁵² This public discourse of “Soviet people” was supra-ethnic, but it “spoke Russian.” Nevertheless, as already mentioned, alongside these civic unification efforts the infrastructure of the “affirmative action empire” also remained in place. The latter was discursively supported by the primordial contingency of theorizing Soviet ethnicities.⁵³ For example, the passport

⁵¹ Mark Bassin and Catriona Kelly, “Introduction: national subjects,” in *Soviet and Post-Soviet Identities* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), 1-16. For a detailed discussion on the speeches of Soviet leaders following the emergence of the idea of Soviet people see the following survey: Yaroslav Bilinsky, “The Concept of the Soviet People and its Implications for Soviet Nationality Policy,” *Annals of the Ukrainian Academy of Arts and Sciences in the United States* 14 (1978-80): 187-133.

⁵² Ronald Grigor Suny, “The Contradictions of Identity: Being Soviet and National in the USSR and After,” in *Soviet and Post-Soviet Identities*, ed. by Mark Bassin and Catriona Kelly (Cambridge University Press, 2012), 23. He adds that “Soviet peoples had both an ethnic and a national identity, and the national extended for many to the Soviet Union as homeland as a civic identity. At times the two underpinned each other in a tense relationship; at other times they competed and even undermined one another. The broad Soviet civic identity eventually gave way, but only under extraordinary circumstances.” (Suny, “The Contradictions of Identity,” 23). It could be also noted that among a few nations in the article, Suny twice mentions “Estonians” as a shorthand of peoples who were “hostile to” or who “rejected” the USSR (Ibid, 23, 29).

⁵³ On the studies of ethnicity in soviet ethnography and sociology, it is possible to consult the following sources in English: Ernest Gellner, “The Soviet and the savage,” *Current Anthropology* 16 (1975): 595-617; Ernest Gellner, *Soviet and Western Anthropology* (London: Duckworth, 1980); Peter Skalnik, “Gellner's Encounter with Soviet Etnografiia,” *Social Evolution and History* 2 (2003): 177–

ethnicity (*national'nost'*) remained inherited from the parents – or if theirs differed, the child would choose between the parents ethnicities at the age of sixteen. Official ethnic belonging was fixed by blood ties and it was not up to personal choice. This is different from Yugoslavia where ethno-cultural belonging was regulated by the concept of “republican citizenship” (subsumed under federal citizenship) that was up to personal choice and that also included a choice of the “Yugoslav” category.⁵⁴

Even if the work on Soviet ethnicities and late socialist subjectivity do not intersect, some bridging ideas might be found in Rogers Brubaker's collaborative work on everyday ethnicity in Cluj-Napoca. He made a call to look at ethnicity “as a modality of experience, rather than as a thing, a substance, an attribute that one 'possesses',” to pay attention to contextual aspects of ethnicity in relation to some concrete event or recurrence; rather than speaking of people as “having” an ethnicity, we could speak of them “doing” an ethnicity at these relevant moments.⁵⁵ This call for

193; Yu. Bromely, ed. *Soviet Ethnology and Anthropology Today* (The Hague: Mouton, 1974). In Russian: Iurii V. Bromley et al, eds., *Sovremennye etnicheskie protsessy v SSSR* (Contemporary Ethnic Processes in the USSR) (Moscow: Nauka, 1977); Iurii V. Arutyunyan and Iurii V. Bromlei, eds., *Social'no-kul'turnyj oblik sovetskikh natsii* (Socio-cultural aspect of Soviet nations) (Moscow: Nauka, 1986); M. U. Kulichenko et al, eds., *Osnovnye napravleniia izuchenii natsional'nyh otnoshenii v SSSR* (*The main directions of the study of ethnic relations in the USSR*) (Moscow: Nauka, 1979); A. Susokolov, *Mezhnatsional'nye braki v SSSR* (Inter-ethnic marriages in the USSR) (Moskva: Mysl', 1987).

⁵⁴Nikolai Botev, “Where East Meets West: Ethnic Inter-marriage in the Former Yugoslavia, 1962 to 1989,” *American Sociological Review* 59 (June, 1994): 461-480.

⁵⁵ See: Brubaker, Feischmidt, Fox, Grancea, *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity*. The study is based in the Romanian city of Cluj in Transylvania. Transylvania that has been historically dominated by Hungarian upper strata. Cluj has a significant Hungarian minority also today (15-20%). Research took place at the time of local political Romanian nationalism of the 1990s and looked at the 'everyday' ethnicity in juxtaposition with the political nationalism. “Ethnicity is a matter of seeing (and doing) *as*. [...] As a modality of experience, ethnicity is not a continuous but an *intermittent* phenomenon. It *happens* at particular contexts [...]. Although we speak routinely of persons as *having* an ethnicity, we might more aptly speak of them *doing* an ethnicity at such moments; although we routinely speak of them as *being* Hungarian or Romanian, we might more aptly speak of them *becoming* Hungarian or Romanian, in the sense that “Hungarian” or “Romanian” becomes the relevant, operative description or “identity” or self-understanding at that particular moment and in that particular context.” (Ibid, 207-208. Italics in original) // Brubaker has formerly also studied post-Soviet ethnicities from institutionalised point of view, he put forward a theory of “triadic nexus” about three kinds of competing nationalisms at work in the post-Soviet lands. In this approach, “nationalizing” nationalism refers to the compensatory policies of the formerly minor ethnic groups that have gained power in the newly (re)established states; “trans-border” or “homeland” nationalism is an answer from the Russian centre to the challenges posed by the “nationalizing” nationalism in defence of the interests of the

processual, effectively performative, look at contextual doing of ethnicity relates to Dmitri Gorenburg's observation that most of the works about the ethnic relations in the USSR take the official Soviet statistics and adapt a face-value primordial understanding of singular human attachments to ethnicity.⁵⁶

To consider the culturally available and inter-generationally transmitted identifications in simultaneous relation to the late socialist “performative turn” and the contradictory Soviet ethnicity politics opens several possibilities for subject positions in the late Soviet Estonia. What was people's relationship to the public discourse(s)? What were the life-world universes like for the people in the study? Who and where were “their own” people? This line of thought leads to the appreciation of plurality of life-world perspectives. Late Soviet Estonia was, possibly, a place where the older generation of nationalist locals lived side by side with the older generation of newcomers with Soviet subjectivity, a place where the younger generations participated in the Soviet life with varying degrees of constative investment and some degree of activities *aside* of it.

Keeping these potential lines of interpretation and diversity in mind, I will now turn to development of the two main arguments of the dissertation. The first is about the socio-cultural divisions in late Soviet Estonia and the second is about the negotiation of cultural identification of individuals in relation to inter-ethnic families.

ethnic kin in the “near abroad”; “minority” nationalism is a similar internal answer from the mostly Russian communities to the “nationalizing” nationalisms of the new nation states. See: Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996)

⁵⁶ See also for literature review here: Dmitry Gorenburg, “Rethinking Interethnic Marriage in the Soviet Union,” *Post-Soviet Affairs* 22 (2006): 145-165.

(d) first argument

I argue that Soviet Estonia was a culturally dual entity as it was divided between *Estonian* and *Russian cultural worlds*.⁵⁷ This distinction was based on language, as the local education system was arranged in two parallel linguistic tracks which socialized children into realms that were dominated by either the Estonian or the Russian language.⁵⁸ These intertwined yet parallel worlds offered different horizons of meaning, future perspectives, and sense of belonging; and they both functioned as reproductive and “generative” environments. I show that regardless of some parallel structures, these cultural worlds were perceived and lived in an asymmetric manner. This was naturally the case with the majority of the population, who lived primarily within one world and perceived the other “from outside.” However, Estonian-Russian inter-marriages were simultaneously placed within and between these worlds.

The *Estonian cultural world* was based on the indigenous population and its connections to land, union republic structures, local economy, legacy of inter-war independence, local upper-culture and nationalism; it was a linguistically and culturally self-contained community with meagre connections to Estonian Western émigrés. It was a strongly ethnicized world that was marked by the “titular” ethnicity of the Estonian SSR and its Estonian physical space. Many Soviet ethnicity policies contributed to the development of the ethnically Estonian culture. Interviews with intermarried people show that, due to the memories of the rather high living standards

⁵⁷ As mentioned before and explained below, these worlds had and have strongly ethnic (and sometimes political) connotations for Estonians but less clearly so for Russian-speakers. These worlds contained ethnic identification reservoirs, but calling them automatically ethnic worlds would over-ethnicize them especially in the Russian case.

⁵⁸ Toomas Karjahärm and Väino Sirk, *Kohanemine ja vastupanu: Eesti haritlaskond 1940-1991* (Adaptation and resistance: Estonian educated elite 1940-1991) (Tartu: Argo, 2007). For example, since 1961, the general education in Estonian lasted a year longer (for 11 years) than in Russian (for 10 years) as a small “victory” of local administrators who argued for the need to dedicate more time for subjects of additional local relevance; at the same time, Estonian lessons practically did not take place in the Russian schools.

in the interwar period, the local population took the Soviet maintenance and improvement of socio-cultural infrastructure for granted and did not assign it much extra value. However, the newcomers noticed and appreciated it, as the Stalinist interwar and Great Patriotic War provided few positive memories. Estonia was a relatively attractive and wealthy living space (more Western, “cultured”, comfortable, cleaner than the rest of the USSR); but its native culture was tiny and provided access only to itself.

The *Russian cultural world* in Estonia was based on a fluctuating migrant population. But it was also related to the Russian imperial tradition, the presence of the Red Army and police, Soviet Union structures and the large industries that were directly subordinated to Moscow. It functioned in the Russian language, but it accommodated and assimilated many other Soviet ethnicities. It was more intimately connected to the large Soviet structures and discourses that held the whole USSR together and that functioned in Russian language. However, the Russian world in Soviet Estonia was peripheral in relation to the Soviet centre, and it lacked strong local leadership. From the Estonian perspective the Russian world in Estonia was primarily working class and representative of backwardness (less developed, “Asian”, dirty).

The number of local Estonians remained around one million throughout the USSR while the number of newcomer Russian speakers grew from ~40 000 (1945) to beyond 500 000 (1989). At the same time, children from the Estonian-Russian marriages who went to Estonian schools all chose “Estonian” for their passport nationality, while those who went to Russian schools split about evenly between Russian and Estonian passports.⁵⁹ The Estonian cultural world and its schools

⁵⁹ See Appendix 4.

provided more clear-cut messages for personal identification; whereas the Russian cultural world and its schools presented a more ambiguous message and left the choice of self-identification open. The majority of inter-marriages socialised children into the Estonian world, although the identification patterns of these children were deeply related to the lack of family discussions on ethno-cultural matters – this parental choice was also often based on little discussion.

I argue that, as for the dynamics between the Russian and Estonian cultural worlds, across concrete situations and geographical locations both worlds stood at parity, both institutionally and in terms of identification patterns that were available to people. This parity was quite unique to Estonia in the USSR, although the dynamic may have also existed to some extent in Latvia, in both union republics the Russian-speaking population grew quickly but the “titular” nationality held simultaneously strong. This was a parity, but deeply asymmetrical in its concrete occurrences. Therefore, dividing the Soviet Estonian society into two cultural worlds serves only as a starting point for an inquiry into deep discrepancies within and between these constellations.

The Russian world and the Estonian world comprised two essentially different memory communities in Soviet Estonia. Personal experiences and communicative memories differed radically even if in the public realm many artefacts of the Estonian national memories were repressed and pushed aside by the all-encompassing “Soviet” narrative.⁶⁰ The conflict between locals and newcomers was acutely felt by the local Estonians who carried immediate memories of the Inter-war

⁶⁰ Jan Assmann, John Czaplicka, “Collective Memory and Cultural Identity,” *New German Critique* (Spring – Summer, 1995): 125-133. Assman distinguishes between the two powerful mnemonic mechanisms in society (among some others): cultural memory – the memory carriers which have become solidified and part of the cultural production and code; communicative memory – information that is passed primarily by oral means, it is durable for 2-3 generations and then either disappears or is becoming converted into cultural memory.

republic, Soviet annexation, and Stalinist terror – so that it has been claimed that within a single year “Russians turned into the main enemy of Estonians” – and none of this was openly discussed in Soviet Estonia.⁶¹ Such radical polarization appears to be true insofar as the annexation mobilised large parts of society and repressions were felt to be abusing the national body; this identification was accompanied by a general disdain for the perceived inferiority of Russian mass culture. However, I argue that while this imagery persisted among most of the local Estonians throughout the Soviet period,⁶² it downplays the persistence of the anti-German sentiments and the identification with the late Soviet regime which was felt among many Estonians. Overall, it assumes greater a coherence of the Estonian national body than actually existed.⁶³

What the newcomer Russians thought about the local Estonians has not been much studied. What prevails is the stereotypical trope from the Estonian side about a culturally non-adapting and imperially minded working class “migrant” that is kept in communicative memory and also stored in the publications of Estonians' memoirs and

⁶¹ Olaf Mertelsmann, “How the Russians Turned into the Image of the “National Enemy” of the Estonian,” *Pro Ethnologia* 19, *The Russian Speaking Minorities in Estonia and Latvia* (2005): 43-58; E.g.; Ene Kõresaar, ed., *Soldiers of Memory: World War II and Its Aftermath in Estonian Post-Soviet Life Stories* (New York, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2011). There are also ample evidences from the Estonian life-story collections which have been especially good in recording memories of older-generation of Estonians who carry the live memories of the inter-war republic: Rutt Hinrikus, ed., *Sõja ajal kasvanud tüdrukud: Eesti naiste mälestused Saksa okupatsioonist* (War-time girls: the memories of Estonian girls about the German occupation) (Tallinn: Tänapäev, 2006); Rutt Hinrikus, ed., *Sõjas kasvanud poisid: Eesti meeste mälestused sõjast ja Saksa okupatsioonist* (Boy who grew up in the war: memories of Estonian boys about the war and German occupation) (Tallinn: Tänapäev, 2011).

⁶² David-Fox, Michael, Peter Holquist, and Marshall Poe. Introduction to *The Resistance Debate in Russian and Soviet History*, 5-11. *Kritika Historical Studies*, no. 1. Bloomington: Slavica Publishers, 2003; Dunaway, David, and Willa Baum, ed. *Oral History: An Interdisciplinary Anthology*, 2d ed. American Association for State and Local History, 1984. Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 1996; Hank Johnston and David Snow. “Subcultures and Emergence of the Estonian Nationalist Opposition 1945-1990.” *Sociological Perspectives* 41 (1998): 473-497.

⁶³ Diversification of the memories of Estonians about the late Soviet period is also shown by Jõesalu and Kõresaar, “Continuity or Discontinuity, 177-203. I reached to similar preliminary conclusions in my MA thesis about the Estonian autobiographers who were born in the 1940s: Uku Lember, “Domesticating the Soviet Regime: Autobiographic Experiences of the “Post-War” Generation in Estonia (MA diss., Central European University, Budapest, 2007).

even scholarly analyses. A general claim based on the evidence from some life-stories is that people perceived Estonia to be “somehow different” while still seeing it as being essentially within “the same USSR.”⁶⁴ Such a generic answer has been conveyed in the historical sections of the studies about the collapse of the Soviet regime and the tense ethnic situations in the Soviet borderland.⁶⁵ I show that the patterns of identification for the Russians-speakers in Estonia were essentially ambiguous and wrought with conflicting poles of statist dominance and cultural inferiority. The nuances of this imagery depended much on the place of residence of a concrete individual (in Eastern Estonia one would be able to “stretch” one's connection to Russia proper; in Tartu one would have to face an Estonian everyday reality).⁶⁶ Longer Sovietization experiences and the portrayal of the inter-war independent Estonia as “fascist” had also had some effect and added to the tool-kit of othering. However, in addition to the concrete place of living, the identificational outcomes depended much on an individual's social position within the Russian world in Estonia – working class immigrants would seek more affirmation from economic infrastructure and new modern residential areas, whereas intellectuals with cultural contacts to Russia and Army staff whose social superiority depended on their

⁶⁴ There are two compilations of life-stories of Russian-speakers in Estonia. However, these compilations also favour stories of adaptation and appreciation of Estonian independence. Rutt Hinrikus and Volita Paklar, eds, *Mu kodu on Eestis: Eestimaa rahvaste elulood* (My home is in Estonian: life-stories of Estonian peoples) (Tartu: Eesti Kirjandusmuuseum and Tänapäev, 2009); Rutt Hinrikus and Volita Paklar, eds, *Rasskazhi o svoei zhizni: zhizneopisania estonozemel'tsev* (Tell me about your life: life-stories of Estonian inhabitants).

⁶⁵ Estonian studies: Klara Hallik, *Koos pole lihtne aga eraldi ei saa* (Together it is not easy but it is impossible to be apart) (Tallinn: Tallinn University, 2010); Marju Lauristin and Mati Heidmets, *The Challenge of the Russian Minority: Emerging Multicultural Democracy in Estonia* (Tartu: Tartu University Press, 2002). See also historical sections of the following books: David Laitin, *Identity in Formation: The Russian-speaking Populations in the Near Abroad* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998); Robert Kaiser, *The Geography of Nationalism in Russia and the USSR* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); Anatol Lieven, *The Baltic Revolution: Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, and the Path to Independence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

⁶⁶ See also: Tiit Tammaru, *Venelased Eestis: ränne ja kohanemine* (Russians in Estonia: migration and localisation) (Tallinn: Siseakadeemia kirjastus, 1999); Raivo Vetik and Jelena Helemäe, eds, *The Russian Second Generation in Tallinn and Kohtla-Järve. The TIES Study in Estonia* (Amsterdam University Press, 2011).

connections to the Soviet state maintained closer contact with the greater Russian (and often Soviet) world and also tended to see its incongruence with the smallness of Estonia.

The annexation of Estonia in 1940 and the continuous migration of Russian-speaking newcomers (1945-90) also invite a comparison with the colonial experiences and evoke the justified, if perhaps too generic, claims for local victimhood in popular discourse. Scholars have argued for using colonial paradigm for the study of Soviet Baltic States, but this approach is strongly undermined by the fact that the Soviet annexation was, at least in principle, accompanied with universal citizenship, essential ethnic equality, and socially emancipating policies (free education, medicine, career affirmation of “titular nations”).⁶⁷

Nevertheless, the colonial paradigm allows for useful comparisons within and beyond the Soviet Union for better understanding the Estonian situation with respect to inter-ethnic contacts and marriages. It is argued that the Soviet politics of inter-marriage had twin goals that crystallized after Stalinism: modernization and ethnic assimilation. However, as mentioned before, these goals were undermined by the

⁶⁷ At times the regime even downplayed Russian chauvinism (1920s; mid-1950s), in the Baltic States it guaranteed passports to everyone (which it did not do to *kolkhoz* members in parts of Russia and Asia until the 1970s). // The case for a sweeping emotive use of the idea of “colonialism” in the Baltic States was made by Robert Conquest who was an idealist communist in his youth and became famous for a first thorough study of the Stalinist Purges in the 1960s: “The three newest colonies in the world today are the Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. For over 20 years – from 1918 to 1940 – they were free, independent nations; today, they are ruled from Moscow.” (Robert Conquest, *The Last Empire* (London: Ampersand Books, 1962), 80) On the colonial paradigm in relation to the Baltic States, see: Timofei Agarin, “Demographic and Cultural Policies of the Soviet Union in Lithuania from 1944-1956. A Post-Colonial Perspective,” in *The Sovietization of the Baltic States, 1940-1956*, ed. by Olaf Mertelsmann (Tartu: Kleio, 2003), 111-126; Eve Annuk, “Totalitarismi ja / või kolonialismi pained: miks ja kuidas uurida nõukogude aega?” (The Pressure of Totalitarianism and / or Colonialism: Why and How to Study the Soviet Time?), in *Võim ja kultuur*, ed. by Arvo Krikmann and Sirje Olesk (Tartu: Eesti Kirjandusmuuseum, 2003), 13-40; Violeta Kelertas, ed., *Baltic postcolonialism*, (Amsterdam; New York: Rodopi, 2006); Attila Melegh, *On The East-West Slope: Globalization, Nationalism, Racism and Discourses on Central and Eastern Europe* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2006); David Moore, “Is the Post- in Postcolonial the Post- in Post-Soviet? Toward a Global Postcolonial Critique,” *PMLA* 116 (2001): 111-129, Karlis Racevskis, “Toward a Postcolonial Perspective on the Baltic States,” *Journal of Baltic Studies* 33 (2002): 37-56.

parallel institutionalisation and primordialization of ethnic identities. Soviet sociologists and ethnologists were engaged in enthusiastic claims for the emergence of the “new historical community of Soviet people” while simultaneously documenting the territorial rootedness and genesis of ethnoses.⁶⁸ The Soviet Union promoted itself based on the enlightening and emancipatory mission in the Central Asian and Caucasus republics, where the presence of Russians was justified by the notion that they were bringing “progress.” Inter-marriages were conceived of as a vehicle of modernisation.⁶⁹ In reality, the patriarchal and traditional customs in the Asian part of the USSR, and also within Islam, created a clearly gendered pattern: local men married Russian women, not the other way around.⁷⁰

Traits of colonial approaches offer therefore a reasonable comparative ground in the case of Estonia as an illumination of the local *asymmetrical* cultural parity. In reference to Russian-Estonian marriages, gender-to-nationality ratio was relatively equal.⁷¹ Gender-bias among the inter-marriages is also not among the prevalent tropes of recollection among my interviewees, although it depends slightly on the place of living (labour structure). In addition, religious themes were almost absent among inter-marriages in the study, which is certainly influenced by the combination of low levels of religiosity among the (Lutheran) Estonians, where observance rates had been declining since the 1920s, and also among the (Orthodox) Russians with their more immediate experience of Stalinism. Where religious valences can be found, most of

⁶⁸ Adrienne Lynn Edgar, “Marriage, Modernity, and the ‘Friendship of Nations’: Interethnic Intimacy in Post-war Central Asia in Comparative Perspective,” *Central Asian Survey* 26 (2007): 583-584.

⁶⁹ Edgar, “Marriage, Modernity, and the ‘Friendship of Nations.’”

⁷⁰ See data in: Dmitry Gorenburg, “Rethinking Interethnic Marriage in the Soviet Union,” *Post-Soviet Affairs* 22 (2006); Andrew Fisher, *The Soviet Marriage Market: Mate-selection in Russia and the USSR* (New York: Praeger, 1980); Rasma Karklins, *Ethnic Relations in the USSR: The Perspective From Below* (Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1986).

⁷¹ Fisher, *The Soviet Marriage Market*, 204-252.

the religious influence on families was exercised by Russian grandmothers who had been socialised prior to the 1930s.

In comparison with Western colonial practices – and also with the practices of the USA up to 1967 when the anti-miscegenation laws were declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court – the Soviet case offers an absolutely opposite model in which inter-marriages were encouraged by the state. However, in the Estonian case, there are no references to the state brokering marriages in a similar way to Central Asia. The “external” figure who meddled with inter-marriage the most appears to be the local Estonian mother-in-law, whose position symbolises vestiges of Estonian (inter-war) nationalism.

(e) second argument

People rarely wish to be married to a person that they cannot comprehend. The spouses in this research were and are oriented to finding some common ground, making ways to participate in each other's lives and to create a family. However, people share with each other the things that *can* be shared – for which there are available words and suitable situations. This thesis is born out of interest in the infiltration of social conflict into the familial environment.

It appears that the inter-married spouses (b. in 1930-50s) typically identify with the narratives of ethnic belonging quite strongly by asserting in the interviews as “being” either “Russian” or “Estonian.” However, on the other hand, they appear to have practically lived *aside* of the culturally conflictual identification patterns by not actualising them in the marriage context. They rarely mention cultural conflicts in

relation to their marriage. Such everyday relationships to the discourse of ethnic belonging appears almost “performative”: by repeating the narratives of fixed ethnic belonging people liberated themselves from the accompanying “constative” identifications. In reference to the former discussion of A. Yurchak's ideas on late Soviet Union, it can be said that the intermarriage milieu was “deterritorialised” from the meanings of conflictual social discourses.

Returning to the rhetorical assertions of belonging, I would repeat that the interviewed “Russian newcomers” and “Estonian locals” state that they identify with their corresponding cultural world and also with its ethnicized components; “having” a singular ethnicity was and is an important and stable aspect of their self-understanding and also a narrative trope in life-story telling. However, such assertions had little contact with everyday practices and familial discussions in which people claim not to have experienced conflicts around the cultural interpretations. The topic of discussing or experiencing social conflicts at home was rather brought up on my initiative during the interviews. Overall, the contradictions between Russian and Estonian cultural worlds were rarely negotiated within intermarriages and such themes seem not to have (openly) entered the mixed family milieu. However, it should be added that such conflicts were also not negotiated in the Soviet public discourse. This raises the question about an imperative of “talking through” contradictory matters within a family and hints that silence or avoidance might be a more productive solution to potentially explosive and incommensurable discussions.

Nevertheless, people also claim that the conflictual cultural identifications were not actualized for their individual cases, that the incommensurable aspects of Estonian-Russian cultural divide were not relevant for their self-identification, and

were not personally experienced as such. In addition to this avoidance, people also lived *aside* the conflict in their everyday life. Even while identifying with the discourses of “having” an ethnicity, they did not “do” a conflict at the same time.

Such a position, however, was vulnerable and not isolated from the culturally conflictual identification patterns within society. At moments of interpersonal discord the conflicting cultural identifications would often be activated in order to aggravate the argument or insult the other partner. Confrontational instances were also induced by the external forces, for example by relatives or friends. But conflictual identifications arose to prominence more at the time of the Singing Revolution when the divisive discourse became publicly central. People in intermarriages either succumbed to multiple arguments without reaching an agreement (in more conflictual marriages) or they continued not to discuss cultural conflicts in the family at that time, thereby turning the former absence of identification into a conscious avoidance of it. The factors that hinder debates on ethno-cultural issues in multi-ethnic families today and in Soviet Estonia are different but the outcome is often the same. So it happens that many children who grew up at the time of Singing Revolution in intermarriages do not remember discussions of social events from their childhood, but their Estonian peers remember the excitement and discussions with clarity.

Naturally, there were other situational and contextual occasions when people were questioned about their cultural identification by external forces. For parents, this started with the initial moments in their inter-cultural relationship, such as deciding to marry, relating to parents-in-law, naming children, or choosing children's schooling language. Even if people did not discuss much each other's family backgrounds, history or political ideas, deep differences emerged at times. As for children, they

experienced moments of ethno-cultural belonging and self-reflection in relation to school and in interactions with their peer group. In addition, there were numerous everyday interactions and calendar events that forced considerations of tradition and belonging on family life.

As mentioned, spouses had to deal with how “intermarriage” reflected back on them within society. For example, many Estonian spouses struggled with its socially negative image: they were perceived as “marrying down” from their social position. This gives a new perspective to social class divisions. For Estonians from working-class origins or with left-wing heritage, marrying out of their ethnic group was socially easier as there was less negative social pressure related to these decisions. This may be seen in an interplay with the Soviet discourse that affirmed those with poorer backgrounds. For Russian spouses, the consequences of marrying an Estonian in relation to social mobility were manifold, depending on people's origins and their reasons for migrating to Estonia. In general, however, there was no social stigma involved with marrying an Estonian.

As a side-comment, I would also mention that whereas the discourse of cultural conflict did not enter into inter-marriages, the ethno-cultural power dynamics often appeared domestically through the work of gender. For example, choosing Estonian or Russian language schools for inter-married children was almost at parity, but in the interviews the choice of a Russian school is often de-emphasised with justifications having to do with mundane factors, such as the school's proximity. In fact, the school choice is most related to mother's ethnicity: mothers were expected to provide family stability and to help children in the studies. Ample evidence from the interviews exemplifies the unequal presence of spouses in family life: men were less

at home and spent less time with children, and as such would more likely exercise influence in terms of short interventions and not with long-term practices and promises of care.⁷²

(f) on methodology

From the spring of 2009 to the summer of 2011, I conducted 95 life-story interviews with representatives from culturally mixed families in Estonia. I approached the people who represented the marriage of “local Estonian” and “newcomer Russian.”⁷³ The interviews were done with the people who were born from the 1930s to the 1980s. This included the inter-married parents (spouses) and their children (see Appendix 1 for an interview list). However, the dissertation is primarily focused on the spouses born from the 1930s to the 1950s and on the children from those marriages born from the 1950s to the 1970s. This allows to study life-experiences in two distinct historical periods: late Soviet Estonia and restituted Estonian republic. Approximately half out of all the 95 interviewed people correspond to the criteria described above and thereby form the primary sources for analysis. Another half are mostly interviews with younger people: these were used as background information and as a way to access their older family members; these interviews also form a corpus of data to be studied at length in the future.

⁷² Many of Estonian autobiographical collections in English deal with female autobiographies. However, they demonstrate curiously discussions of male absence from family and lack of involvement in rearing children: Tiina Kirss, Ene Kõresaar, and Marju Lauristin, eds., *She Who Remembers Survives: Interpreting Estonian Women's Post-Soviet Life Stories* (Tartu: Tartu University Press, 2004); Suzanne Stiver Lie et al, eds., *Carrying Linda's Stones: An Anthology of Estonian Women's Life Stories* (Tallinn: Tallinn University Press, 2006, 2009).

⁷³ As I noted already above, these categories should be taken as ideal types and ideal search criteria – I was looking for people from “Estonian-local” - “Russian newcomer” marriages. The interviews often led me to realise that people and their family backgrounds rarely fully correspond to such typology.

Most of the interviews were conducted in Estonian, a smaller number in Russian or in “mixed” language. If possible, various family members were interviewed, depending on their willingness and availability. As might be expected, some members of the family were ready to talk and some preferred not to be interviewed. Interviews were conducted in several locations in Estonia, but mostly in Tartu, Tallinn, and Eastern Estonia. I spoke with people from different social classes, but there were somewhat more people with higher education, as well as more women than men. Initially, I targeted people for interview through my own social networks and from there onwards I made further contacts. I also spent longer periods in Eastern Estonia and in Tartu and acquired contacts through locals. The interview sequence could be broadly divided into two: life-story narration first, which was followed by semi-structured conversation.

In my presentation of oral history materials, I deal with interviewer's voice, with the memories of interviewees' lives, and with the interviewees' memories of other people's lives. I attempt to separate such voices as much as possible. Nevertheless, the difference between the stories that are based on first-hand experience and the stories that are based on stories of others (i.e., mediated experiences) remains significant.

It is also useful to notice that silence is always part of an oral history encounter even if it never adds to the length of transcript. Silence is produced by interviewers' questions: an outcome that is often based on a good-will of giving space to voice but ends up in a verbal withholding or stoppage. I felt it certainly a few times when I realised that I had asked a question which was part of my concerns, but could not help my interviewee to tell the story. It appeared that people with higher education

were generally better equipped to tell the more nuanced stories about the links between cultural identification and their life-course. In general, as much as vocalising life-experiences in relation to abstract notions is facilitated by the skills acquired through socialising and education, I was attentive to the possibility that an oral history might contribute to the silence it has tried to break.

The analysis of family histories based on oral sources has been mostly done by describing a single family or comparing a couple of “typical” families as case studies; alternatively, some authors use representative quotes in their own authoritative narrative. The composition of this dissertation is based on two parallel modes of representation. For one, the structure of the thesis is embedded in an attempt to present individuals and family-stories in a logical sequence for a reader. I chose the parts of interviews that demonstrate a wide life-world context and a diversity of cultural identifications as I heard them during the interviews. Second, the thematic structure of the thesis is based on a close re-reading of the interview transcripts with a focus on the role of cultural identification within the inter-ethnic family and individual life-worlds. This thematic structure is, then, the basis for the final grouping of the interview situations that were chosen for sharing with readers while keeping in mind also the primarily goal of presenting family stories.

Around twenty families appear in more than one chapter of the dissertation and provide a chance of gaining a more thorough understanding of their life-worlds. The interviews with other people beyond these families serve rather as glimpses for illustrating concrete topical points. The names of interviewees have been changed and, at times, certain other details about their life-stories have been altered in order to guarantee privacy due to the sensitivity of the topic.

The eleven families who are introduced in Chapter 1 will appear most often in the thesis and their family situations are illustrated by the family trees, which serve as a visual representation of the oral history encounters and as a reading aid (see Appendix 2). It should be said that family trees are based on the interviews and are therefore incomplete in reference to potentially existing other blood relations; as such, they demonstrate the family connections to which people assign importance in the re-told life-story and they do not serve as a complete representation of a family's lineage.

(g) overview of the dissertation

To end this introduction, I would like to describe shortly the flow of chapters. I will start the *first* chapter by introducing eleven inter-married couples primarily through their encounter stories.

In the next two chapters, I will demonstrate how people identified with the Russian and Estonian cultural worlds in Soviet Estonia from a larger perspective. In the *second* chapter I will look at how places of living (Tallinn, Tartu, Eastern Estonia) influenced the inter-cultural divisions and entanglements. In the *third* chapter I will discuss similar dynamics in reference to the temporal periods that encircle late socialism (Stalinism and Singing Revolution in Estonia).

In the last three chapters, I will discuss family environments and personal life-worlds in relation to individuals' identification patterns with the Estonian and Russian cultural worlds. In the *fourth* chapter, I will look at intermarriages as microcosms for observing the negotiation of meanings and dispositions in intimate surroundings. I will touch upon how the relatives, especially mothers-in-law, reacted to inter-marriages. After that I will look at the everyday life in marriage setting and I

will discuss the relative absence of ethnic conflicts in this realm and gendered family roles.

In the *fifth* chapter, I discuss some specific topoi of cultural identification that arose from the life-story interviews (personal names, Soviet “passport ethnicity,” inter-group experiences as school) and that illustrate “inside” and “outside” perspectives to cultural identification.

In the *sixth* and last chapter, I will take a closer look at the contingencies of the past in relation to inter-generational transmissions in the family. I will focus on how parents (b. late 1920s – 1930s) communicated their knowledge about the first half of the 20th century and familial past to their children (b. 1950s – early 1960s).

Chapter 1. Meetings and marriages: encounter stories

1.1. Introduction

For people of different origins to meet some favourable social circumstances and physical proximity is necessary. Leida (b. 1931) studied Estonian history and worked later at an historical archive. She stresses that

it all depends on [...] the geographical situation, on the demographic situation, when people live together [then] there are the mixed marriages, [but] if they do not meet anyone, if they did not go to seek from somewhere... There was a time when one married only within one's village or county. [---] And when the bicycle came into the village, then there were more marriages with the neighbouring counties [laughs]. So that, the personal level is not so decisive as these *objective circumstances*.¹

The general situation in the USSR created plenty of such circumstances. In this chapter I introduce inter-ethnic encounters as an illustration to the varieties in social backgrounds and life-courses of people who were intermarried and as a basis for the discussion of the same families in the latter parts of the thesis. By the way of topical introduction to the thesis, I indicate through this chapter the areas of concern that will appear also in the later chapters, such as, basic ethno-linguistic differences and influence of pasts, gender and generational relations in family, social class belonging, interview dynamics in the context of Estonian contemporary cultures of memory.

Most attention in the chapter is given to the future spouses at the time of their meeting and to their movements either prior to or after the marriage – in order to illustrate the conditions in which the spouses had to deal with the cultural differences

¹ Socialized into historical studies in the 1950s, Leida stresses the objective circumstances and at some point she would also express doubts about biographical research – “what can it achieve?” Indeed. “Yours is more sociology I think? But no sociology will go through without being based on statistics. Sociology is an exact science, without statistics, it will not come out scientific. [---] But as much as I know there is no statistics about your topic in Estonia.” (Leida, 1931, nr. 18/2)

of their marriage for the first time. This means that the temporal focus of the chapter lies on the (memory of) the beginnings of being together, on the time at which these young people did not have many reasons to talk about their pre-marital pasts with each other and when their future of marriage still lied ahead. (Short overviews of the future developments in the family and some characteristic details on the pasts will be given, nevertheless, in order to orientate the reader.)²

The chapter is divided into three parts in which the first and third point to the differences in the conditions of meetings in the 1950s (older cohort) and in the 1970s (younger cohort). The second part “bridges” these three decades by introducing multi-generational inter-married people which include both the older and younger cohort.³ The use of children' voices in the chapter reflects the empirical reality that I encountered: some people whom I approached because they were inter-married were themselves already born to inter-married families. In a number of such cases, the parents of an inter-married couple were actually “more inter-married” as their immediate cultural backgrounds had been more diverse than in the case of their children.

² Within the life-story interview, the details about beginnings of the relationship that led to marriage came up at different times during the narration and then we discussed them further; sometimes they did not come up and sometimes people were not willing to share their memories about it – these situations are not included here and, these families will be brought in the later chapters.

³ See the family trees of the eleven families of the chapter in Appendix 2. See also the illustration of temporal locations of the couples in the chapter by a graph that represents the spouses in a linear time frame and indicates their birth cohorts in Appendix 3.

In the first part (1.1.) the spouses were born in the period of 1927-32(37) and they married in 1953-55(64) (Marriages: Poska 1953, Keerpuu 1955, Arhipelagov 1955, Dimitriev 1964 (Helju (b. 1934) and Leonid (b. 1937) Dimitriev are born later than the other spouses, they represent a bit different birth cohort, and they also married at a later age)). In the second part (1.2.) the informants are from the younger cohort, they were born in 1947-56 and they married in 1968-1983 (Marriages: Sander 1974, Kisseljov ~1983, Laas 1968). The inter-married parents from the older cohort were born in 1925(15)-33 and their marriages had taken place in 1947-55 (Sander (I) 1950, Sander (II) 1955, Kisseljov 1947, Laas 1954). Therefore, these parents represent even a bit older people cohort than was the case with the spouses in the first part. In the third part (1.3.), the spouses were born in 1943-55 and they married in close proximity in time: 1977-78 (Kõlar 1977, Alekseyev 1977, Nikonov 1978, Laiküla 1977). Here, also the youngest cohort of inter-marriages is introduced with the example of Laiküla family, where Vera (b. 1979) married in 2004 and Silvi (b. 1985) in ~2008.

Before proceeding to the empirical discussion we might take a moment here in order to think about marriage. First, the words “marriage,” “family,” and “household” all describe the various types of the complex arrangements of the personal, sometimes “private” or even “intimate” life. These words also describe the institutions that are regulated by the state and that carry culturally specific but variable meanings for individuals. They are at the heart of coming-together of an individual and the world. The grand story of the 20th century “Western family” is about its social role, about the decline of patriarchy and paternal control, emancipation of women, the liberation of the individual from the familial milieu, the deregulation of marriage and divorce, and often about birth control. These changes culminated in the West mostly in the 1960-70s.⁴ The “Soviet family” was influenced by the two contradictory factors: the fluctuating Soviet family policy based on the interpretations of Socialist theory and the long-term currents of demography.⁵ In comparison with the Western Europe, however, the pattern of generally early and universal marriage prevailed in all the USSR, including Estonia.⁶ This is attributed to the Soviet policies that recognised solely civil marriage status as a grounds for plenty of privileges, including exemptions from army drafts and apartment allocations. In general, the authors agree that the institution of marriage functioned pretty similarly in the USSR and in the West, and

⁴ See: David Kertzer, Marzio Barbagli, eds, *The History of the European Family*, Vol 3 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003); Stephanie Coontz, *Marriage, A History: From Obedience to Intimacy, or How Love Conquered Marriage* (New York: Viking, 2005).

⁵ See: Helene Carlbäck, Yulia Gradszkova, and Zhanna Kravchenko, *And They Lived Happily Ever After: Norms and Everyday Practices of Family and Parenthood in Russia and Central Europe* (Budapest, Central European University Press, 2012); Alain Blum, “Socialist Families”, in *The History of the European Family* Vol 3, ed by Kertzer and Barbagli, 198-237; Basile Kerblay, “Socialist Families,” in *A History of the Family*, ed. by Andre Berguiere et al, Vol. II, *The Impact of Modernity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 442-475. Soviet family policy is normally characterised as the tale of three periods: the 1920s saw an unprecedented amount of deregulation, the 1930s and 1940s were a time for the conservative turn; late 1950s and 1960s were the time for liberalisation. The 1960s are therefore also the time when the Western family and Soviet family policies and behaviour patterns became similar in many ways.

⁶ Blum, “Socialist Families”, 226.

that several family policies in the Soviet Union were actually “ahead” of Western ones, especially in terms of securing equal rights for marriage and women's rights.⁷

The decision to marry was a relatively free personal choice in the USSR comparable to that in the Western societies even under Stalinism and individuals relate to their own marriage and family life, naturally, in very diverse ways. However, this does not mean that such decision should have been based on love, or thorough considerations, or could neglect the ethno-cultural dispositions (e.g. in Central Asia).⁸ The decision to marry lies in the web of social constraints. In the Soviet case, the most notorious constraints were often related to living space: how to find a corner, a room, or later an apartment for what could be considered a normal life?⁹

There is one more aspect to consider prior to starting to read the chapter: the “picture” that is displayed by the family trees which accompany the life-stories of the chapter (Appendix 2). These family trees depict the connections and relationships that are revealed in the life-story interviews; they are drawn after the interviews based on

⁷ Blum, “Socialist Families,” Kerblay, “Socialist Families,” several articles in: Carlbäck, Gradszkova, and Kravchenko, *And They Lived Happily Ever After*.

⁸ The situation in the Central Asian republics and parts of Caucasus region remained different in broader terms. It was much more based on the community and family there. But these regions are not in my focus, as well as the socially desirable divorces from kulaks or class enemies or the struggles among the high-end party *nomenklatura* under Stalin. Stalin had several wives of his closer colleagues in the Gulag or executed (Kalinin, Molotov, Poskrebyshev). For example, as for Mikhail Kalinin, officially he was the head of Soviet Russian Republic and then the USSR for 27 years (1919-46, with different official titles). Kalinin was also the only other person who remained untouched on the famous retouched photograph of the 8th Russian Communist Party Congress in 1919 next to Lenin and Stalin. However, in 1938, his wife Jekaterina Kalinina was arrested and sentenced to Gulag for 15 years for “anti-Soviet activities and connections with the Trotskyites and right-wing faction.” In 1945, she was given an amnesty and was released a few months before her husband's death. Jekaterina Kalinina (born Lorberg, 1882-1960) was Estonian. Mikhail Kalinin was in ethnic inter-marriage to a woman who was born in an Estonian village in Russia. It is possible to construct a terminologically tautological case here: “The First Lady” of the USSR in 1919-46 was an Estonian, and the period of 1939-45 out of this she spent in the Gulag. Mikhail Kalinin refused to divorce his wife.

⁹ Such debates also reached to late Soviet sociology, in addition to being at times discussed in media. For example: E. Chernyak, V. Zaharkin, *Sem'ia rabochego* (Worker's family) (Moskva: Mysl', 1987); B. Govako, *Studencheskaya sem'ia* (Family of students) (Moskva: Mysl', 1988). In Estonia a few sociologists started to work with “family problems” in the late 1960s with an ideological pretext of improving of the conditions of socialist cohabitation; however, the topic of ethnicity was meticulously avoided. See editions from: Aita Blumfeldt et al, eds, *Perekonnaprobleemid* (Family problems) (Tartu: Tartu Riiklik Ülikool, 1972), to: *Estonian Population and the Family. Family Problems X* (Tartu: Tartu Universiy, 1990).

close reading of transcripts and they are therefore partial in relation to the “objective blood-relations” as they exist outside and beyond the interviews. These graphs describe the family connections that are socially relevant to people during the interview; they relate to life as remembered and told.¹⁰

Building visually fixed kinship networks based on the information in the life-stories points, however, to another already mentioned problem, identification with social categorization and relationships. In an attempt to describe individual life-trajectories and contextual identifications there was a need to use other categories that could be conditionally more stable. The family trees present visually individuals in stable kinship network and are often named according to the kinship relation with the main protagonists-interviewees. Hence they illustrate how social ties function as categories and place-assignments – they assign people to places where they “belong to” in the eye of a researcher who follows certain categorising conventions. Keeping this in mind, these family trees also convey the critique of their own “normality”; the critique of social striving for belonging to idealised and desirable family connections.¹¹

1.2. Earlier encounters: late 1940 – early 1960s

Daria (b. 1931) and **Mart** (b. 1932) **Poska**¹² met and married in 1953 in a rather small industrial town not far from Moscow. They moved to Estonia two years later, first to

¹⁰ In order to make the reading of these family trees easier, I described the people there as “interviewees” (bold text in a box), “important relatives” (text in a box), “less important relatives” (text without a box), or “distant relatives” (text in italic). On social importance of constructing “right” genealogies, see: Eviatar Zerubavel, *Ancestors and Relatives: Genealogy, Identity, and Community* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

¹¹ As Pierre Bourdieu reminds, in order to seriously face misrecognition, one must first recognise it.

¹² Poska interviews: Daria, 1931, nr 95 (14 July, 2011, 24 pages), Lena, 1953, nr 89 (21 June 2011, 27 pages), Sonia, 1976, nr 71 (4 Oct 2010, 25 pages).

Mart's parents, and then to Tartu, where they also settled down and had two daughters – **Lena** (b. 1953) and **Jana**. Lena's daughter Sonia will be born in 1976. Daria and Mart both came from modest backgrounds: from among the working-class and peasantry, respectively. Daria's father was a specialist on a factory shop floor – more of a worker with golden hands than an executive – and was therefore not taken to the front during the war. Her mother worked at an atelier, but when during the war the father basically lived at the factory, and the third child was born in 1944, she remained at home. Mart was from the Estonian countryside near Pärnu. He was the family's only living son; his brother had fallen in the Red Army in 1944. His parents later worked at collective farm.

The post-war conditions did not offer her the opportunity to go to university, even if Daria would have probably done well there. After finishing vocational engineering school in 1953, Mart was assigned to work in a factory in Russia, where he met Daria. She had worked in the construction office, Mart in the electrical department. “He did not speak any Russian then, but I was 22 years old, I was young, I was beautiful. He liked me.” Daria was actually seeing another man at the time, but their letters had not reached each other on time – she had changed departments and he, in the army, was not in barracks but at the outdoor trainings.¹³ Their daughter Lena comments in passing: “Well, mother had of course also some considerations as to why to put an eye on [my] father, she knew that he would not stay there in Russia, that he would come away, and then she could join him.”¹⁴ Mart was in Russia due to the Stalinist post-graduation work allocation in which people were sent also outside their union republic's borders. (After Stalin's death the graduates would be normally

¹³ Daria, 1931, nr. 95/2.

¹⁴ Lena, 1953, nr. 89/3-4.

allocated the jobs inside the soviet republic in which they studied – this, of course, created an anomaly with regard to RSSR due to its size and the potential, literally, to be sent to Siberia.)

Daria and Mart married in 1953, after which he was drafted into the army from the workplace but later released due to poor health – tuberculosis (after that his mandatory 3-year work allocation would not be binding any more). Meanwhile, their daughter Lena was born. In 1954 they visited Estonia, in 1955 Lena and Daria moved there. Daria emphasises the fact that it was not her own decision to move, and that she was following her husband – “I did not come of my own will, my husband brought me.” The motivation behind these decisions remain a bit unclear, as well as the exact dates at play.¹⁵ In any case, after visiting Estonia for the first time, Daria would return to Russia. But she would come back and she would acknowledge now that the living standard in Estonia was much higher than that of her country of origin:

[Daria:] He was so afraid that I would not come back, because I was a city girl, I took part in many activities – I am such an active one – I also had my work there. [...] At the farm they had no electricity, no radio, no newspapers, no nothing... Look at this picture, I am 36 there, when I was 22, I was very handsome! – Of course, it was a bit terrifying perspective for me, there.

In Russia, the times were really difficult with products; there was even no bread in the shops. To buy bread one had to go early-early in the morning, after working hours there was nothing, shops were absolutely empty, there was nothing. And when we arrived to Estonia, to his parents' farm: there was butter, and milk, and eggs, and all. [...] And then he tells me: 'If you wish [my health] to get better, we should move here.' I leave him there, travel to Russia, and take Lena, daughter, [...] and return with her.¹⁶

Life in Estonia would be easier in practical terms and Daria became accustomed to Estonia, even though as they moved to Tartu from the country, around 1957, they only

¹⁵ Daria and Mart could not have met before 1952-53; they married in 1953. Lena was born in 1953 (both Lena and Sonia say so; but Daria is not very clear about her birth date). Daria says that Mart moved to the factory in 1953 and that they also married the same year. Sonia assumes that her grandparents should have met earlier, but it is not probable as Mart was born in 1932.

¹⁶ Daria, 1931, nr. 95/3.

got a very small room for a family of three people. Afterwards, Daria would arrange for her two sisters and two cousins to move to Estonia as well. She had become acclimated. Daughter Lena takes her mother's motivation to move to Estonia for granted, but in another context her mother had insisted that she “did not come here voluntarily...” This is probably an indirect reference to the question of occupation that she believes an interviewer might have in mind: based on whose orders, following which impulse, eventually, why did she come? I did not have this question in mind, but I was a bit surprised to hear about the sisters and cousins moving to Estonia after her. As Daria had stressed before, she – their family – had had no connections to that place before having met Mart.

Daria's motivation to come and to stay is reflected upon more painfully in dwelling on the differences between her and Mart. “Had I grown up in Estonia, perhaps, I would not have gone to [married] him. Perhaps, in this case, I would have realised that we are absolutely different.”¹⁷ References to his drinking problems, lack of initiative and, seemingly, any investment into the family life come across in all three interviews with the three generations of the female family members: Daria, Lena, and Sonia. “But at ours... if you got married – live with it; here, the mentality is a bit different.”¹⁸ Daria took this attitude along with her from Russia and she says it makes her different from the locals.¹⁹

¹⁷ Daria, 1931, nr. 95/11.

¹⁸ Daria, 1931, nr. 95/11.

¹⁹ An after-story to the meeting of Poskas: Lena spent much time with her grandmother, grew up bilingual, and went to a Russian school, but she has worked in the largely Estonian-speaking collective after graduating from the University (she studied medicine in Tartu in Russian). She married a Soviet army officer who was stationed in Tartu – Vitali (b. 1953) grew up in the Far-East near the Sakhalin Island and was an Aviation mechanic at the Tartu Military Airport (graduated from Irkutsk). Vitali has not learned Estonian and as he cannot naturalise into Estonian citizenship, he has picked the Russian one; at the time of the interview, he had been unemployed for a longer period. Their daughter Sonia says that she only really learned to speak Estonian in high school. As she mentions the Soviet period she would use a typical Estonian expression to characterise that time which she then connects to her family: “It was a *Russian time* and we had a *Russian family*.” Sonia has followed in her mother's footsteps and is becoming a medical doctor. She has a child and is married to the son of a Red army

* * *

Heldur (b. 1928) and **Galja** (b. 1930) **Keerpuu**²⁰ met in Leningrad during their studies. He was a graduate student (*aspirant*) of mining; she studied book-keeping at the university. They registered their marriage in Leningrad in 1955, their daughter **Elle** was born the same year and they moved to Tallinn. (Elle's daughter Helen was born in 1981.) They had had different childhoods. Galja was from Leningrad. She had survived the blockade and had lost all her family in it – her two brothers and mother had starved to death. She had grown up in an orphanage and later spent some time living with her father and step-mother who had not treated her well. I learned little about her, and as it was not possible have a talk with her, Galja's past and perspective on moving to Estonia will remain blurry.

Heldur was born and lives in Nõmme, a suburb near Tallinn, an area with pine trees and private houses. They did not have a wealthy home, but some of their relatives had been quite prominent figures before WWII. Heldur graduated from the Tallinn Polytechnic Institute, and went on to Russia for *aspirantura*, graduate school, to study mining in 1952, first to Donetsk. (“First they offered me Tomsk. I checked that Tomsk is suspicious, but Donetsk would be better. Then I got myself to Donetsk. But then Leningrad started to do this important research on the Estonian oil shale...”²¹) With the decree of the minister of higher education he had been transferred to Leningrad. In passing, he also explains why he had not got a Soviet doctorate degree. While in Leningrad he had participated in several doctorate defences and people had been failed unfairly, without apparent logic.

officer who moved to Tartu in 1987 (when Sonia's future husband was twelve). Sonia's husband and his family have Russian citizenship and they do not speak Estonian. Though they had planned to move away in the beginning of the 1990s, they have not left Estonia. (Sonia, 1976, nr. 71/17)

²⁰ Keerpuu interviews: Helen, 1981, nr. 5 (22 July 2009, 9 pages), Mari, 1955, nr. 12 (18 August 2009, 15 pages), Heldur, 1928, nr. 21 (24 Sept 2009, 9 pages).

²¹ Heldur, 1928, nr. 21/1.

[Heldur:] There were the very old academics, they were napping. If you spoke very loud then there were many more questions. You had to be cunning and speak very silently; then they would nap on. But when speaking loudly, you would wake one up, he is annoyed, and... And stupid questions from Moscow, for example, they asked: 'How much does the labour efficiency grow with your doctorate?' --- [Defendant] replied: 'Ten percent' --- 'Too little, should be twenty!' [...] 'You only made the generalisation on the Kamber department, why did you not generalise about the full mine?' --- And again failed.²²

Defences at which Heldur participated were held in Leningrad and it is possible to sense some Leningrad-Moscow rivalry in which the latter exhibits centralized labyrinthine ludicrous bureaucracy (but in this story there is also a hint to some academic myth-making). After these and other reminiscences, I asked Heldur directly if there had been anything more “political,” ideologically strikingly distinct from Estonia for him in Leningrad in 1953-55. “I did not have that [national sentiment], because I dealt with minerals. I did not have strong national hostility,”²³ is his reply.

With regard to intermarriages, Heldur says that his “first attraction [*sümpaatia*]... mother was Russian and father was Estonian, another attraction was – I guess... father was Russian, mother was Polish. All the time like that.”²⁴ Going to Leningrad was also motivated by “some personal matters.”²⁵ Heldur insists that he was not exceptional by getting a “Russian wife” from Leningrad as “there were plenty of people there in *aspirantura* who married Russian women.” “For example, Paul Kaasik, he married the daughter of an academician in Leningrad. Right away, they got a “Pobeda” [car] as present. In ’56, or in ’58, it was a great rarity. So he drove here and took me to Leningrad. Rich man, then there were no rich men.”²⁶

²² Heldur, 1928, nr. 21/4.

²³ Heldur, 1928, nr. 21/6.

²⁴ Heldur, 1928, nr. 21/3.

²⁵ Heldur, 1928, nr. 21/1. He mentions that he had first gone to Tartu to study Math, but then had returned to Tallinn. “I rode to Tartu and, well, I had one ‘sympathy’ there. But then it did not fit with her and I returned to Tallinn and I handed the papers in for the mining studies. And so I studied mining. And I also knew that – one had been there before – that the scholarship was higher there.”

²⁶ Heldur, 1928, nr. 21/5.

Soon after registering their marriage, Galja and Heldur moved to Estonia. But she was actually not sure whether she should stay; his mother was against the marriage, and the neighbours in Tallinn were permanently causing troubles that made her life tense and difficult. Heldur does not really mention these details of the difficulties;²⁷ his story is much about his professional career which we already introduced above.²⁸

* * *

After finishing the vocational teachers' institute in 1951, **Leida** (b. 1931)²⁹ went to Leningrad to study history in order to become a teacher in the University of Humanities. Leida grew up in an Estonian family of school-teachers with long-term left-wing leanings; her father experienced some political trouble in 1948, but he had not been arrested and she does not stress this theme. Leida did not know Russian well when arriving to Leningrad but the first test in October had been in the Old-Russian literature: "Russian girls were retelling me all [the books]." She was studying on the Estonian republican quota and was taken in without exams, Leida graduated in 1955.

The year of her graduation, she married **Ivan Arhipelagov** (b. 1928), a student in the prestigious military academy of medicine who was to become an army doctor. "He was tall and handsome. [...] Then invited me to theatre and all, and... in October we met and in January he proposed to me. [---] Most of the guys were

²⁷ When I discussed with Mari and Helen about how to learn more about Galja's past, Mari suggested that Heldur should know, Helen commented that the grandfather would probably speak mostly about himself..

²⁸ An after-story to Keerpoo's meeting: Their daughter Elle (b. 1955) has done simpler jobs in her life ("I am an ordinary working person"), she married an Estonian man and they have two children who are also married. All of them are Estonians; only Elle says that "perhaps she feels more cosmopolitan." Her stress on general humanistic principles might be also closely linked with her turn towards the church in the 1990s.

²⁹ Arhipelagov interviews: Ivan, 1928, nr 19 (23 Sept 2009, 4 pages), Leida, 1931, nr 18 (23 Sept 2009, 40 pages), Viktor, 1962, nr 10 (7 Aug 2009, 44 pages).

looking for wives from Leningrad, [otherwise they] would be sent off wherever.”³⁰ Ivan had been different; he was into this Estonian girl. His own parents were divorced, he had volunteered in WWII, “marched up to Berlin,” went to boarding school and the Tashkent University. And then he could transfer to Leningrad elite institution. The friends he made in the Leningrad academy would stay with him for life.³¹

Leida’s memories of Leningrad depict it as an interesting student-time. It is about dancing the national dances, singing in a choir, living an international life rather in the manner of “friendship of people’s.”³² Possibly prompted by my self-introduction as a CEU student, she mentions of many Hungarians at the institute. With them she had bonded and they studied Russian language together. It seems that she had liked a certain Laszlo quite a bit. But she wonders why there were so much bickering [*intrigid*] among the Hungarians.³³

Leida claims that even as a child, when learning that “there are so few Estonians in the world and that they have such a miserable history,” she had thought that if she was to marry a foreigner then “certainly not a person from any small nation – if a foreigner, then it should be a larger nation. [...] So that, some kind of

³⁰ Leida, 1931, nr. 18/11.

³¹ Ivan, 1928, nr. 19/1.

³² Leida, 1931, nr. 18/13.

³³ Leida, 1931, nr. 18/16: “With Hungarians I studied together and was in touch there in Leningrad. I taught them – the Hungarian boys, all but one, knew their national dances – and then I taught them *tuljak*. One Hungarian, Laszlo – he was an older boy – polka is so difficult for other nations to learn, cannot figure out the Estonian polka – and he also danced, well, like Hungarian national dance. I told him that walk more smoothly, but he that no, it is not beautiful enough. [laughter] [---] The Hungarian community was pretty big and all the boys danced national dances with us. Then we had a choir, where all the Baltic, Lithuanians and Latvians were together. And we did national dances and sang there. [---] Hungarians invited everyone to their national evening and, the Germans too – this German boy married an Estonian girl, learned to dance *tuljak*, and all. The Hungarian boys said: ‘We like Leida, she knows national dances.’ Well, we had such a company there. But the Hungarians did not get along well. Who did not get along well, had intrigues all the time, were the Hungarians and the Lithuanians, right, interesting. Of the others, I did not see that the students would... such pointless things. But their character... I got along well with all of them, but something there was, some tricks. But anyhow, quite an international crowd. [---] I did not want to study foreign language, and then with these Hungarians and Germans I went to study Russian together, because I did not know Russian you see. I mean, I had grammar alright, but I had no practice, in speaking. Well we had some fun with these Hungarians there, they had learned Russian for two years there and they were very... [laughs].”

disposition, as they say in psychology, was there.”³⁴ And again, like Heldur, Leida makes it clear that *not* marrying an Estonian was a *normal* thing to do – personally for her, and also more generally, within the group to which she belonged:

I studied in Leningrad, my husband studied in Leningrad. One of our Estonian girls married a Latvian, one married a German, I married a Russian – brought a man along with me, right. Had I not studied in Leningrad, maybe I would have married an Estonian. [---] But in my general opinion, there are few of such swell men in Estonia, who would take upon themselves marriage and feeding the family. [---] It was so also in the old times, the great farms in Mulgi county [Mid-Southern Estonia]. [...] By the 20th century, most of the farms belonged to the bachelors. They kept some maids, and when one had a child she was sent away, maybe was given some assistance too, and then they took another one. Didn't have any shame [...] and there were no connections, they were not recognized as [wives].³⁵

As a historian Leida's accounts of the past are filled with rich and interesting details about the tsarist and interwar times – in this example, about the inferiority of Estonians or at least in support of the idea of intermarriage. In her words, as Ivan had tense relations with his mother he had also decided that “he will marry whatever woman but not a Russian.” Maybe Leida is telling that to me as they have lived for more than 50 years together – “but there was some kind of attitude, that we had nothing against this option. And my [Estonian] parents also had nothing against this.”³⁶ On the other hand, from her stories and also from their son **Viktor** (b. 1962) it becomes apparent that Ivan had been a rather distant figure to the family and to his children through life: “father has always been doing his own things.”

After giving birth to their daughter in 1957 and after having been carefully “screened,” Leida followed her husband to a secret military base – as it had been a secret one, she would refuse to name it during the interview. They lived for some years in this closed base far from Estonia, but due to health problems he retired early.

³⁴ Leida, 1931, nr. 18/10.

³⁵ Leida, 1931, nr. 18/2.

³⁶ Leida, 1931, nr. 18/17.

After struggling to find a place to live and when Viktor (b. 1962) was born already, Ivan joined Leida in Estonia. Leida found a professional job as a teacher, later as a leading archivist with the authority and trust to declassify documents. In a way, first Leida followed her husband and then it was the other way around – Tartu was a good place to retire from the military but Ivan had not initially planned for that.³⁷

* * *

Helju (b. 1934) and **Leonid** (b. 1937) **Dimitriev**³⁸ met and married in Narva in 1964. Their son Aleksander was born in 1966, and Sergei in 1970. Helju was born to a family of state forester, to her father's third marriage. There were three children from her father's previous marriages and in 1939 he died; soon the war started and life in the family became hard without the father.³⁹ Helju was a good student, graduated seven classes and proceeded to a vocational school – secondary school was not free and was out of reach. From there she could however enter directly to university in 1952 – first to Tallinn then to Tartu where she studied economics (commerce). “Perhaps this... education is what I got,” comes to her mind, when asked if there was something positive for her about the Soviet system. After graduation she was allocated for work in Narva – an industrial town on the Eastern border of Estonia that had been literally flattened in the war – and she did not resist; it had actually been a rather

³⁷ A short after-story note to Arhipelagovs: Their children Laine (1957) and Viktor (1962) went to Estonian schools. Ivan has not learned Estonian, as a former military officer he had also difficulties with getting a permanent residency permit in the 1990s.

³⁸ Dimitriev interviews: Aleksander, 1966, nr 37 (18 Nov 2009, 25 pages), Helju, 1934, nr 80 (11 Oct 2010, 56 pages).

³⁹ Father died in 1939 of pneumonia, as it was contracted on duty the large remaining family was eligible for survivor's pension and living place at the home for ex-foresters – Helju remembers that for a short period “they had money,” some furniture was bought. This however ended the next year, in 1940 the soviet socialist republic had closed that retirement home. Mother found a job in the village at the chicken farm. In short, Helju's childhood was poor, but she was surrounded with the other villagers and her mother's parents.

exciting move, she said. She arrived in 1958 and has stayed now for more than half-century.

Leonid's mother had died from tuberculosis and his father left the family for another woman who worked for NKVD and "had been a very cruel person. [The boy] was beaten more than fed. And once he [Leonid] had lost the bread coupons..."⁴⁰ So Leonid was taken in by his aunt, they had eaten frost-bitten potatoes and gone through many post-war hardships in Russia. Then the aunt moved to Narva to take care of her brother's children who had come there for construction work and, in such a position, had secured a flat for himself, too – and she took Leonid along. Later, the aunt shared room with an old woman and Leonid "was again in some corner with the camp bed. All the life he has been was in some corner, and yet he did not appreciate having his own home later in life" – this thought does not leave Helju alone.⁴¹

Helju and Leonid had met at a volleyball tournament. (Actually at that event, she had kept an eye on another volleyball player, even had to have a date with the guy, but "one doctor, sport doctor got him.") Leonid went in for several sports: played volleyball, basketball, did light athletics; he had also loved to dance. So they met again at parties and at dances. They married as Helju was pregnant; had it happened otherwise, she is not sure today. (Their son was stillborn; she had a bad flu during the pregnancy.) They married; did he ever love her, she also does not know. But something there was. "It was in 1964 and I was 30. I married later, I should have... there should have [rather] been a marriage "of minds."⁴²

Their son Aleksander (b. 1966) says that it had already started wrong: "the pictures of the marriage ceremony, the photos did not develop, the whole film roll

⁴⁰ Helju, 1934, nr. 80/52.

⁴¹ Helju, 1934, nr. 80/53.

⁴² Helju, 1934, nr. 80/41.

was wasted.”⁴³ Indeed, Leonid was not a “good husband” – rather a heavy drinker and womanizer, absent from home. He and Helju divorced officially in 1988; their marriage was broken earlier, but they would live together until very recently when he moved out to live with one of his younger lovers.

Helju pays much attention to and is quite open to sharing her personal life – what went wrong? Perhaps it was due to some search for sincere love that she missed an opportunity for a more practical, functional arrangement “of minds”? “I have been the one who has always – when the others did not believe in real love for long any more – I did believe that love is out there. And with this love I have “got grinded” [*nühkida saanud*] all my life.”⁴⁴ Helju had a great love in Tartu when she was a student there; she had thought that they would reunite later... In Narva, “once again, one unhappy love, he was in the same office,” but lived together, unmarried, with the director of the “Children World” department store – a well- established overbearing [*võimukas*] woman. Now, when this Volodya himself came over to Helju one night and said “he had moved out”, the director’s revenge would not wait: Helju was invited to newspapers, articles were published, she was called up to her bosses, not promoted for a while. For years “the director” would potentially attack her on the street.

[Helju:] I had to pass the “Children World”, once she hanged on to my skirt – such wide skirts were in fashion, with a high waistband, zip behind, I was thin then – she broke my zip. You should not mess around with Russians, oh God. [---] I was silent and did not do anything. And then this Maria... they turned it around as if I had gone to the newspaper to tell on Volodya. [...] That I had wished to push him to marry me, as if he had abused my trust. I even had no relation [means sexual?] with him, and that man knew that I did not, and if he believed all that, then he was stupid himself. [...] Even that woman [Maria] told me afterwards that [she did not believe it herself], it was when the man had stayed home [with her]. [---] But Volodya had something with nerves, he was in the hospital, maybe he regretted a bit. I don’t know, but this woman would not leave me alone, from time to time she would call

⁴³ Aleksander, 1966, nr. 37/4.

⁴⁴ Helju, 1934, nr. 80/23.

or, on the way, would meet me, start to talk. I told her, leave it; that live in peace with him. [---] She, told me something bitter, “that you are like this and that”... Once I had to go and to take an order from her, and it was quite impossible to work, she would right away start to talk about the personal matters. “So, now you are alone, now, no one will take you.” And then she would tell me: “Yes, Helju, I know Volodya well, yes I know that [I had to arrange it like this], but I had no way out. [...] I know that it was not true but so I had to, and otherwise I would have not got it.” But with Volodya I did not talk about it at all and we did not cross paths.⁴⁵

Were there any friends who could have helped Helju when she accidentally stirred the anger of the local and almost entirely Russian establishment? “Some girls at the dormitory and then one small Seryoga who came saying that let’s go dancing, don’t cry here, let’s dance. He came to the dorms, I don’t know even where he belonged to. ...”⁴⁶ Helju had encountered many Russian men and in the end she chose one, maybe because of the child, and “it was already the time, too.” For two Estonians to get together in Narva seems to have been rather impossible; then again, she does remember one person, a colleague, with whom perhaps... but well, now it is already half a century later... As for Volodya, she “kept seeing him in dreams for decades.”⁴⁷

* * *

These four “earlier encounters” took place between the early 1950s and the early 1960s and they explain some aspects of intermarriage situation at the time. Two out of the four discussed encounters happened in Leningrad; they illustrate the presently oft-forgotten fact that for ambitious Estonian young people the connection to Leningrad remained the closest metropolis to go it.⁴⁸ For this Estonian generation born in the 1930s the relationship to the pre-war past is often characterised by a certain ambiguity

⁴⁵ Helju, 1934, nr. 80/28-29.

⁴⁶ Helju, 1934, nr. 80/29.

⁴⁷ Helju, 1934, nr. 80/28-29. // An after-note: sons Aleksander (b. 1966) and Sergei (b. 1970) have remained working and living in Narva. They went to an Estonian school there, both of them have had relationships with Russian women

⁴⁸ Some of the life-stories of the Estonians who have remained living in Leningrad have been by now gathered to the following book: Lea Jürgenstein and Liina Rootalu, *Peterburi eestlaste lood* (Stories of St-Petersburg Estonians) (Tallinn: AS Ajakirjade Kirajstus, 2011).

– they were intimately aware of that immediate past but, if possible, it was “left behind” – and for that matter, studies in Russia were of great help to smoothly acquire the skills necessary for succeeding in Soviet society. Their decision to leave Estonia for studies or work indicates also some precondition for an openness to marry out of the Estonian national group. In addition, an articulation of such readiness in the life-story interview, after a long-lasting marriage, is also part of a post-facto confirmation to one's own life-choices. Women dominated as informants up to now; as these interviewees are old people today, it is quite difficult to find men as old who are still alive, especially from working class origins.

For the students, “marriage” was one of the few ways for to have a say about one's immediate future and to influence the job allocation committee (the other would have been an excellent academic record). For staying in Leningrad or in Tartu – a local spouse was almost mandatory in the 1950s; marrying “into” a city also meant that some corner for the newly-wed could be found in the already-existing room. Alternatively, moving to Estonia, either to the country or to Nõmme was a promise of privacy as well. (In the stories of the meetings in the 1970s, the problems evolving around living space will have lost their such sharpness.)⁴⁹

⁴⁹ As a commentary to the practical difficulties which people often faced while arranging their lives, it could be said that the Poskas, Keerpuus, and Dimitrievs are officially divorced, but the first two couples continue to live together. Daria Poska said that she wished to “frighten him a bit,” but actually her decision had to do also with their application for better living space for which they argued for the need to move out of their original small apartment. The Keerpuus divorced in the 1990s as Galja's mental health was declining, but they have remained living together, as have the Poskas. The Dimitrievs lived together for around 15 years after their divorce; Helju has lived alone since the beginning of 2000s.

1.3. Encounters through two generations: 1940s – 1970s

Lidia (b. 1956) and **Sergei** (b. 1955) **Sander**⁵⁰ grew up in Tallinn and married in 1976. They were both from inter-ethnic families. Nominally, Lidia's mother was an Estonian and father was a Russian; for Sergei, it was the other way around. Lidia spoke Estonian with one parent and Russian with the other; Sergei spoke Russian at home. Their daughter **Aive** was born in 1978 and Leena in 1980 – and they spoke Estonian with their parents. In the story of that family the inter-ethnic relations make up several generations.

After graduating from the secondary school, Lidia had planned to study further, but then failed the entrance exams, went to work at an atelier and soon met Sergei – “it happened in March, I became acquainted with my husband and I did not at all want to go to study further any more. I married and in two years Aive was born, then I did not have more time [to study].”⁵¹ Lidia and Sergei met at a dance and, initially, she did not even realize that he understood some Estonian too; he moved with the Russian crowd. Lidia remembers about her youth that in Tallinn in the 1970s “there were the dances where there were only Estonians – “Sossi club,” in the Cellulose factory. Where else? In the “South” there were also the Russians, [...] the “Builders club” was certainly Russian and also the Summer Theatre – there were Russians only. [---] And there in Kopli the Sailors’ club, there were really Russians only, and let’s say, not the best sort of Russians.”⁵² Lidia comments on the ethno-linguistic divisions in the sphere of organised leisure activities at the time when the

⁵⁰ Sander interviews: Aive, 1978, nr 74 (5 Oct 2010, 27 pages), Lidia, 1956, nr 86 (14 June 2011, 46 pages).

⁵¹ Lidia, 1956, nr. 86/33.

⁵² Lidia, 1956, nr. 86/38.

disco culture was just reaching Estonia and most of the working youth free time was organised around the dance evenings. Outside of the educational institutions and the workplaces, these dance evenings were for many the place to meet other young people. In Lidia's words:

It happened so that he stood there and we started to talk – and I did not imagine that this guy can be not a Russian. Then, as we met for the third or fourth time, he mentioned his family name. [...] I asked: 'Do you know the language?' --- 'A little.' --- Then I started to talk to him and realized that his Estonian was pretty shoddy [*vilets*]. [---] We are both such mixed people, from here and there.⁵³

Sergei's parents were the following: **Aleksandra** (b. 1929) was a Russian and **Richard** (b. 1933) was an Estonian from Tallinn. She had had moved to Leningrad after WWII and did simpler jobs there. Richard was stationed in Leningrad while he was serving in the army. They met and moved to Estonia after he was demobilised and Sergei was born (1955). Aleksandra was a working class woman who had been a bit prone to family conflicts. Richard came from a difficult family background: Aive tells me that when Richard's older brother was born his mother was fifteen years old “and actually it was so that the older brother and younger brother were given to an orphanage – and [my] grandfather stayed with them.”⁵⁴ But Richard's parent's life had continued with parties and the boy was neglected; eventually, he was taken in by his uncle.

And Lidia's parents: **Grigori** (b. 1925) had been “actually not Russian but Ukrainian,” he had grown up in the Krasnodar region in the southern Russia; his father had come from Ukraine and his mother was Mordvin.⁵⁵ **Valve's** (b. 1925)

⁵³ Lidia, 1956, nr. 86/15. “But Estonian became the domestic language for us. First, when we married we lived with my parents, we got a room in their flat. [...] And at work he was with the Estonians.”

⁵⁴ Aive, 1978, nr. 74/5.

⁵⁵ It is possible to conclude that Grigori was as Mordvin as Ukrainian “by blood,” however, at another time in her story Lidia summarizes that “all in all, my father was Russian.”

family had left Estonia in search for a better life in Siberia in the tsarist times and had returned right in the first Soviet year (1940-41). Then she got a job at the police (militia) writing birth certificates and issuing passports, and later held different office jobs.⁵⁶ Aive knows that her grandparents met in a park in Tallinn: “I know that my grandfather had first frightened my grandmother. [---] Perhaps he seemed like a Jew to an Estonian. [...] Such a dark one, dark eyes, could be a bit frightening. [---] And then they started to communicate, and then they registered.”⁵⁷ He had been a funny guy, the soul of the crowd. On her part, Lidia feels compelled to explain to me how her mother could have married a Russian man in the post-war Tallinn:

I asked... the people had asked – why did you really go to a Russian... or a Ukrainian? But well, how many men of that age were there to choose from? Who had escaped, who... The ones who were here were the drunkards, and so on. Anyway, she had no options in her circles, and she was already 27 when she got married. She did not marry at a too young [age]. Well, and I should say that my father was a handsome man. Handsome, did not drink, smoke, was polite.⁵⁸

Lidia's question to her mother reflects “the question in the air”: “I asked... the people had asked.” She also turns the negative societal attitudes of the time against marrying a Russian into the chance to explain to me, as an Estonian listener of the present day, why and how could it have happened. The post-war lack of men is the structural explanation, her father's good qualities – a personal one. The explanation hints at the possibility that had there been enough men a more “natural” choice could have happened. In any case, the soldiers did not choose where to serve their time. Grigori

⁵⁶ That her mother is an Estonian from Russia and not from Estonia is told to me by Aive (1978); it was not mentioned by Lidia, who focused on her mother's Southern Estonian roots: her great grandmother had been from a wealthy farm but married an orphaned boy – a smith's apprentice – and was left without dowry. So her grandmother was born into a poor household. Lidia told me furthermore that her mother had come to Tallinn in 1943-44 and worked as a book keeper. Most probably, she had arrived to Tallinn rather in 1940-41 during the Soviet occupation, then spent the German occupation in the countryside, and moved to Tallinn towards the end of the war.

⁵⁷ Aive, 1978, nr. 74/4.

⁵⁸ Lidia, 1956, nr. 86/10. Later during the talk with Lidia it appears that her mother had actually been 25 when marrying.

had initially planned to take Valve home to Krasnodarski *krai* with him, but this had been “horrible for her.” “This experience – how ugly this Russia is... After that [visit], father never invited her back there. They came here to Estonia and never considered going home to Russia anymore.”

Lidia hints at the perceived difference of “Russia” and “Estonia” – but specifically she refers to the comparison of the ethnic Ukrainian villages in the Krasnodar region and the city of Tallinn – and the fact that while being in Estonia the home-place had turned also into a place of comparison. “Initially, he had felt that his Russian homely environs, it all had seemed so beautiful. He did not remember how bad it had actually been there and how poor everyone was.”⁵⁹ Lidia's description of “Russia” as a Ukrainian village contrasts greatly with Leida's and Heldur's “Russia” as experienced in Leningrad.⁶⁰

* * *

Viktoria Kisseljova (b. 1953) and **August Leidmaa** (b. 1952)⁶¹ live together since 1983 when their son **Oleg** was born. August was married at the time and had a young son with his wife (a Russian woman) and Viktoria was not entirely sure that he would leave his family for her. August did, but it was also partially due to the fact that his wife had thrown him out after learning about the situation. Now Viktoria sometimes thinks that had August stayed, perhaps it would have been better.

Viktoria was born and raised in Tallinn, and went to a university in Leningrad, where she graduated with a degree in Russian studies in 1976. She was offered an administrative job at the university – a great fortune not to be sent to some

⁵⁹ Lidia, 1956, nr. 86/1-2.

⁶⁰ An after-note: Lidia has kept a rather simple job related to sewing throughout the changing times. Aive became a teacher of history, she is married to an Estonian man. In 1992, Lidia and Sergei became Baptists and soon the rest of the family followed.

⁶¹ Kisseljov interviews: Viktoria, 1953, nr. 7 (5 Aug 2009, 20 pages), Oleg, 1983, nr. 23 (27 Oct 2009, 14 pages).

remote location for work (“...luckily Alaska has been sold, otherwise everyone would be sent there.”⁶²) She had been thinking of inviting her recently widowed mother to join her in Leningrad, and when she thinks back to it now, her mother had been younger at that time than she is now and, recently widowed, she could have started a new life there, too. But then Viktoria met August and decided to return to Estonia. That’s the story she tells me.

It turned out rather difficult for her as August became an alcoholic. There were seven years when he did not drink, but otherwise alcoholism has been a constant companion in their life. Another companion has been her mother Liina who has been bedridden for fifteen years and lives with them.

[Viktoria:] I do not know how to talk about him, because he has really this Russian disease, he is an alcoholic. [---] But all his relatives get along with me very well. [...] Her aunt, she was such a nice person, all the time she told me that only a Russian wife can withstand such a husband. I did not know how to take it, as a compliment or an insult. [laughs]⁶³

August has a “Russian disease” which only a “Russian wife” can withstand. He also had rather distant relations with his divorced parents. Oleg remembers some visits to the grandmother in a small Estonian town where he grew up, but Oleg has not visited the grandmother for the last five years.⁶⁴ In general, August’s family past and own personality come across little in the interviews with Viktoria and Oleg. In Viktoria’s words her husband is an introvert, perhaps depressed. “My mother-in-law is disabled and lies in the corner for fifteen years; my wife does not get any younger; my son does not respect me because there is no reason; and the parliament also... so it is better to drink.”⁶⁵ A link to “the parliament also” reflects the Russian language media discourse

⁶² Viktoria, 1953, nr. 7/8.

⁶³ Viktoria, 1953, nr. 7/9.

⁶⁴ Oleg, 1983, nr. 23/11.

⁶⁵ Viktoria, 1953, nr. 7/15.

about the Estonian government, but in general, nationality or whether they agree or disagree about the Bronze Soldier crisis does not matter so much for Viktoria, primarily, she would just like August not to drink.

Vikoria is from an Estonian-Russian family, but her parents **Juri** (b. 1915) and **Liina** (b. 1925) were both born in Russia. Liina was from an Estonian family near Leningrad; her parents had moved to Russia from Estonia to look for better employment in the late tsarist era and did not return at the change of regime in 1917-20. Liina was baptised Lutheran in 1925 while her sister, born in 1930, was still christened – but as Orthodox. During the German occupation their house had burned down and the remaining family – Liina, her sister, their mother, and a cow – moved to their aunt’s house in Estonia in around 1943. Soon, with the advent of Soviet Estonia, they would be working at the passport table and at the telegraph, respectively.

Juri was working in Tallinn on a Soviet cargo ship in the summer of 1941 during the German onslaught and the evacuation of the ESSR. Two of the ships he was on were hit and sunk on the way to Leningrad, but he made it to Kronshtadt on the third. Then, he was drafted into the army and spent most of the wartime in Kronshtadt.⁶⁶ Juri could not get back to his wife and children who were stuck in Leningrad – and they all died in the blockade of 1941-43. Only one of his nieces survived. Juri returned to the Tallinn harbour as a marine in around 1945, and was assigned to the crew that was de-mining the sea.

⁶⁶ Kronshtadt is the famous military fortress founded by Peter I in 1703 on the Kotlin island 30 km West from the mainland St. Petersburg. Galina Vishnevskaya survived the blockade in Kronstadt as a child. A world-famous prima donna of the *Bolshoi Teatr*, wife of Rostropovich, close friend of Shostakovich, she left the USSR in 1977. In her memoirs, *Galina: a Russian story* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1984), she mentions being in Tartu in 1939-1940 with her father who was the Soviet Army officer, she had perceived food abundance and the friendliness of shop assistants and taken a mental note of how well these local “bourgeois nationalists” were living. She had also witnessed the June 1941 deportation in Tartu: a girl in a light summer dress had jumped off the lorry and ran away, but she had been caught and brought back.

Liina and Juri met in 1947, their first son was born in 1948, followed by Viktoria in 1953. Liina's sister married a Ukrainian guy from the closed military town of Paldiski in 1958. Viktoria says jokingly that they have quite an *internationale* in the graveyard now: an Estonian grandmother who did not speak Russian, with her two sons-in-law – a Russian and a Ukrainian. In this regard, Viktoria says that

they never had a national conflict in the family. We lived in the Old Town then, with the extended family; uncle's family, our family, there were the other communal..., one more family was with us. I guess it was someone who, sometimes I think, that this someone had lived there with the family before the war; and maybe they had lived very nicely and... it was to Sweden or where had they gone to..., or [they] could have also been whatever, or been sent out, deported. [---] But later this flat was given to my father. [...] And my father had lost all his family in Leningrad.⁶⁷

When thinking back, Viktoria stresses that it was a joyful, loving and open household in her childhood. Perhaps there were problems and tensions in Estonia, but after all, her father had lost all his family in the blockade as well. Liina had been a beautiful woman and Juri “was a great joker [*naljamees*], played the guitar, sang and was really very positive. They gave to us [...] very much positivity and love.”⁶⁸ (Note here some of the strikingly similar elements in the Kisseljov and Sander stories.) It had been a bilingual home but the Russian language dominated. After being in the hospital in Leningrad for a year at the age of five, Viktoria did not practice much Estonian; she had not talked much with her Estonian grandmother who actually lived with them.⁶⁹

* * *

⁶⁷ Viktoria, 1953, nr. 7/4.

⁶⁸ Viktoria, 1953, nr. 7/5.

⁶⁹ An after-story to Viktoria Kisseljova. She decided to stay in Estonia when Oleg was born and August moved in with them. She worked in journalism and for the Estonian TV, Russian department. Oleg works with the information technology, but has not graduated from the university yet. He went to an Estonian school and his friends are Estonian – it had come as a surprise during the Bronze Soldier crisis to some of his friends that his mother is Russian. August had been a scientist but now he has not kept a stable job already for a longer period.

Zinaida (b. 1949) and **Vambola** (b. 1947) **Laas**⁷⁰ married in Kohtla-Järve in the Eastern Estonia in 1968. Their son Andres and daughter Maarja were born as twins in 1969. Vambola came from a rather poor countryside farm where he and his brother grew up with their mother **Mari**, aunt, and grandmother – all women. They had had a small lot of land there in the middle of forests and marshes. In Zinaida's words Vambola “has no idea where his father is. He was just like that, given birth to, thrown in the face of [his] grandmother and aunt.”⁷¹ The post-war family situations were complicated, single mothers quite common, but it is hard not to notice judgement in Zinaida’s tone. Vambola finished a vocational construction school, was drafted to the navy, and then followed his brother for work in the Eastern Estonian oil shale mines. He went there “for a longer rouble as the others” – salaries for miners were significantly higher.

Zinaida was born to a Russian family in Leningrad but moved to Narva with her mother **Raissa** and sister in 1952. Raissa had been “sent there” rather against her own will to work as a medical nurse at the Krenholm factories in this difficult the post-war period. “We were sent to Narva, we sat in the train and cried with the other girls... that the people talk there, well, another language...,”⁷² remembers Zina of her mother’s words. The exact reasons for moving to Estonia remain unclear, however, as Raissa had finished her education before, had two children, and her husband stayed behind in Russia and “disappeared” from the family. (Later, Zinaida visited her

⁷⁰ Laas interviews: Andres, 1969, nr. 44 (26 Nov 2009, 14 pages), Zinaida, 1949, nr. 77 (9 Oct, 2010, 45 pages), Vambola, 1947, nr. 78 (9 Oct, 2010, 10 pages). It is one of the few interviews, where the principal story teller is the wife and, not prepared to participate, the husband is sporadically dropping in and out. At times delivering a lengthier opinion on some matter and at times making shorter comments.

⁷¹ Zinaida, 1949, nr. 77/14.

⁷² Zinaida, 1949, nr. 77/4. Andres says that she had been born in Narva, but from Zinaida’s own story it appears that she had been three when she arrived to Narva.

biological grandmother in Leningrad; she learned that her father had been a seaman and had remarried in Arkhangelsk).

These origins come through also at another moment, at the beginning of the interview Zinaida would say: “So, go ahead, ask what you want. I'm a Jew” – but her mother is Russian and she grew up with an Estonian step-father. Jewishness and her biological father appear only in this comment. While working in Narva, **Raissa** had married an Estonian man **Karl** and soon they moved to the mining region where he was looking for work as a miner. Three more children were born there. Zinaida grew up bilingual and attended a Russian school as did the rest of her siblings.

Zinaida's 42-year marriage to an Estonian man comes across as a happy one – and she also takes credit for having made it happen, but in general, she depicts Estonians in a rather strong language as “stingy, envious, spiteful,” also somehow weaker in character as she “does not know a single Estonian woman who has been married only once.”⁷³ And she knows many as she has lived all her life among them – “well, take it or leave it.”⁷⁴ For example, her Estonian stepfather Karl “tipped, roamed around” [*tinutas, hulkus*].⁷⁵ Already Karl's own father had been violent, after his first wife from a rich family had died he had married his maid, Karl's mother, but continued his wife-beating habits. Zinaida came from a broken family as well, but her judgement of her own mother Raissa is very warm and appreciative, in stark contrast to the “Estonians” like Karl and Mari. But if to return now to Zinaida and Vambola then they had met at a dance in Kohtla-Nõmme.

[Zinaida:] I went there with my friend and, and it started so that right away, sending me home and, drinking lemonade at a kiosk... [...] It lasted around a year and a half. [...] He returned from the military [*kroonu*]; he served for

⁷³ Zinaida, 1949, nr. 77/11.

⁷⁴ Zinaida, 1949, nr. 77/10-11.

⁷⁵ Zinaida, 1949, nr. 77/11.

four years in Petersburg⁷⁶, in the navy. [---] He did not speak any Russian, almost no words, only curse language [*matj*] which he had learned there [in the army]. And then he was writing to me... [---] and then writes to me that “oh darling, I already wrote to my mother that I am marrying you.” – What the heck, he did not even ask me. [laughs] – Oh God, he did not let me live. I was a secretary of the city executive council. The chairman would tell me: “Hey, your navy man [*maritšok*] is waiting there on the street again... go then!”⁷⁷

After high-school, Zina had tried to enter a technical school in Leningrad (she keeps calling it Petersburg), but did not get in due to a bad mark in technical drawing. This reminds that her first love had been her neighbour Juhan – he had helped her with these drawings too: ““Juhan, do these things!” and he did. He took my swill buckets [*solgiämbriid*] out, helped me to wash the floor...” When I asked “why she had not chosen him?” it is hard for Zina to find an answer, perhaps he had not been “such an obtrusive one, he loved me too much, he even did not touch me with a finger, did not assail me [*ründan'd*] like men do.”⁷⁸ Juhan is dead and perhaps this has helped to retain an image of him as the neighbour-boy of the past. In the context of Zinaida’s youth, at least in reference to Juhan, the discussions of Tolstoi’s *War and Peace* attest to something different, something that stood out, that was “intellectual.” She lived and continues to live in a working class environment, in the town of miners.

I went skating a lot and he accompanied me there in the evenings and waited for me, he got a cold there too, I suppose. He was also a great sportsman, very intellectual, a lot of things, books and all, *War and Peace*, and all. He was an intellectual. I cannot even say more. [---] So when I married with [...] my husband – well, the wedding invitations and all were given [...] to our neighbours, but they did not come. Juhan loved me so much – when the taxi came to pick us up, he sat by the window, looked out, and was crying.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ She would use that word when referring to Leningrad.

⁷⁷ Zinaida, 1949, nr. 77/22.

⁷⁸ Zinaida, 1949, nr. 77/22.

⁷⁹ Zinaida, 1949, nr. 77/22. // An after-story to Laas' story. Later, Zinaida worked at the bureau of family matters to an early retirement due to the closure of that office, Vambola was a miner. Their familial language was Estonian, their children went to Estonian schools, but have stayed in the Eastern Estonian region.

* * *

These three encounter stories above exemplify that relatively many people that are nominally intermarried already have a multi-ethnic background. After approaching an “Estonian-Russian” couple I would often learn during the interview that some of the spouses’ backgrounds had been already “mixed.” Some Estonians grew up in Russia and when coming to Estonia they would be “newcomer Estonians,” some “Russians” had actually Jewish, Ukrainian, or even Mordvin, heritage and they would mostly referred to simply as “Russian.”

These cases give primacy to the voice of the younger cohort born in the 1950s, but they also enable me to shed further light onto the post-WWII meetings of spouses and population movements.⁸⁰ A major source about such more distant pasts are the children's comments about their parents and other intimate relatives whom I as an interviewer cannot turn to directly (as they are deceased or would do not wish to talk). Therefore, their lives are interpreted by the storytellers (mostly their children or spouses) based on the information that is available to them and then by me based on what I have been told. The temporal focus therefore oscillated between the times of primary informants' marriage in the 1970s and their parents’ marriage in the 1940-50s.

The inclusion of (slightly older) contemporaries allowed me to expand the panorama of life-experiences in terms of social origins and to discuss the people who met through the husband's military service or who were doing simpler jobs in their youth. There are also people who had moved to Estonia prior to the encounter with

⁸⁰ From the people born in intermarriages in 1949-55 we also learn that the sense of national belonging for the children from such marriages is often more complex and situational – especially, if they went to a school that did not harmonize well with their home environment but rather enforced their sense of multiple belonging (this will be discussed in more detail in **Chapters 5 and 6**). In addition there are references to families in which people do not know about their father or have a step-father from mother's new marriage.

one's future spouse, so their marriage did not necessarily entail a consideration of moving to Estonia (though there were considerations of returning to Russia).

1.4. Later encounters: late 1960 – early 1980s

Olga (b. 1948) moved from Leningrad to Tallinn in 1976 and she soon met **Toivo** (b. 1943) **Kõlar** there.⁸¹ She had told him at their encounter: “I emigrated.” That phrase “wow, made an impression” on Toivo.⁸² The words like “emigrate” and “migrant” were not used for “internal” purposes and had a negative public connotation at that time. When Olga and Toivo got married, she already had a son. Actually, both Olga and Toivo had been already married before. Their common daughter was born in 1981.

Olga was born in Germany as her father was a military journalist for the Soviet Army and her mother had the privilege to be “let's say – a home-maker.” But in general she characterizes it as “a simple Soviet family, there was nothing more to it, really [laughs], [it was] with the Soviet ideology, but what was absolutely clear – they could not stand Stalin. My mother's father suffered, was in jail for 20 years.”⁸³ Toivo was born in Tallinn to an urban family in the midst of the war and the German occupation. It was “at the time when there should not have been any...,” he says with laughter hinting that all the able men should have been in the war. His father, who had been mobilized, swam away from a sinking Soviet ship and remained in Nazi-occupied Estonia. Toivo's parents' marriage had crumbled in late 1930s, and after a brief post-war reunion, they divorced in 1947. Toivo knows relatively little of his

⁸¹ Kõlar interviews: Toivo, 1943, nr. 30 (10 Nov 2009, 36 pages), Olga, 1948, nr. 31 (10 Nov 2009, 10 pages).

⁸² Toivo, 1943, nr. 30/1.

⁸³ Olga, 1948, nr. 31/1.

father as he grew up with his mother in the outskirts of Tallinn. As an attentive post-war child, he remembers many stories of the past, even as his own mother “had been a damn good in remaining silent, did not say anything excessive.”⁸⁴

Toivo was in the Soviet army and on his return he became an active participant in the literary scene, and between 1969 and 1970 he was briefly jailed by the KGB for some of his writing. Interestingly enough, this did not result in him becoming a permanent political outcast: in 1978 he even joined the Party – the “Estonian minded” cell of the Writer's Union. Toivo was and is an Estonian writer. He followed the increasing dominance of the Russian language in the public sphere in the ESSR with anxiety. Olga grew up in Leningrad, where she also studied journalism and worked for a number of newspapers until she “suddenly felt that [she] was fed up.” She continued working for Russian newspapers in Tallinn. In the beginning of the 1980s Toivo and Olga covered the Russification of the Estonian education system and the lack of Estonian language studies in the Russian schools in the media to an extent that was possible – this had even earned Olga a condemning mockery caricature in the all-union satire magazine *Krokodil*.

But where did Olga “emigrate from” when she came to Tallinn in 1976? As I pose this question to her, she remembers that at the Estonian Russian-language newspaper *Molodesh Estonii*, where she started to work in 1976, she had been told by the editor-in-chief to go and write about a propagandist at some factory. That propagandist had been obviously Jewish by name:

I looked at my editor-in-chief and said: 'Volodya, he is a Jew!' And he looked at me as if I was an utmost anti-Semite [laughs]. Why do I not want to write about a Jew? But I was so used to the fact that you cannot write about the

⁸⁴ Toivo, 1943, nr. 30/23.

Jews, that there cannot be a Jewish first or family name – [...] It sat in me so strongly...”⁸⁵

Olga is very clear about her disillusionment – as a Russian woman who had been married to a Jewish man in Leningrad. She was involved in the “critical circles,” she remembers of a new-year’s eve in a packed smoky kitchen where everyone was bluntly mocking the Soviet order. She also suffered from anti-Semitism as she was turned down employment at the Leningrad TV the moment she declared her husband's nationality. But indeed: “I had become a journalist who had to write about this system, the Komsomol, and the Party – and I was really an absolutely ready-made dissident who hated it all, and who simply, well, was cynically writing things that she could not accept.”⁸⁶ (In this way, Olga ironically confirms the suspicions of the authorities – her loyalty had become deeply problematic.) This helps to understand Olga's reference to her own background: she comes from “a *simple Soviet* family” but with her first husband she entered a very different world in Leningrad; in this new environment that was critical to the Soviet regime she had already found a common language with Toivo before she met him.⁸⁷

* * *

Luule (b. 1955) and **Vitali** (b. 1955) **Alekseyev**⁸⁸ married in 1977. They had met two years before at a university party, she was studying sciences at Tartu University, and he was studying engineering at the Academy of Agriculture in the same town. **Nikolai** was born in 1977 and Sergei in 1979. “How had their meeting happened,” I ask. Luule replies to me that

⁸⁵ Olga, 1948, nr. 31/4.

⁸⁶ Olga, 1948, nr. 31/3.

⁸⁷ Olga and Toivo have lived together since the later 1970s. They both work in the field of humanities.

⁸⁸ Alekseyev interviews: Luule, 1955, nr 53 (18 Dec 2009, 24 pages), Nikolai, 1977, nr 60 (15 Sept 2010, 29 pages).

when you are 19 years old and you come from a forest and your first love is the one who invites you to a dance as a first person in the university club, then I do not know how it happened. But we dated for three years before [registering], he was still thinking for a bit [laughs]... I cannot say how it was.⁸⁹

Vitali was drafted to the army for two years after graduation, while Luule remained behind with their newborn son. Vitali's own parents had recently divorced: "My father-in-law took a widow with twin sons, [...] and my mother-in-law went to her loved one from Moscow with whom she had met at a resort in the south." Her new husband had been of higher rank, a retired polkovnik, who had divorced and arrived to the Tallinn "with two suitcases."⁹⁰ Vitali's parents moved out of their flat, the young couple could move in and so they got their own apartment already two years after marrying. Marriage, apartment and work allocation had been closely related for many young couples.

[Luule:] This was a great tragedy after the fifth year when one had still not married. There were the mandatory work allocations. I remember that panicking sense of girls that, well, one has to get married to a tractor driver somewhere in the country... But I know some of my course mates, they managed to – went to Väike-Maarja or Vaimastvere [villages] – but they still got married and created families. But yeah, there was some tragic sentiment.⁹¹

Vitali comes from a Soviet officer's family. His father was born on the border of Belarus and Russia to a poor peasant family. He had met his future wife from the neighbouring village at some school event after the war, and they married in 1946-47. A poor boy, he had started an army career that took the couple to various places, finally to Afghanistan and then, in the beginning of the 1960s, to Tartu, where he was stationed at the military airport. He retired soon afterwards for health reasons; by then he had also started to drink, and later divorced. In short: Vitali was a young boy when

⁸⁹ Luule, 1955, nr. 20/9.

⁹⁰ Luule, 1955, nr. 20/9.

⁹¹ Luule, 1955, nr. 20/6.

he had arrived to Tartu with his parents. Luule, on the other hand, was born into a very religious family on an Estonian island. Her parents were Methodists, later Baptists, and had eleven children, but three died during the war when the young couple had been deported with other civilians by the German army (which was quite an exceptional regional event in the Estonian WWII history). Familial atmosphere and Father's authority had liberalized with time; she was the first child to be allowed to join the Pioneer and Komsomol organisations. In the end, neither Luule nor any of her seven surviving siblings became religious – “maybe it had even stronger effect on our Mother, but our Father was such, more liberal, and – [it was] one's own choice.”⁹²

When Luule and Vitali met, he was more local to Tartu, he knew the place and the people better than she. Luule was from a socially different, even stigmatized background, and geographically she was from the remote “island forest.” On the one hand, Vitali's parents' networks helped the young couple to settle in Tartu. On the other hand, I should also note that Vitali was welcomed well to Luule's big family without problems (that I heard of) and contacts with the island remained friendly.⁹³

* * *

Elina (b. 1952) and **Dmitri** (b. 1952) **Nikonov**⁹⁴ work as freelance artists in Tallinn; they have one son **Alo** (b. 1979) and one daughter **Lea** (b. 1987). Elina was raised in Tartu, and she had two other siblings (and after her parents divorced, her father had more children). Her mother was a lawyer and her father a scientist, Elina went to a class which specialised in English, attended a children's art school and, as she says,

⁹² Luule, 1955, nr. 20/3.

⁹³ An after story to Alekseyevs: Luule and Vitali continue living in Tartu. It had been difficult in the 1990s, he had been fired, but then found a new job. They spoke both Estonian and Russian at home. Their sons went to Russian language schools. But later Nikolai followed religious studies in Estonian; he has followed his grandfather's footsteps in many ways.

⁹⁴ Nikonov interviews: Elina, 1952, nr. 1 (26 March 2009, 11 pages), Dmitri, 1952, nr. 2 (26 March 2009, 17 pages).

was relatively certain she would like to become an artist from young age. However, she had to try entering the Institute of Arts in Tallinn for several years before getting in (in her words she entered at the 5th attempt) and up to that moment she studied art history in Tartu. Elina does not say much about her home life, but she “knew how the things had really been,” for example, she overheard parents talking in the late 1950s about the return of the deported relatives. She grew up in a nationally-minded home and peer group.

Dmitri's parents moved to Moscow in the post-war situation in search of a better life: “in the province, up to now [people] live badly, and of course, people aspire to where it's better.”⁹⁵ His mother was from the Smolensk oblast and father from the Kalininskoi (Tverskoi) oblast near Moscow.⁹⁶ His parents had problems with acquiring a normal living space in Moscow, Dmitri spent his first years in central Russia at his aunt's house (father's sister), then went to schools in Moscow, worked for some time on the metro construction projects (as did his father), and then also went through the army.

During his second year at the Academy of Arts in Moscow Dmitri met Elina who was at a theatre decoration's apprenticeship there, visiting the city. This was in 1976. Elina: “There was a girl who had been together with Dima at the children' art school and then [...] I was invited there, the other [Estonians] were not invited, and so we met, from the first sight, so to speak.”⁹⁷ And in Lea's (b. 1987) words:

Grandfather had always been telling that one night father had returned from a university party or something, sat down behind the kitchen table and said: 'Damn it, today I met this girl and fell in love at first sight.' After three weeks

⁹⁵ Dmitri, 1952, nr. 2/5.

⁹⁶ Dmitri's mother was a supervisor at a grain manufacture, but as for the father: “Birds flew around in his head” – not really an artist, it seems that he would have wanted to be one: for a while he worked doing artwork for the Moscow metro stations. (Dmitri, 1952, nr. 2/5)

⁹⁷ Elina, 1952, nr. 1/9.

my dad was already visiting in Estonia. And my mum also visited [Moscow] all the time. Two years later they were married and had a son. *Real shit* what one hears here and there. But they are, well, big, such a... thirty years married but like in love, on a steady flight. They walk around with a naked ass in the country, shrieking [*kilkama*], this is really... like *come on*, they are fifty-seven already.⁹⁸

As she studied in Tallinn, and he in Moscow, for the first years, Dima and Elina were mostly in touch by the phone and letters, “it’s hard to say, how many letters...”⁹⁹ When I ask if Elina had not considered moving to Moscow, Dmitri says that she had rejected this option right away, while Elina adds that there was no such idea to begin with. Dmitri: “There were of course some questions, but she told [me] right away: ‘No, I do not want.’ But for me it generally did not matter.”¹⁰⁰ We hold this interview three of us together, and this adds another dynamic to the conversation at which Elina encourages Dmitri to remember and share more than he would deem topically relevant. An example of the dialogical dynamic between the spouses could be observed in the discussion of Dmitri’s move to Tallinn:

[Dmitri:] In ’79 I came here.

[Elina:] In ’78, to my mind, because...

--- No, in ’79.

--- In ’79 Alo was born already.

--- I graduated in ’79.

--- You graduated, you graduated... We already lived here, and [you] graduated a year later – Because, he had graduation exams in ’78, at the time when we married, in April...

--- ...well, this is not so important...

--- ... Dima did not tell me that he had the graduation exams at the same time, he just did not take them, and he naturally could not also graduate. He defended his diploma work [thesis], but did not pass the exams. And then, in

⁹⁸ Lea, 1987, nr. 9/4. Italic words in English are used by Lea also in English.

⁹⁹ Elina, 1952, nr. 1/9.

¹⁰⁰ Elina, 1952, nr. 1/9; Dmitri, 1952, nr. 2/9.

the autumn '78, he already came. In '79, Alo was born. And the first year we lived at my mother's.¹⁰¹ [---]

--- Elina was still working, she graduated in '80. When I came here, I went to work as an artist, found some kind of company, and worked there as an artist. And when she graduated, she recommended [to me] to go to study [again].

--- No, it was not like that. You do not remember anything. You tried right on the first year, in '80, for the first time. [...] No, in '80 you already got in the Institute of Arts. And I graduated it in '81.

--- This cannot be. How come?

--- Because, Alo was born in '79, in '80 you entered, and I was on my last year, and in '81, I graduated, Alo was two years old.

--- Such things, of course, I do not remember. Unimportant matters.¹⁰²

Dmitri came to Estonia for Elina but he also liked Tallinn as a place. While he shares many critical views towards the Soviet regime and mass migration to Estonia with Olga Kõlar, his reasons for arriving were totally different. The dialogues between Elina and Dmitri are exceptional in my study because, as a researcher, I normally met with people separately, but among such dialogues that I have (four, in total) Dmitri's sense of "unimportance" of the details of family life is the strongest: for example, in reference to his own family past, certain dates and facts. The question of whether it is ethical for me to turn "unimportant" into "important" should perhaps remain open for now. But what I certainly can attest to, are the gendered ways of remembering in which women act as guardians and reservoirs of familial details.

¹⁰¹ Elina, 1952, nr. 1/9; Dmitri, 1952, nr. 2/9.

¹⁰² Elina, 1952, nr. 1/10; Dmitri, 1952, nr. 2/10. When our discussion turns to Dmitri's family past, Elina would also constantly correct him and remind him of some details – especially in relation to some sufferings of his father as a recruit during the WWII (see Chapter 6 for that discussion).

Elina's and Dmitri's dialogue may perhaps remind of the numerous real and fictional dialogues that are often depicted as "typical" to older couples. It thereby reflects wider, at least Western, norms of gendered remembering. Specifically, it brought to my mind a beautiful duet from the film *Gigi* that is considered to the "last great MGM musical" (directed by Vincente Minnelli, music and songs by Alan Lerner and Frederick Loewe, 1958.) The song is called "I Remember It Well" and ironically suggests that the man and the woman have very different memories of the time of their meeting (the man actually does not "remember it well"): "We met at nine." – "We met at eight." – "I was on time." – "No, you were late." – "Oh yes, I remember it well. – We dined with friends." – "We dined alone." – "A tenor sang." – "A baritone!" – "Oh yes, I remember it well"...

* * *

Jüri Laiküla (b. 1949)¹⁰³ was from the Estonian countryside close to Tallinn. **Jelena** (b. 1954) was from a small town Kuibyshev, near the Volga. They met in Tallinn at a bar where he worked as a doorkeeper, and were married in 1977. (It was the second marriage for Jüri; he wished to have children and perhaps that is why he divorced from his first wife.) Vera was born in 1979, and Silvi in 1985. Laiküla's bring also the youngest generation (born in the 1980) into the discussion.

Jelena graduated from a vocational school on book-keeping in Kuibyshev (Samara) while already living in Tallinn – commuting back and forth. She had tried to continue her studies but did not finish, then she worked different jobs in commerce in Estonia. In around 1988-92, she “did business” by “selling, buying and exchanging some goods.” In Jüri’s judgement she had not had a good atmosphere at home in Russia, “probably he [Jelena’s father] drank a lot [*pani k arakat k ovasti*] and it was not pleasant in general. It was such a small Russian town near Kuibyshev, near Samara. [---] It is only natural that a person is looking for where is better.”¹⁰⁴ Jelena moved to Estonia in the beginning of the 1970s in search for some change, a more interesting life, she had followed her friend who had come to Tallinn some time before her.

Jüri does not mention the mass deportations of Estonians in 1949, his year of birth, without being explicitly asked; his family was not repressed, as he puts it: “Well, my grandfather was smart enough for that, he did not start to stand against it [collectivization], and he had good relations with people.”¹⁰⁵ Jüri's youth had been “just back-breaking work” at his mother’s farm. He went in for sports in youth and got

¹⁰³ Laik ula interviews: J uri, 1949, nr 20 (23 Sept 2009, 12 pages), Silvi, 1985, nr 13 (18 Aug 2009, 14 pages), Vera, 1979, nr 22 (24 Sept 2009, 13 pages).

¹⁰⁴ J uri, 1949, nr 20/3.

¹⁰⁵ J uri, 1949, nr 20/3.

by quite easily in the Soviet army, after that he worked in the fire brigades but the pay check was low; next he chose to drive a taxi. Then he worked at what he calls a “pub” in today’s vocabulary – in a bar at the hotel that catered for foreigners. He claims that the principles of “success” have not changed throughout times; they lie in communication and connections with people.

Throughout his life he remained attached to the small private farm that his mother was keeping in accordance to the collective farming system, and that he later inherited. The small scale private production for the market within the general collective farm system provided exponentially high incomes relative to average salaries and thereby offered moments of entrepreneurship and material wealth which are the measure of worth for Jüri. Jelena was working in commerce and had also contributed to familial well-being.

The Laikülas were busy with their small-scale food production during the Estonian “Singing Revolution” (1988-91) – at least this is the rather prevalent memory of the time for Jüri, Silvi, and Vera. **Vera** (b. 1979) went to a Russian school – “no one knew that the Soviet Union would ever collapse,” but **Silvi** (b. 1985) went to an Estonian school – “the system had changed and seemed to change even more in the future.”¹⁰⁶ This division would eventually lead to an important linguistic divergence in the course of Vera’s and Silvi’s lives. Jüri recognizes that he did not dedicate much time to his children; for him, sending his older daughter to a Russian school was easier as their Jelena was Russian. At home they spoke both languages. While deciding about the school for Silvi in 1992 “there was no question any more.”¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ Silvi, 1985, nr. 13/1.

¹⁰⁷ See Chapter 5 for further discussion on school choice.

Vera and Silvi are both married – Vera to a Russian man in Estonia, and Silvi to an Irish man. Vera lives quite close to her parents in the same part of Tallinn, and is quite bitter about the Estonian state, particularly its actions at the Bronze soldier crisis: “excuse me, they are the same people as in the Soviet times.” On the other hand: “I am not looking at the other states, I know it is worse in Russia. I am not interested in what is there; I look at what happens here.”¹⁰⁸ She would not like to live in Russia, her homeland is Estonia: “I like it here, I say, I am a fan of Tallinn, of Estonia, I like a lot, I go around eagerly.”¹⁰⁹

Silvi is married to an Irish man, with whom she now lives in Ireland. She had gone there for a summer job and met a group of former boarding school students at a local bar; this is how the relationship started. For her it has been interesting to notice faith-based borders in Ireland: all of her husband’s friends are Protestant, no Catholics in these clearly Catholic environs. When comparing herself with her sister, Silvi notes that she tends to follow Estonian language media, while Vera is more inclined to utilize Russian language sources. They have different opinions about the Estonian affairs. Silvi also disagrees with her mother: “My mother was so offended when the [Bronze] Soldier was taken away. We started some arguments even. Then I told her: “You know I won’t talk to you about... I won’t discuss with you that ever again. We will just have an argument.””¹¹⁰

Then again, Silvi lives in Ireland and, as of now, does not plan to return. Jüri and Jelena are divorced after many years of difficult co-habitation; their children say that they just did not match. It is pretty difficult for Jelena financially, it is not surprising that Jüri also emphasises Jelena's difficulties and does not mention her

¹⁰⁸ Vera, 1979, nr. 22/7.

¹⁰⁹ Vera, 1979, nr. 22/12.

¹¹⁰ Silvi, 1985, nr. 13/9.

financially more successful times in the beginning of 1990s. Actually Jüri is not well off either.. His relationship with his older daughter, who has a Russian husband, is a cold one, and he resents his Russian son-in-law's protective approach to Jelena who is without “means of income” – “When you are unemployed you are unemployed, nothing to do. [---] I told him that she threw these means of income out of the window, you now.”¹¹¹ He had once been, or at least felt that he was, the head of the family. Now he seemed to express his frustration and loss of control through numerous references to economic themes.

* * *

The four last families exhibit a more clear-cut ethnic typology that is comparable with the first four: the spouses would identify with either the “Estonian” or “Russian” ethnicity, but they are born at a different time in late 1940s and 1950s as opposed to late 1920s and 1930s. Their encounters and marriages in the 1970s they exemplify a widened sense of individual freedom to move and search for better life, for example, due to “lack of perspective” or “boredom” back home – especially from the “Russian” side. The spouses’ sense of personal agency and freedom of choice has notably grown in comparison with the times of “voluntary escapes” from hunger and desperation that were dominant in the 1940-50s. For the generation that was born after WWII, their relationship to the pre-war past is influenced by their own family and peer group relationships. They are currently still socially active and perhaps therefore they offer less finite narrative explanations to their earlier biographies.

* * *

A closer look at the eleven families discussed in the chapter raises the question of the omnipresent imbalance of voice in representing the past: sometimes both spouses, in

¹¹¹ Jüri, 1949, nr. 20/8.

other cases one spouse, and in some cases only children speak. However, this should not derail the historian's task – a task that has always been based on selective remaining data – to reconstruct the past. In terms of topics, when men tell their life-story and reply to my questions, they would mention much less about their wives (there surely were some exceptions); women, on the other hand, focus on their own contributions to the family life and faiths of their close ones. This speaks to the existence of a gendered life-story mode – men tend to talk more about work and self-fulfilment and women about family and themselves in this network.¹¹² It also highlights the women's central position in families throughout the USSR – in general, men took much less active roles within the family and spent more time outside of it.¹¹³ In terms of accessibility, whereas there are sons who speak about their parents, there are fewer husbands who would be alive and agree to be interviewed.¹¹⁴

Among the younger interviewees spouses get more equal representation. But as this study deals with the family histories and memories it has therefore an inherently “feminine bias” – a focus on the workplace or the Party *nomenklatura* would have probably yielded different results. This gendered aspect is then another important “bias” in addition to the more straightforward “Estonian” one – the author is an Estonian, the locus of study and historiographical problems are Estonian.

¹¹² See: Kristin Langellier and Eric Peterson, *Storytelling in Daily Life: Performing Narrative* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004); for an overview about gendered ways of storytelling in oral history, see: Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 119-121. Gender divisions in Estonian autobiographies in relation to male work biographies and female domestic narratives have been commented on in the following sources: Kirsti Jõesalu and Ene Kõresaar, “Working Through Mature Socialism: Private and Public in the Life Story of an Estonian Industry Manager,” in *Baltic Biographies at Historical Crossroads*, 68-85; Kirss, Kõresaar, and Lauristin, ed., *She Who Remembers, Survives*.

¹¹³ See also: Carlbäck, Gradska, Kravchenko, *And They Lived Happily Ever After*.

¹¹⁴ Among the sons there were already represented: Viktor Arhipelagov, Aleksander Dimitriev, Oleg Kissel'ov, Andres Laas, Nikolai Alekseyev; among the older spouses, only Heldur Keerpuu spoke for himself, but he did not really touch upon the matters of family.

Chapter 2. Arrivals, places, and local entanglements

2.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I will continue to introduce additional families with particular attention to the voices of children. I will also use some published autobiographies in order to show the variety of “Russian-speaking newcomer” identifications with Estonia, which did not emerge so clearly from the interviews.¹

The chapter is focused on describing how the Russian-Estonian cultural division was experienced and perceived in different physical places where inter-married families lived. I will first discuss the capital Tallinn, then move to the university city Tartu, and finally look at the diverse region of Eastern Estonia. Direct and indirect comparisons enable a discussion of the differences between Estonian and Russian cultural worlds depending on the location, as well as different patterns of individual identification in these places.

First, I will introduce Tallinn as the place where the number of Russian-speakers grew fast but local Estonians still remained the dominant group. I will start with a representative case study, which exemplifies how many ethnic Estonians perceived the influx of Russian speakers which caused them some anxiety. After that, I will discuss the Russian-speaking newcomers' impressions of arriving to Estonia. The stories of arrival help to understand which meanings were attributed to Estonia by the newcomers: *Where* did one arrive to? Was it “the West,” the Baltic States, Estonia, Tallinn, another part of the USSR? Whereas the general opinion of Estonians

¹ From this chapter onwards I mark the interviewees who appear for the first time in the thesis with an asterisk (*).

emphasises the cultural and linguistic in-adaptability of newcomers with the Estonian world, the stories of arrival rather demonstrate that newcomers were mostly well aware of the local differences. However, they did not necessarily attribute these to “Estonianness,” but often to generic notions of “Westernness” or “Germanness.”

A more compact comparison is undertaken in the last two parts of the chapter where I discuss how Tartu and Eastern Estonia were experienced by the people in intermarriages. For this purpose, I will use the metaphors of parallel and nested worlds to draw attention to the institutional organisation of social life and how it was experienced by the people in their everyday life.² *Parallel* worlds refer to the institutional arrangements of activities into two different temporally unrolling tracks. In Soviet Estonia this is most clear in the case of two linguistically separated school systems. *Nested* worlds account for asymmetries and power relations in which one world contains the other.

I will show that in Tartu, the Estonian world dominated and the Russian world existed mostly in specific “nests” pertaining to the army, some university departments, and schools. In Eastern Estonian towns, it was the other way around. However, while in Tartu it was possible to get by in Russian language (almost all the Estonians knew it), the opposite was not the case in Eastern Estonia, where the Russian-speakers would normally not speak any Estonian. Eastern Estonia is also interesting for observing how the balance of cultural worlds depended on the relative size of the population groups: public conflicts were more prone to happen when both worlds were strongly represented (like in Kohtla-Järve), whereas there were less conflicts when the Russian world entirely dominated (like in Narva). Towards the end of the chapter, I will discuss the experiences of Estonian youth in Eastern Estonia

² Brubaker et al, *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity*, 266-268.

more thoroughly: there, the ethnic boundaries were experienced strongly and perceived vividly towards the 1980s when the general public conflict between the two cultural worlds grew.

2.2. Tallinn and ethnicized flow of time

Toivo Kõlar (b. 1943) is a contemporary to late Socialism in Estonia. He was born during the World War II, he remembers quite a lot about the pre-war past, but he lived most of his active adult life in late socialism. In the 1970s, he married Olga (b. 1948) who had recently arrived from Leningrad and since then he has at times written about the ethnic questions in Estonia. Toivo's accounts illustrate vividly the ethnicized “Estonian” sense of changes to the dynamics of Estonian cultural worlds from the 1950s to the 1980s in the example of Tallinn.

As a young boy, after his mother's divorce in around 1947, Toivo lived with her in the outskirts of Tallinn – “and it felt very provincial [*kolgas*] but actually in was within the limits of Tallinn.” His mother had got a room and work there: “We did not know a damn thing [*tuhkagi*] about the Russians. They existed somewhere, but it was more in the newspapers, some lecturers came, but we actually did not hear Russian.”³

I don't know about Eastern Estonia. [...] but in my childhood, I remember the building of [the town of] Maardu, one could see that. And there was an ugly place which had to be avoided, at the riverside – because supposedly there were many Russians. Actually, the Ingerians worked there in the beginning, well, the people who were not really registered in Tallinn; they were ill-treated [*vintsutatud*] everywhere. Russians... they started to arrive later *en mass*. They built that military air base near there, and reactive fighters took off and landed there. It was exciting for a young boy. [...] Then we sometimes went to the soldiers' cinema, there was some kind of mobile cinema... soldiers let the boys in there.⁴

³ Toivo, 1943, nr 30/5.

⁴ Toivo, 1943, nr 30/5.

Toivo remembers taking the bus to the centre of Tallinn and meeting Russian youngsters on the bus: “Then they got on [the bus] on in Maardu, but they did not make noise, they were rather silent, [even] fearful. And... all in all, I lived my own life.”⁵ He went on to a central school in Tallinn that neighbours a Russian school,⁶ which, he remembers,

was there across the square, where it also is today, the School Number 6, the former Lender’s [female] gymnasium – there were the Russians. We saw them, they saw us. We kept much distance. Encounters? Well, there were no such daily ones. In addition, [the Russians] were so frightening and alien. They wore a uniform, a grey one – probably designed after tsarist gymnasiums. Grey uniforms, and the boys had their heads shaved – pretty scary – and the girls had aprons on the front.”⁷

In the later years of secondary school, as was common, well, I had a school romance. One Estonianized... she was not even a Russian, rather Ukrainian... Well, Galina, she had always gone to an Estonian school, [her] mother lived in Estonia, probably Ukrainians... At home, they spoke Russian though... And once Galina took me to somewhere back, in Kopli [industrial suburb], to see her Russian relatives, and this was... Well, seemingly, they were like some kind of technical intelligentsia, maybe. Volumes of collected works and Bronislav Nushitch and something. But all this seemed so estranging and non-comprehensible to me, and then a *kereshinka* – such a small cooker, and this smell of petroleum that we never had in Estonian homes.⁸

Branislav Nušić (1864-1938) was a Serbian civil servant and playwright. It is hard to understand why Galina's relatives should be linked with his works, but he is certainly an author who is unknown to Estonians and a reference to him alludes to cultural connections between Serbs and Russians. Toivo's assertions of difference also entail some value judgement as “this smell of petroleum [...] we never had in Estonian homes.” social and personal In the manifestations of ethnic differences social and personal aspects are intermingled for Toivo. Drafted into the army in 1962, he returns in 1965. In his words, he had left Tallinn as an “Estonian town” but returned to a place

⁵ Toivo, 1943, nr 30/6.

⁶ Toivo would put his Russian-speaking step-son into that Russian school in 1978. This will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

⁷ Toivo, 1943, nr. 30/5.

⁸ Toivo, 1943, nr 30/5-6.

dominated by the Russian language: “I returned in ‘65 and something had drastically changed. Russian dominated in the trams.”⁹ Toivo's mother was permanently in trouble in the shops as “she was not comprehended, was asked to speak in human language...”¹⁰ Toivo remembers riding on a trolley bus “going and thinking [...] and suddenly some drunken Russian *baba* starts to yell at you that 'you are all fascists but I am a *blokadnitsa*.' The other Russians would normally calm her down.”¹¹ The word refers in Russian to a Leningrad 1941-43 siege (blockade) survivor.

How could this situation have felt to this Russian woman in Tallinn? Did she feel as though she was among fascists all the time or only when tipsy? Was it a random daily occurrence or was it some other personal problem that upset her? – We do not know. At this moment, she only fits well to a typology of mutually enforced ignorance and inferiority. However, telling that story reminds Toivo then of another one when he was pretty drunk on a trolley bus. He is a bit hesitant to tell me, but after more than two hours of conversation it is already rather fitting...

[Toivo:] I had taken some drinks with friends somewhere, and riding on a trolley bus, and then there is one Russian *baba* – clearly just arrived from Russia. Well, in such clothes – they would re-dress after, wearing some large scarf... And, and I told her these lines by Lermontov, '*nu chto... Proschai nemytaia Rossija*,' Lermontov has this famous poem, that: 'Farewell – unwashed Russia.' [...] Oh God, oh God, then what happened... They wanted to lynch me right on this bus. [---]

[Uku:] *Er... you said it?*

--- Yes, well, I had looked at that woman and, I thought, how could I, somehow... – Well, what did I think? Such a primitive, primitive creature she was... But I could not say 'Who are you? Get lost!'

--- *But did you really have to say anything at all?!*

--- Yes, I felt it that I had to, because she was so alien [stressing] and disgusting and... damn.

⁹ Toivo, 1943, nr 30/6.

¹⁰ Toivo, 1943, nr. 30/29.

¹¹ Toivo, 1943, nr. 30/29.

--- *You were a bit tipsy?*

--- Well, a lot... and then I was saved by the driver – an Estonian guy – he opened the door, stopped and said: 'Now hit the road fast, before they will get the cops.' And I did. [...] Eventually, by the beginning of these damn 1980s almost all the police forces in Tallinn were Russians... If you did not think “occupation” too much before, by then it was apparent.¹²

Toivo is a writer and he is certainly good at picking up details, perhaps also at adding one or two for the sake of outlining his point. In any case, the former is not a particularly canny description of a public incident triggered by a drunk Estonian. Toivo had had some problems with the Soviet powers in the late 60s and also with drinking. But around 1978 he was admitted to the Party, he published, and he worked in the Estonian Association of Writers. His marriage to Olga who “emigrated” from Leningrad, however, further fuelled his critical position towards the regime and Russification. As he says, he started to follow the situation systematically. Characteristic of his late Soviet sentiment could perhaps be the following story; it is about a young successful writer who visited Toivo's summer cottage near Tallinn.

[Toivo:] Perhaps there was some business to handle too [between us]... but we spent a nice summer day, we went swimming and... [At that time,] he was just breaking through – sharp, rough, and mean, but fun. And we are standing there on the [train station] platform, and there was somehow more Russian buzz [*sumin*] than usual. There were some [summer cottage] cooperatives there, of such Russian factories. And suddenly, he asked me – he came to this idea – in a manner of a future professional: 'Tell me, how does it feel to be a writer of a perishing nation?' I had not posed this question to myself in such a cruel way. But it felt like that. I told him: 'It is proud and sad. And one must continue.'¹³

¹² Toivo, 1943, nr. 30/29. Lermontov's poem is the following (translation from below in: Rancour-Laferriere, “Lermontov’s Farewell,” 1973.): “Farewell, unwashed Russia / Land of slaves, land of masters / And you, blue uniforms / And you devoted to them // Perhaps beyond the wall of the Caucasus / I will hide from your pashas / From their all-seeing eyes / From their all-hearing ears.” (Proshchai, nemytaia Rossiia / Strana rabov, strana gospod / I vy, mundiry golubye / I ty, im predannyi narod // Byt' mozhet, za stenoj Kavkaza / Sokroiush' ot tvoih pashei / Ot ih vsevidiashchego glaza / Ot ih vseslyshashchih ushei.) An English analysis of the poem and source of the translation: Daniel Rancour-Laferriere, “Lermontov’s Farewell to Unwashed Russia: A Study in Narcissistic Rage,” *The Slavic and East European Journal* 37 (1993): 293-304. The article also studies the poem and finds its hatred curiously paradoxical considering general context of Lermontov's writing.

¹³ Toivo, 1943, nr. 30/33.

I have thought a lot... the same generation who for that moment, for the moment of the Czech events and onwards – they lost all their pinkish veils. For some time, and for us pretty destructively – well the loss of memory doctrine – we knew something, but [whispering] “maybe something would change,” the new breathing or something, and God knows what would have happened to us. We have discussed with NK many times that bloody good that it went as it did – otherwise we would be done and over with.¹⁴

Toivo speaks for the post-war Estonian intelligentsia to which he belonged in professional and generational terms. Right “after Czechoslovakia,” Toivo had been shortly in prison in 1969-70 for some of his sayings and criticism as “he had never really kept it too much to himself.” What he says about his KGB experience is that they had not found an Estonian investigator for him: “and they did not have any Estonian during the house search... and what were they searching through, this was all in Estonian language. These guys were not professionals anymore.”¹⁵ However, even with the subjectively felt de-professionalisation of the KGB, the general situation was turning more worrisome. Toivo remembers that one night he had returned from his summer house by the train and had over-heard that now the Estonian children were put in the mixed kindergartens. “And then I heard the war signals again in my ears. There was nothing to do, [I] had to start messing around again. This was, it was some time around the Letter of Forty – my signature was not asked for, I was away myself, somewhere in Caucasus mountains.”¹⁶

* * *

“To the newspapers *Pravda*, *People's Voice* and *Soviet Estonia*. An open letter from the Estonian SSR.”¹⁷ This is how the public letter of 40 Estonian intellectuals started in October 1980. It was addressed to the Communist Party newspapers in Moscow and

¹⁴ Toivo, 1943, nr 30/4.

¹⁵ Toivo, 1943, nr 30/28.

¹⁶ Toivo, 1943, nr 30/15.

¹⁷ “Ajalehtedele “Pravda,” “Rahva Hääl” ja “Sovetskaja Estonija.” Avalik kiri Eesti NSV-st.”

Tallinn. The letter starts with quoting the single news item in public newspapers referring to the youth disturbances in Tallinn that took place after the football match between Estonian TV and Estonian Radio, as the performance of a popular rock band had been cancelled there. The youngsters came to the streets in mass, repressions against the “main organisers” followed.¹⁸ The letter turned attention to the tense situation and a wave of Russification that had gone on since 1978. (This aimed to have Russian taught more extensively and to develop the so-called bilingualism – a fluent understanding of Russian by the non-Russian nationalities, in reality. Estonia was the only Soviet republic where the relative knowledge of Russian by the titular nationality (Estonians) had decreased in comparison of the 1979 and 1970 census data.) Small spontaneous youth demonstrations, unsanctioned by the Komsomol, had taken place in Estonia also before, but the 1980 event was massive, went on for days and involved thousands of pupils and students. Now, these forty Estonian intellectuals made a simple point: they claimed that the youth was voicing “something” – some discontent, that existed there in the society, that this “something” should be discussed and that solutions should be sought to it. They said that blaming people for hooliganism was not (the only) solution.

The Letter of Forty has been discussed at length elsewhere.¹⁹ It has been emphasised that many older intellectuals were strongly opposed to writing it as they were afraid it would do more harm than good, and that similar was probably the

¹⁸ Estonian Telegraph Agency announcement, 14th October, 1980: In the Public Prosecutor's Office: “The Public Prosecutor's Office has instituted criminal proceedings against the authors and instigators of the serious disturbances of the peace that have taken place in Tallinn in recent days. These disturbances, which involved groups of youngsters, have invoked the justifiable indignation and dissatisfaction of the workers. Legal action will also be brought against criminal hooligans involved. The circumstances will be subjected to close scrutiny in their entirety, after which the culprits will be brought to justice as the law prescribes.”

¹⁹ E.g. Sirje Kiin, Rein Ruutsoo, Andres Tarand, *40 kirja lugu* (Story of the letter of 40) (Tallinn: Olion, 1990).

opinion of the “Estonian minded” part of the Soviet Estonian leadership who did not however express their opinion.²⁰ All the signatories went through the process of threats, reprimands and small-scale punishments after submitting the letter to the newspapers (contrary to regulations, the Letter was not registered and no response followed from any of the three editorial offices). Naturally, the letter was never published in Soviet press, but it was actually taken into account in the CP Central Committee. Moreover, the Letter passed into circulation, it reached many locals and to the West. No harsh repressions followed to the signatories, but many were made to publicly denounce the letter (even if it had not been published anywhere).

Toivo Kõlar had not signed the Letter as he was not in Estonia at the time, and with his combination of a criminal record and Party membership it was perhaps also for the best. But he got in trouble the next year at the same time when he was temporarily substituting the editor-in-chief of the Writer's Union's monthly magazine *Looming* [Creation]. During his first days at work, Toivo approved the proofs for a new issue without hesitation. He remembers some good pieces from it, but that there had also been some poems by one Andrus Rõuk, a student of the Tallinn Academy of Arts, he says that he does not remember. A bit later one “attentive reader” noticed that the first letters of Rõuk's poem read downward as “*sini-must-valge*” – blue-black-white. It was also found out that the editor-in-chief's position was on the party *nomenklatura* and that Central Committee had confirmed Toivo's temporary placement. Some shouting at the CC and a punishment in the party line followed, the available pieces of the journal were confiscated, but nothing more. Well, Andrus Rõuk

²⁰ Aili Aareleid-Tart, “Estonian-Inclined Communists as Marginals,” in *Biographical Research in Eastern Europe*, ed. Humphrey, Miller, and Zdravomyslova, 71-99.

was expelled from the Academy of Arts, too.²¹ The reader of the poem today might be surprised by its strong and open nationalist sentiment; its last verses (“white”):

Voogab päev üle lõõsan maa	The dawn flows over the blazed country
Algaman merel kui tõus	The tide rises at sea
Lebada kauem ei saa	Unable to rest any longer
Geenid veel jõus	Genes still in force
Eestimaa	Estonia

But this seems not to have been an issue. The issue was hiding and exposing a forbidden phrase. As such, it did not express naïve, romantic, national sentiment and belief into persistence of the nation, it rather openly questioned the legitimacy of the Soviet power in Estonia. I will return to “blue-black-white” in later chapters while discussing the differences between the Estonian and Russian worlds in Soviet Estonia.

²¹ Andrus Rõuk, “Silmaes taevast ja meri,” *Looming*, nr. 9 (1981): 1311. “Silmaes taevast ja meri / Inimene sinisilmne / Nagu peoga kühveldet teri / Imeline valge // Meeled tuultele valla / Uued vaod vaotuman palge / Süda sädemaid kalla / Tuli neelab kõik alla // Voogab päev üle lõõsan maa / Algaman merel kui tõus / Lebada kauem ei saa / Geenid veel jõus / Eestimaa.” (1980).

There is another incident where a directly oppositional poem went through the press, it was in the Soviet Estonian pupil's magazine *The Pioneer* in 1970 (nr. 10, October). The children poem was called the “Badger's House”, it was printed and the magazines were delivered to home orders. Most of the other printed items were however taken off the sales. The author herself remembers that no direct repressions had followed to her, but she was not allowed to travel abroad for a long time, maybe because of that? (<http://www.tartupostimees.ee/1173536/vaike-jalutuskauk-uhest-laternast-teiseni>, accessed: 10 Sept 2013.) Original poem was published as follows: Milvi Jürisson, “Badger's House”, *Pioneer* Nr. 10 (1970). The poem is about the Badger's House that is described as a self sustainable, hard working and peaceful household, where everyone is busy building, repairing, making thing better. Suddenly, a large group of raccoons arrives to the doorsteps, bags on the door and gets in, they settle down as the space is nice and “why not to stay for a while”, when the badger protests the raccoon claims that “there's no need to pick a fight”. So they stayed and invited more friends to join them in time. The badger, however, walked his path to the court in a hope to find a just solution; judge however was a dumb old bear, who did not understand a thing. In the end, we do not learn how it all ended, but we know that the badger's pathway to the court had become deeper and deeper. // Poem in Estonian: “Mägral oli maja / nii nagu vaja, / see temalt võttis / kogu tema aja: / Juba tehti treppi, / juba pandi voodrit – / mägra peres polnud / ainsatki loodrit. / Ei tal olnud mahti / poesabas seista, / kõik, mis majas tarvis, / ise valmis treis ta. / Nõnda mägra majas / kasemetsa veeres / tasaselt ja targu / elukene veeres... // Kuni ühel õhtul / keegi äkki kloppis – / ukse taga seisid / kährikkoerad troppis! / Trügisid kõik sisse, / pambud pandi maha, / vaatasid siis ringi: / “korter pole paha.” / “Kuulge!” hüüdis mäger, / “miski siin ei klapi” / Kährik talle vastu: / “Kõik on korras, papi. / ruum on teil ju lahe – jääme veidi siia... / poleks mõtet asja / kakluse viia.” // Kährikuid on palju, / kährikul on kihvad, / pükste peal veel kõigil / rotinahast rihmad. // Jäidki koerad majja, / seadsid ennast sisse, / omakorda võtsid / sõpru korterisse. // Aga mägrapapi / kõndis kohtu vahet / lootuses, et kohus / nuhtleb seda pahet. / Aga kohtusaksaks / oli vana karu, / kellel kõik läks meelest, / kes ei saanud aru. // Mägrapapi visalt / ründas kohtumaja, / kuni tallas sisse / suure laia raja. / See ei ole teada, / kuidas lõppes kohus, / aga rada lookleb / praegugi veel rohus.”

2.3. Arrivals to Tallinn: trains, coffee, cleanliness

Travelling to Estonia from Russia throughout the Soviet period took place primarily by train. There are many stories about it, but most prevalent are the ones about the Tallinn train station – the Baltic Station²². This was the standard and almost only option for ordinary travellers (air travel, starting effectively in the late 1950s, being more reserved for business matters). In the 1960s, there were on average three trains a day from both Leningrad and Moscow to Tallinn. Most probably, a man or a woman would step out of the train and notice the medieval Old Town with the Toompea hill²³ in the background as the railway station sits next to them.²⁴

Filipp Glebov's* (b 1964) father was an aspiring young artist who yearned for excitement and artistic freedom. He arrived in Tallinn in 1951 and later married an Estonian artist. His son says that

it's such a nice legend, that is always told about him, that he wanted to go to the academy of arts in Riga – but he ran out of money in Tallinn. [---] But anyway, yeah, he wished to come here to the Baltic States. [---] And when he arrived, then in the Baltic station – seeing the Old Town and the Toompea hill and all – he thought that this is the place where he would willingly be. The Baltic States clearly represented some kind of freedom and creativity. He could have certainly entered [art schools] in Moscow or... “Repin” [school] in Leningrad, but he did not wish to study such academic... But maybe not even because of academism, but maybe also that he was drawn to some kind of other environment and other culture. I guess, ideally, he would have gone

²² The “Baltic Station” is a name from Czarist era when it was the end of a Baltic rail line.

²³ In German: *Domberg*, translated: Cathedral Hill.

²⁴ Such arrivals are often also depicted in arts and in fiction. In Estonian literature, one might be reminded of the following novel and subsequent film: Paul Kuusberg, *Andres Lapeteuse juhtum* (The case of Andres Lapeteus) (Tallinn: Eesti Raaamat, 1963); Film: *Mis juhtus Andres Lapeteusega* (What happened to Andres Lapeteus?), Tallinnfilm, directed by Krigori Kromanov, 1966. Both are in Estonian and focus on the moral difficulties of the War generation during the ‘cult of personality’. They start with depicting the heroic but mundane arrival of WW II soldiers at the Tallinn railway station. However, in the following book (this time by a famous Russian author) and film the Moscow youth arriving to Tallinn around 1960 do not notice the railway station, which they only pass through, to find themselves right on the beach where they camp for the summer. However, soon after, these youngsters who have had just graduated from secondary school in spring, will find themselves hanging out at many modern, stylish, jazzy cafes. Vassily Aksjonov, “Zvezdnyi billet” (Starticket), in: *Iunost’* (Youth), Nr. 6-7 (1961); Film: *Moi mladshii brat* (My Younger Brother), Mosfilm, directed by V. Semakov 1964.

abroad, but these possibilities, possibilities... inside the Union, they considered the Baltic States to be almost abroad.²⁵

Some people “inside the Union” certainly considered the Baltic States to be “almost abroad.” **Marina Toompuu*** (b. 1955) remembers her mother's sentiment that “it was a different world, it was a totally different world.” When Marina's mother had told her parents that she was getting married and going to Estonia...

... then my grandmother's first reaction was to ask 'oh God, do they at least use Russian currency there?' It was a totally different country [...] it was 1954 then, and in Russia it was clearly understood that [Estonia was] a totally different place and different state and different life.²⁶

Marina does not refer to the knowledge in a Russian province about how life in Estonia was, but rather to the more general perception that it was beyond *their* state. Part of this story is Marina's own imagination of the time around her birth as it is intertwined with her mother's story.²⁷ **Jelena Loore*** (b. 1954) remembers her own arrival to Tallinn with her parents, in 1970, when she was sixteen, as follows:

We arrived here on the 1st of December, 1970. [---] I remember we came through Leningrad, the passenger train was neat, clean. It was early in the morning at around seven thirty, there, in the Baltic station. There was no snow in Tallinn. [---] It was very peaceful, the city was very beautiful. We went to find the Army headquarters. It was where the Home Guard is now. It is not very far from the Baltic station. The city made me wonder... it was different, very beautiful, very clean. It was still in the Soviet time. The train was very neat.²⁸

Jelena's family went first to the Red Army headquarters where her father, as a military officer, had to report his arrival. Her parents were both from the Tver region; they had met there, her father became a submarine officer, and her mother stayed at home.

²⁵ Filipp, 1964, nr. 56/4.

²⁶ Marina, 1955, nr. 8/6.

²⁷ Marina, 1955, nr. 8/6.

²⁸ Jelena, 1954, nr. 14/4.

Actually, her father's ship – or more precisely, nuclear submarine – had sunk in 1970 while he had been in the hospital. After that

he was offered some other place and he chose Tallinn. He was transferred here to Tallinn and he was in the military for a few years and then he retired. He was not an old man, perhaps forty three, around that. Then he was an instructor in the naval institute. When he was in the army, he graduated from the university in Petrozavodsk through correspondence courses. He had a civil profession too – he was a Russianist and a history teacher.²⁹

Jelena does not really explain explicitly what she was wondering about at arrival, but she says that it was about the difference, the timeless “beauty” and everyday “cleanliness” were intermingled. She eventually married in Tallinn at the end of the 1970s. Jelena's husband was descended from the Estonian settlers in Russia and had gone to Russian schools (except for his primary schooling in Russia in the 1960s which was in Estonian); he had come to live in Estonia in the 1950s.

Viktor Korobko* (b. 1939)³⁰ is from Ukraine. He lost his father at the beginning of WW II and his mother in the post-WW II Ukrainian famine. Viktor grew up in an orphanage, was first in the army, then worked in factories, got married, and did not get an apartment for himself. Faced with problems both with his marriage and with his low salary, he started to “look into the bottle” a bit.³¹ Then one day he saw a recruitment poster for working in Estonia. He says that “having read the name of the country I had in mind an image from some documentary film: the autumn landscape, maybe Saaremaa, forests, groats, and the picturesque seashore in Tallinn.”³² The

²⁹ Jelena, 1954, nr. 14/3.

³⁰ His story is from the following life-story collection. Viktor Korobko, “Elutee” (Life-path), in *Mu kodu on Eestis*, 228-245.

³¹ Korobko, “Elutee,” 228, 236: “My mother got a notice of father's death in 1941. She herself died of hunger in 1946. The neighbour put her own children and me on a sledge and took us to the train station in town, hoping that the militia would pick us up and send us to an orphanage. [---] I sensed the moment of our marriage registration rather physically than spiritually, it was as if not my passport but my soul was being stamped. [---] Seven years we waited for an apartment, but when it was finally my turn, the boss gave an apartment to another department in the factory in exchange for two rooms in separate places. So we got a room in a communal flat.”

³² Korobko, “Elutee,” 236.

conditions offered were good, so he decided to leave the factory and signed the contract to move to Estonia in around 1967.

In Tallinn, we got off the train and found ourselves in a square in front of the Baltic Station. In front of us expanded the panorama of Toompea, magnificent buildings, and towers with green roofs. We were taken there, exactly to Toompea, straight from the station. We had to go through a somewhat demeaning process as our clothes were 'fried' in a special chamber. We had to strip down to our underwear. Our clothes lost their former looks. And as we were taken towards the building trust through the streets of Tallinn we were very much like prisoners of war. In *Tallinstroi* the men were divided into the building collectives.³³ Some stayed in Tallinn, and some were sent to Kallavere – this town-like settlement near Tallinn had been built for the workers of the Maardu chemical factories. The whole settlement was made up of dormitories. The girls became plasterers and painter-decorators, and the stronger half [men] masons, layers of concrete, and carpenters. I was assigned to be the carpenter in the mixed-profile building brigade and I was sent to renovate the Kuusalu car-repair factory. There were two “chemists” in our group. This is how the prisoners who worked in the chemical factories were called; I befriended one of them, Sergei Golubev. It came as a pleasant surprise that we were taken to work by bus. In Ukraine, I always rode in an open lorry bin into which benches had been built.³⁴

Viktor eventually became an inhabitant of Narva as he accidentally found a more rewarding job there as well as better living conditions. His former wife and child remained in Ukraine, and he remarried a Russian woman in Narva in 1969. Viktor's image of Tallinn is similar to the previous stories, but on the other hand, his general condition and also his arrival were quite different to Filipp's father – who had arrived as an adventurous student – and from Jelena's father – who had come as a high ranking military officer. No one was waiting for Viktor in Estonia; and at times he had even felt like a “prisoner of war” – an image he could only have recalled from his Ukrainian childhood in the late 1940s.³⁵

³³ *Tallinstroi* is the name of the building trust, it could be translated into English from Russian as “Tallinnbuild”.

³⁴ Korobko, “Elutee,” 238.

³⁵ Current social relations with a focus on ethnicity in Tallinn are discussed in several works. Following is an ethnographic study of ethnic activism and relations in a district of Tallinn: Seljamaa, “A Home for 121 Nationalities or Less.” For a statistical overview: Tiina Raitviir, *Rahvuste Tallinn: Statistilis-sotsioloogiline ülevaade* (Tallinn of Nationalities: statistical-sociological overview) (Tallinn: Eesti Avatud Ühiskonna Instituut, 2009).

Irina Kask (b. 1950) graduated from a vocational school in Tallinn and was then assigned to work in the Eastern Estonian town of Kiviõli, where she met her future husband – all this took place in the beginning of the 1970s.³⁶ But she was from Russia and had initially arrived in Tallinn. Irina's daughter **Jana*** (b. 1976) tells me that her mother had come to Tallinn to study, or perhaps she had just come and then started to look for possible options.

[Jana:] She did not come with an official warrant; she came totally out of her own free will. She wished, as she says, she wished to get away from Yaroslavl. [...] She felt trapped and bored and without any challenges there in Yaroslavl. She wished to get away from there and the only opportunity and place was actually Tallinn, because she had relatives in Tallinn. My Russian grandfather's [...] niece lives in Tallinn, and [...] well, her husband worked in this 'Dvigatel' factory. [...] In any event, this niece was here in Tallinn, and my mother came and went to her. Initially she stayed with her, took the entrance exams [...] and got in. This is the story of how she landed up in Estonia. [...] She just had not found suitable opportunities in Yaroslavl, did not know what to do and where to go, and whom to become. And so, this Tallinn seemed like an option to try.³⁷

Irina wanted to get away from Yaroslavl, and Tallinn was home to a close relative who could host her, so she came to escape boredom and to look for something different. When she arrived she was not “taken somewhere” like Viktor nor did she have to “report somewhere” like Jelena's father. Probably, her niece was there at the station or at least somewhere in town; being in touch with her niece had made moving to Estonia a realistic option.

³⁶ The story is told by Jana. First she thinks that it was surely in 1973, but later has to reconsider it when calculating back from her birth in 1976, her parents marriage in 1975, and the fact that her mother studied in Tallinn, graduated here and was then sent to work at the factory where she met with her father.

³⁷ Jana, 1976, nr. 90/8: “But with this Tallinn niece there is actually such a story that she had appeared rather accidentally, after the WWII, because her family disappeared in the WWII – they hail from near Velikije Luki, and my grandfather's family hails from Nizhni Novgorod – niece's family is from Velikije Luki and the war hit this place very hard. So she was a young child and got into an orphanage somewhere near Leningrad and having been sent away from orphanage she was sent to Tallinn to some kind of school. And she stayed here. [...] That we found her was a matter of some chance, but I do not know how it happened, because my grandfather is not alive any more and my mother does not know, as well.”

Irina would tell Jana that she had sensed the smell of coffee right at the railway station, which she would later come to compare with “Yaroslavl coffee.” In Jana's story, “coffee” becomes an additional marker of distinction that acquires a “civilizational” dimension.

[Jana:] She always told me of, how in Tallinn, at the Baltic station, getting off the train, the Moscow train [...] there was such a smell of coffee in the air, like the smell of real, fine coffee... And the pastries – well it was Tallinn. And then she walked into the Old Town and there are these cafés, where they sell coffee and pastries, this was such, totally like paradise. Well, for a person who came from somewhere... from Yaroslavl... [...] She always tells me that in Russia it was like... coffee was in this large pot, you know: pour the coffee in, the grain-coffee in, add the water, boil on fire, add milk and sugar too – and then pour it out into the glasses with a ladle – and then you get your coffee, right. Then you come to Tallinn and here you get it in a cup, right, black fine coffee, and she said, she learned to drink coffee only in Estonia. By the way, this story came up [with her] as I started to drink coffee quite early, while in university, and then her mother complained that 'you are starting with coffee too early, I was already around thirty when I learned this coffee drinking.'³⁸

Leo Paas* (b. 1929) married **Valentina** (b. 1939) in the mid-1960s. He knows a story about her visit to Tallinn for the first time, in 1961, with her group of student friends.

Leo shares one of her brightest impressions of Tallinn.

[Leo:] And they sit behind a table, eating. And, she says, there is one Estonian guy with a white shirt and a tie, and he eats with a fork in the left hand, a knife in the right hand. They started to talk, like: 'Who are you?' And then the guy replies: 'I'm a taxi driver.' This left quite a strong impression on my wife. In comparison with the Leningrad taxi drivers in cotton coats, hands soaked with oil.³⁹

Valentina was surprised by the fact that a taxi-driver was wearing a white shirt and ate with fork and knife at a table in a café next to their group of students from Leningrad.

³⁸ Jana, 1976, nr. 90/9. Tallinn's café scene in the late 1960s is depicted in Jaan Sööt's short documentary *511 paremat fotot Marsist* (511 Better Photos of Mars) Tallinnfilm, 1969. In the movie, the director mixes *The Beatles* music with Estonian poetry and texts about the potential of life on Mars. But it was perhaps not only because of *The Beatles* that the film was never released in the USSR – the images of cafes and its customers depict alienation and boredom – people seem to get together but are lonely.

³⁹ Leo, 1929, nr. 24/3.

1961 is the same year when **Marina Toompuu's** (b. 1955) sister was born and their grandfather had come from Ryazan to Estonia to see his new-born granddaughter.

My grandfather, as he came here, there are anecdotes showing that he totally loved it. And then he came and wandered around the city. And he had returned from some place and said “oh well, you do have such a good and swell service here.” Upon enquiry, he revealed that he had been enjoying a beer, and when they asked where he went for the beer, he had explained that he had been to the *Palace* for a beer, and that it was all so good and exactly how it should be. But he was more than seventy then. [...] But he had a stroke here and died in three days. [...] Maybe he had been here for a few weeks. [...] So this is really about, how a life can... [go?]. So it happened that here was buried Ivan Ivanovich Ivanov, who would have never ever in his life, until the year...⁴⁰

This is the end of that story and I continue asking about the other details: did the grandmother come to funerals, how were the later contacts with Russia, and so on. I do not learn what exact year did Marina have in mind as the year before which Ivan Ivanovich could have “never ever” happened to visit and die in Estonia, but she probably alluded to the years around the World War II and the Estonian annexation: 1939, 1941 or 1944.⁴¹ Marina refers here to the point that she made previously about the time of her mother's arrival to Estonia: “I remember pretty well that time when Estonia really differed a lot from Russia. Later, in the 80ies, that difference started de erode a bit.”⁴² At the same time, there is an anecdote: grandfather visited a place that almost no “ordinary person went to – the bar-restaurant of the hotel *Palace* – the prime hotel next to the Victory square that was the hotel for any foreign (or important) guests in town until 1965.⁴³ Grandfather found the local in what was not for the locals.

⁴⁰ Marina, 1955, nr. 8/7-8.

⁴¹ Nevertheless, Marina's grandfather (b. 1883) had been an active young man with an entrepreneurial spirit and the Estonian province could have been within his reach also prior to 1917 within the tsarist empire. Marina emphasises the stark differences of the local Estonian and remote Russian worlds, but within her grandfather's life-span most of the time the Estonian territory was part of the same state as Russian territory.

⁴² Marina, 1955, nr. 8/7.

⁴³ The name of hotel *Palace* is pronounced in a French way in Estonian. This 6-storey hotel was completed in 1938 to serve as the primary hotel in Tallinn. The hotel stands next to the main modern square of the town – to the present Freedom square that during the Soviet period was named as

This anecdote about Ivan Ivanovich being in a foreign place is less funny at in the face of his death a few days later.

* * *

In the first part of the chapter, I described the temporal dynamics of cultural worlds in Estonia from the perspective of an Estonian intellectual, from a perspective that is dominant in the Estonian public discourse today. Its basic trope was anxiety about the growing number of working class Russian-speaking newcomers. Local intellectuals would rather separate local Russian world from the Russian “culture” by emphasising its working class nature and calling it “Soviet.” This move would then also mark the local Estonian world as less or non-Soviet.

In the second part of the chapter I introduced the varied reasons and motivations for “newcomers” to come to Soviet Estonia. In contrast with the locals' opinion about newcomers' ignorance, many arrivals were marked with the image of a “different world” throughout the Soviet times: for example, with the depictions of the Tallinn railway station and cafés. This image confirms the notion that the Baltic States were the “Soviet West” – the medieval German townscape, order and cleanliness, bourgeois manners, and artistic freedoms – life was perceived to be different and even foreign.⁴⁴ The difference is accentuated by the counter-images of “Russian coffee,” “Leningrad taxi drivers,” and filthy trains.

Most of the people who arrived to Estonia perceived a cultural boundary between themselves and the locals. However, the meaning of that otherness remained

Victory square. The few foreigners who stayed in the city were also housed in *Palace* until a new, more modern hotel *Tallinn* was completed in 1965. The latter was in turn substituted in prominence with the high-rise 23-storey hotel *Viru* in 1972. That latter one was of high quality, built by the Finnish companies and builders, and equipped both with the latest stylish interior design and the up-to-date microphones and interceptors for the KGB.

⁴⁴ See also: Anne Gorsuch, “Estonia as the Soviet “Abroad,”” in *All This is Your World: Soviet Tourism at Home and Abroad after Stalin* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 49-78.

much more open to interpretation. What and when is “Estonian” and “Russian” in these juxtapositions? From the perspective of the newly arrived person it seems that “Estonian” is rarely a comparative dimension, the scales between the two cultural entities – Russia/USSR and Estonia/local – are too different. The local difference was often marked by the “Western” or even “German” cultural sphere and also by the references to concrete localities – cleanliness and order, but also medieval Tallinn and cafés; nothing is indeed specifically “Estonian” about these.

This observation opens up a potential mismatch between the locals' assignment of culturally “Estonian” quality to the reference points that for the newcomers were part of something larger – “Western”; or something lesser – concrete town or neighbourhood. This juxtaposition was mostly observable in the urban environment; local Estonians retained absolute majority and stronger ties to the countryside.

In the following parts of the chapter I discuss the relations of Estonian and Russian cultural worlds in two different localities of Soviet Estonia. I inquire what were the differences between living in the Estonian-dominated city of Tartu and in the Russian-dominated Eastern Estonian region. The discussion of Eastern Estonia will be longer as the interviews allow for a comparison between different townships in the region; in addition, the experiences of young people in public spaces and at school environment will be touched upon.

2.4. A place of living: Tartu

The parents of **Vaida Lodjapuu*** (b. 1970) were both born in Estonia. Mother **Ljudmila's** (b. 1937) parents had moved there “to be closer to the university” even if

they did not manage to enrol their daughter into it due to financial reasons; they were a Russian-speaking family which also had some Polish roots – they had not been in the USSR. Later they had moved to Tallinn. Father **Leo** (b. 1936) was from an intellectual family in Tartu; his father was a scientist of education throughout almost the whole century and his mother a house-wife all her life; they lived in the 'professors' district' in Tartu. When Vaida thinks back to it, her father's family created chances for self-fulfilment and intellectual life (for men, she would add) even if in a rather cold and lonely atmosphere as grandparents had both "lived on their own"; her mother's home had been aspiring but "the field of action had been more limited," grandmother had been strict in a sense that is, for Vaida, "Russian-traditional."⁴⁵

Leo and Ljudmila met at the university graduation ceremony and married in 1961. They both studied physics and made careers in science. Leo's was outstanding; he was the leader of an important research sector, and travelled internationally. "He was a good scientist, but obviously he also managed to be in the right place in the right time," says Vaida.

After the 1950 purge of the former rector and more than 20% of the professors and lectures that accompanied a general Stalinization campaign of Estonia, a successful physicist from Leningrad, Feodor Klement, was appointed as the rector of Tartu University in 1951 (he stayed until 1970).⁴⁶ He was of Estonian descent and he was supportive of research (in addition to teaching which had become the main task of universities after Stalinist separation of teaching and research institutions); in general, he is remembered well by the Tartu intelligentsia as "he was primarily a scientist, and

⁴⁵ At the age of sixteen Ljuda was not allowed to see the movie "Red and Black" by Stendhal as there had been some "immodest" scenes in it; she went in secret. (Vaida, 1970, nr. 61/3)

⁴⁶ The history of Tartu University and its position in the Soviet education system will be discussed thoroughly in the following forthcoming dissertation: David Ilmar Beecher, "Ivory Tower of Babel: Tartu University and the Languages of Two Empires, a Nation-State, and the Soviet Union" (PhD Diss., University of California, Berkeley, forthcoming).

only then a communist.”⁴⁷ The Russian student’s group in physics was created in 1954, and some high level professional physicists were hired from Russia.⁴⁸ However, Russian and Estonian students stood rather apart: “They did not really meet during their university studies, yeah absolutely, these were totally two different worlds, Russian physics course and Estonian physics course. They [my parents] met at the graduation party,” says Vaida of her parents.⁴⁹

At around the same time, **Ilona*** (b. 1939) and **Feliks*** (b. 1937) **Loks** studied at the department of physics, too.⁵⁰ Feliks says that he had had more contacts with the Estonian boys due to the common military training. Previously, he had lived in four smaller Estonian towns consecutively with his father who was a party official with an upward career – he studied the “red disciplines” in Moscow, fought in WWII, and “ended up in Estonia” in 1945.⁵¹ As a rather high ranking Soviet official in the smaller Estonian towns he was responsible for agriculture and, in Feliks’s words, had certainly been against the March 1949 deportation in Estonia.

In parallel, Ilona was born to a family of intellectuals – her father studied and then taught veterinary sciences from 1920s until retirement in 1974. It was the second marriage for her mother. She had been more “self-educated”, had kept an animal clinic in the 1930s, and had some simpler jobs later (Ilona remembers the sorry stories

⁴⁷ See for example: Toomas Karjahärm and Väino Sirk, *Kohanemine ja vastupanu. Eesti haritlaskond 1940–1987* (Adaptation and resistance. Estonian educated stratum 1940-1987) (Tallinn: Argo, 2007).

⁴⁸ He has said: “All these years I worked as a rector, my bad command of Estonian made itself known. My command of that language deepened slowly. [---] In the university I sometimes had some problems with the people who did not know the local language, but worked or studied here, yet looked down on acquiring the Estonian language.” Feodor Klement, *Templid teaduse teedel* [Temples on the roads of science] (Tallinn: Eesti Raamat, 1983), 115-116.

⁴⁹ Vaida, 1970, nr. 61/7.

⁵⁰ Ilona, 1939, nr. 88; Feliks, 1937, nr. 94.

⁵¹ When explicitly asked he would mention that his father had probably been arrested in 1937 in Moscow, “for he had been hiding, that he has a relative...” A person with his family name had been a minister in the purged government, but his father had managed to show that his own name came from Ukraine, that he had himself added the Russian “-ov” ending which created the false but deadly similarity. (Feliks, 1937, nr. 94/2)

of how the departing Germans came to put their dogs down in 1939). Her parents divorced around 1950, her father remarried, but remained present for the children and continued providing for the family.

Ilona stayed mostly in the countryside as a child, and for her, the occupations and deportations are a personal memory. She did not go to a “very good school, but a normal one.” She did not join the Komsomol as many others had in the 1950s. In 1955-56, her high school had taken in some of its former students who had returned from Siberia (they had formed a youth resistance organization Blue-Black-White in 1946, and in 1950 all 36 members were arrested).⁵² The boys had sometimes “talked something” among their peers. In her words, her childhood and youth was “her nationalist period” – becoming older, she had already “overcome it.” Inspired from the talk with Ilona, I later asked Felix if he had known of any “blue-black-white flags et cetera” – he said that he had never heard of this at the time, and that even today his “general attitude to this war is of course different than what the Estonian’s have. Absolutely different.”⁵³

At the university, the Lodjapuu and Lokses worked in two languages, but they had colleagues who only spoke Russian. Reports to Moscow were sent in Russian, and scientific journals were mostly in Russian. But the majority of the student body spoke Estonian.

Juri Lotman (1922-93) and Zara Mints (1927-90) arrived in Estonia in 1950-51. Their story illustrates other types of motivations for leaving Russia; it also

⁵² “Blue-Black-White” (“Sini-Must-Valge,” SMV) was an underground school-youth resistance movement active in Tartu in 1946-50. It was founded by six students from the 6th High School and it is claimed that by the end it had around 40 members. For the October holidays in 1949 they prepared leaflets mocking the Soviet system and Stalin. On the 5th of November 1949 some of the organisation’s members blew up a Red Army monument in a “Raadi” park in Tartu. 36 members were arrested in 1950. Pearu Kuusk, “Punaarmee monumendi plahvatuses ja lendlehtedest Tartus 1949. aastal” (Of the blow-up of the Red Army monument and leaflets in Tartu in 1949), *Tuna* (2002): 67–73.

⁵³ Feliks, 1937, nr. 94/10.

contextualises the cultural-linguistic divisions with the intellectual ones in Tartu University. Lotman is perhaps the most renowned “Estonian” scholar of humanities in the 20th century, the leader of the “Tartu-Moscow school” of structural semiotics (which was “probably the most internationally acclaimed non-Marxist academic and intellectual movement in the Russian post–World War II humanities”⁵⁴). Lotman published hundreds of articles and kept an immense correspondence network; his statue stands in front of the Tartu University Library.⁵⁵ Lotman served in the army and in the war from 1939 until 1945, after that he graduated from Leningrad University with honours in 1950. This is how he describes the process that followed his graduation:

Girls from the educated families in Leningrad were sent to Siberian villages or to the Far-East without discussion. All this I had to observe while waiting in line. Eventually, I was called in, they had a look at me and for some reason started to talk in third person: 'Let him come back another time.' It ended with a call to Berdjakov's [office], he announced to me that they would grant a non-binding diploma to me. When I asked where was the characterization that had been given to me from my brigade at demobilization, he replied – looking into my eyes with his clear eyes – insistently: 'It has gone missing.' This was the price for the non-binding diploma.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Maxim Waldstein, “Russifying Estonia? Iurii Lotman and the Politics of Language and Culture in Soviet Estonia,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 8 (Summer 2007): 565.

⁵⁵ The statue is a very abstract one, it depicts “brainishness” and thinking – there is no human face to it.

⁵⁶ Juri Lotman, “Mittememuaarid” (Non-memoirs), in: *Jalutuskäigud Lotmaniga* (Walks with Lotman), ed. by Mihhail Lotman (Tallinn: TLU Press, 2010), 95-86, 94-95: “A long search for a job started. It went according to a stereotypical scenario. In the morning I went to one place, where, as I had ascertained before, there would be a job vacancy (normally it was a school). The director received me kindly, told me that there was a vacancy, and asked me to bring an application and to fill out the form the next day. For some reason, in the year ‘50, I yet had this attribute, which depending on the point of view could be called either stupidity or naïveté. The task of filling out the form [*anketa*] was to [me], whose life-experiences were related to the war, totally incomprehensible. [---] My education in this regard was completed by Aleksandr Zapadov – a smart, ironic, cynical person. When we once met at *filfak* [faculty of philology], I complained that job vacancies seem to exist, but one curious chain of events keeps repeating itself: in the beginning a deep and promising conversation, then a request to fill out the form and a proposal to return in a few days, after that a strange look aside and one and the same phrase: 'You know, the job has been already taken.' --- Zapadov looked at me like an idiot. I had never seen such a surprised expression. 'You don't know what's the matter?' he asked. --- 'No I don't.' --- 'You know, go to the museum of zoology, they need a person with a philology degree, have a word there.' --- And I went there. Having entered the office of the director, a fat, old Jew, I told him that I was sent by Zapadov. --- The person looked at me with undisguised resentment: 'Why did he send you?

Actually, it did not mean that “he had paid the price” and was just left free to choose his job; it rather meant that he would not get one as no one dared to take the responsibility to offer Lotman a professional job. The Stalinist campaign against cosmopolitanism had “discovered a Zionist plot,” and this resonated on what could be called “the employment market.”⁵⁷ No one would hire him in Leningrad or in the other places in Russia where he tried. Through a friend, he heard of some vacancies in Tartu, and he indeed got a teaching job at the Institute of Teachers there in 1950, soon after that he managed to start giving courses at the university, and in 1954 he fully transferred to the Tartu University. When Lotman thinks back to those days in Tartu, he would say that

the non-awareness of language and local circumstances, but also the unforgivable foolishness that has followed me my whole life, prevented me from understanding the tragedy of the local circumstances which we had landed up to. I perceived the situation as a sheer idyll: work with students gave me immense enjoyment; an excellent library allowed [me] to energetically advance the chapters of my dissertation whose main bulk was complete; friendship with the group of young literary scholars who lived in Tartu then – it all arouse a permanent sense of happiness in me.⁵⁸

The reader can guess that “foolishness,” for Lotman, had meant the intense, all-consuming focus on work, and that “not noticing anything” referred to the potentially negative attitudes of locals towards the “newcomers”: in addition to many Russian-speakers, many ethnic Estonians from Russia got leadership positions in the University (including rector Klement). Juri Lotman was strongly affiliated to the

I have explained to him that we already have two Jews. I cannot take any more.' --- I turned around and left. After a few days I saw Zapadov on the street. 'Got it?' ---'Got it,' I replied. [---] I called Tarnik, the Director of the Institute of Teachers. Having listened to all the data in my *anketa*, he told me that I can come. Having dressed into my only 'Sunday suit,' that was adjusted for me from my father's black suit, I rode to Tartu, where I stayed for the rest of my life.”

⁵⁷ As well known, this unfortunate case started with the rise of Golda Meir's popularity as an Israeli ambassador to Moscow, where she had somehow mobilized too many Jewish intellectuals and activists. One of the curious victims of the subsequent purges was Molotov's Jewish wife. The “doctors plot” came later in 1952.

⁵⁸ Juri Lotman, “Mittememuaarid,” 95.

Russian high-culture and was rather distanced from the “masses” of newcomers. After the 1950s, Lotman might have started to “notice something,” but it seems that his practical choice was to notice as little as possible. On the one hand, Lotman's “borders” lay in scholarship and Tartu provided him a good place to work in the USSR context in which he was anyway on the ideological “border.” On the other hand, as said, while being Jewish, Lotman remained strongly affiliated to Russian culture; he basically did not learn to speak Estonian, while his wife Zara Mints was much better and two out of their three sons attended Estonian-language schools, and married Estonian women.

In 1951, Juri Lotman married Zara Mints in Tartu (even if their modest party took place in Leningrad). It had been quite difficult to convince her to permanently move to the province. Eventually, Lotman did not learn much Estonian, but Zara Mints did. People would comment that she was “painfully aware” of her position in Tartu and that she paid special appreciation to any student of Estonian descent at her courses (of Russian literature).⁵⁹ But in 1951, in Lotman's words, Zara was a convinced internationalist and a Komsomol activist. So weird had been the marriage registration office to her in Tartu – they were asked to take their coats off and to sit down in a rather nice corner – that Zara had started to laugh spontaneously. It had seemed bourgeois to her exactly in the way that she had imagined it to be when living in Moscow; laughter was her way to accept it. The clerk – working there since before 1940, Lotman imagines, had commented that “the first time it is funny indeed.”⁶⁰

Leida (b. 1931) and **Ivan** (b. 1927) **Archipelagov** married in Leningrad in 1955, a few years after Lotmans had left for Tartu. Ivan told me in a short

⁵⁹ Waldstein, “Russifying Estonia,” 561-596.

⁶⁰ Juri Lotman, “Mitememuaarid,” 95.

conversation that while studying in the military academy in Leningrad he had formed lifelong friendships with his peers, “more meaningful than any youth could imagine today.”⁶¹ These people were scattered all across the USSR after graduation and formed his network of trust. Father's dispersed friendships is a shared knowledge in the family – also Viktor comments it to me at length.

But let's say, for example, he has very good friends, with whom he studied at the Military Academy, these were his friends for life. And up to today he is in touch, who has gone here or there, who is already dead, and let's say, the pre-death [*surmaeelne*] correspondence, [...] very moving actually. But, by the way, he has not made any friends afterwards. That, say, well, this was that world, which, I think, was an entirety for him, this company. But let's imagine, after World War II, this was one of the best educational institutions. There were still the tsarist-era scientists teaching there, really, the brightest minds in Europe. Can you imagine, what could have been the pressure in academy after WW II, when there had been the war, there were student cohorts after many years – what could be the competition? In a word, very strong, after all, medicine is not a joking matter in the army.⁶²

After retirement from the army, Ivan completed his *aspirnatura* in Leningrad and started working as a medical researcher in the University of Tartu, Faculty of Medicine. He was one of the few Russians in the department, and a successfully published researcher. According to Leida and Viktor, Ivan was received with much nationalist hostility, never admitted to the “circle,” and his true friends remained elsewhere – scattered around in the USSR. As a former military officer he wore the stigma of being suspected as an informer and his social circle evolved around the veterans in Tartu who were often indeed connected to the KGB. But Ivan did not speak any Estonian and therefore would have been useless in informing – not knowing the language became a shield against the accusations in informing, at least for Ivan.

[Viktor:] He could reply that a KGB agent has to understand what you are talking about, but I do not understand anything that you are saying, because I do not understand your language. Then, he could feel more comfortable [...]

⁶¹ Ivan, 1928, nr 19/2.

⁶² Viktor, 1962, nr 10/9.

that he cannot inform on them. [---] He was Russian. [...] he had acquaintances who were local, who were from the KGB [...], the military and the veterans. He was always suspicious of the others in the similar manner – becoming too close with someone – it was dangerous in his regard. I think he never felt at home here, he was always afraid that some approaches... could be insincere.⁶³

Ivan arrived in Tartu and connected with the Russian speakers and primarily with the military due to his own background. But he was also suspicious of local military, especially of their possible connections to the KGB. This created a sense of displacement and an uneasy atmosphere for him. However, as Viktor says, isolation was Ivan's disposition in other matters as well – for example, he had been a distant father – but as for Tartu...

Tartu for him is primarily Yuryev... [When] Tartu was founded in 1030, it was Yuryev, right, not Tartu. In 1030, it was Yuryev, and my father is convinced that the Russians have lived there permanently for far longer than the Estonians... And then he would tell about some ancient graves and other bullshit... He has much such preliminary 'knowledge.'⁶⁴

Viktor expresses his distance from father's views, but **Maria Lender's*** (b. 1950) view and feeling about Tartu it a bit similar to Ivan's. She studied psychology in Leningrad and met her future Estonian husband there in the department. They moved to live and work in Tartu in the beginning of the 1970s. It had been quite difficult, living with children at the dorm, with no prospect of getting an apartment. In 1977, they moved to Tallinn to work at the Pedagogical Institute. There they got an apartment through the connections of her father-in-law. In contrast to Ivan and some other people, Maria picked up the Estonian language, and her children went to Estonian schools in Tallinn, she did not resist that.

... but in Tartu I really felt like a second or third rate person. Very strong nationalist attitudes prevailed there. [...] I am from an intellectual family at

⁶³ Viktor, 1962, nr 10/6-7; 10.

⁶⁴ Viktor, 1962, nr 10/18.

least for ten generations, in Tartu University, they were mostly first generation intellectuals. In Tallinn, it was easier, the personality was somehow first before the nation there. For example, NS was a source of tension in Tartu and she did not hide it. – I remember that at some event a person from the room asked that when there is a choice between hiring a not-very professional Estonian or a professional Russian ship-captain NS replied that an Estonian should be hired. – When arriving to Tartu, I could not say a word of Estonian, of course... maybe there was some pride from Petersburg's University. And my child was very ill, I was quite wrapped in myself.⁶⁵

It is not needed to agree with Maria about idea of “ten generations of intellectuals” to understand her straightforward point about the strong nationalist tendencies in Tartu and that she lacked certain intellectual graciousness or openness that she had been used to in Leningrad.⁶⁶ She was a Russian intellectual, she was among the Estonian crowd, she did not feel that she belonged to it. At the same time she had appreciated the liberal atmosphere and compromises that came along with living in Estonia, she accepted that her children will 'become Estonians.'

* * *

But there were also other networks and social environments in Tartu in addition to academia. Ivan Arhipelagov worked in the university but he socialized with military officers. **Nikolai Alekseyev's** (b. 1977) grandparents retained much of their network around the military as they had arrived to Tartu around 1960 when his grandfather was allocated to a military job there. As for his grandmother, Nikolai says that she

did not really delve into local culture, and these specialities. At the same time, she had Estonian friends, she visited them at the summer houses... But my grandmother never valued rural idyll. She preferred an apartment with all the amenities and did not want, did not value that she could have acquired a summer house. [...] With their black Volga – which was a very big thing then – they had their outings, picnics, and enjoyed their life. And I cannot say, which mentality she had, was she oriented to conflict, did my grandmother have any stereotypes... I guess she had her own ideas about Estonians and some attitudes like that, but I think that we should not ask for too much [from

⁶⁵ Maria, 1950, nr. 42/2

⁶⁶ She owns a flat in St. Petersburg and goes there often, probably therefore she refers to the city as “Petersburg” also in her Soviet references.

her]. She has lived as a wife of a military officer all her life, she paid much consideration to various celebrations – of course 23rd of February and...⁶⁷

In Tartu, Nikolai's grandmother had had a job related to dosing beer into smaller packing units and this gave her a potential "additional income." She had also started some "speculating," visited connections in Georgia, started to deliver furniture and stuff from here and there. "So she could afford perhaps a bit more and her sons [...] and they really did not run short of anything."⁶⁸ In general, she enjoyed a more urban lifestyle with amenities, and she could afford it, while perhaps the countryside was for arranging picnics and excursions. Nikolai has stayed close to her grandmother and he knows her stories well. He attests to certain superficiality of grandmother's friendly relations to her Estonian friends within the limits of her status as an officer's wife. Her connection to the countryside is very different from the Estonians of her age who almost exclusively aspired to ties with the land. As Maria Lender noted, most of the Estonian intelligentsia in the university had just "recently arrived" from the countryside.

Daria (b. 1931) and **Mart** (b. 1932) **Poska** moved to Tartu in 1956 after a year in the countryside at Mart's parents. Mart had gone to Tartu to arrange for them to move there but he had "not managed to arrange anything, [---] you know how he is, does not accomplish anything," says Daria.⁶⁹ One day Daria went to Tartu herself:

I could not take it any more. And then in the end I went to Tartu myself. [...] There *we* had a military garrison, and there was a divisional headquarters – there was general Belyi, Gusarov. I accidentally got acquainted with the women from the military base, with the wives. At the time there was 'Age of Love' running at the cinemas, I was talking there about my faith [to the women]. And, you know the Russian mentality, we found a *common language* immediately. I told them about my misfortune, that my husband had brought me here, that I [formerly] worked as a constructor, that I have

⁶⁷ Nikolai, 1977, nr 60/8.

⁶⁸ Nikolai, 1977, nr 60/7.

⁶⁹ Daria, 1931, nr 95/3.

got an education, but am sitting without anything. Then they told me to go to the divisional headquarters – that are *our guys* are there, they will help. I get [...] to the division headquarters, tell everything, who I am, and that my husband finished the Tartu electromechanical vocational school, he is a power engineer. And can you imagine – within a day I found a job for him, and for myself, a room in town – *ten* [square] metres.⁷⁰

In passing, as she is telling me about how they had to fit into that small room, Daria also mentions that “then my sister was also arriving.” This catches my attention: “... *your sister also came?*” Daria says that yes, and that, yes, she lives in Estonia too. “Yes, and then I dragged everyone along: one sister, and then the other sister; and I arranged for my [two] cousins to be here. In general, [I] dragged all my relatives from there to here.”⁷¹ After telling me how she managed to have Mart diagnosed with tuberculosis and how she arranged rare antibiotics for her husband, she would return to the issue of the “ten metre room.” She reminds me that in these years it had all been a wasteland, so it was really great they got the room: “At the time, there wasn’t this Turu street, there weren’t these stores, Riia street – only the Agricultural Academy; and on this other side it was all a vacant lot, there was nothing. Everything was destroyed. Turu streets did not exist. Empty lots.” (Most of this had been mostly destroyed by the Soviet air raid in March 1944). It meant that there were no rooms. “No, no, no, no negotiation.” So these ten metres, “it was actually rather remarkable, but this is, naturally, frankly, my merit, because I was able to – I went directly to the right place, I went to the Russians.”⁷²

This commentary is given by Daria entirely in passing. *The ours* in the army base could help as they had found a common language – she was in the right place for

⁷⁰ Daria, 1931, nr 95/3. Stress in *italic* is added by me.

⁷¹ Daria, 1931, nr 95/4. But now the younger sister left when the detachment started. “Got frightened, ran away, later regretted – there was such a period. One cousin left, regretted a lot, she died last year. Had she stayed here, she would be alive. Because in Russia it is difficult, medical services are awful.”

⁷² Daria, 1931, nr 95/3.

her in this overcrowded city. She put her potential network in action, and it was very much based on whom she recognised naturally as to be *hers*. I have never heard of any Estonians going to the military to arrange something, especially in Tartu. For Daria this signified an opportunity to move on in life. The moment offered a way to move away from the Estonian countryside where she felt useless and uncomfortable; it opened the more familiar world for her. It was a Russian world of newcomers in an alien town. But Daria's world was very little related to the Juri Lotman's in Tartu university; her's had much more connotations to the presence of Soviet union in Tartu. However, this is also a story about Daria's home town Tartu that is located in Estonia; this is just the way she settled down and “domesticated” that town.

* * *

Tartu exemplifies the possibility for a rather isolated experiential world to exist in the Soviet society – a remote academic centre at the Western borderlands – in parallel to which there existed a Soviet military airport. Juri Lotman's *ours* was the Russian department at the university and Daria Poska's was the army personnel; these two parts of Russian world in Estonia rarely intersected. Ivan Archipelagov was well aware of both, but at home in neither. Maria Lender's example shows difficulties of inhabiting both Russian and Estonian world's in Tartu: she was close to Estonians, but still felt rejected. Strong feelings of national sentiment in Tartu are commented on not only by the Russian-speakers, but also in the following comparison of “Estonianness” in the contexts of Eastern Estonia and Tartu.

Jana Kask (b. 1976) arrived in Tartu to study in the university at the beginning of the new times, in 1993. She had gone to an Estonian school, and she had spent her summers with her Estonian grandmother in the country, but her childhood

environs had been predominantly Russian-speaking. In general, she does not remember distinguishing between the nationalities among the children and adults in her childhood – everyone knew Russian, while some people spoke also in Estonian. When I ask Jana “whom does she feel like” in reference to ethnic identity, she remembers her arrival in Tartu and she would respond: “I consider myself Estonian, totally Estonian, but there have been situations where I feel myself as a stranger among Estonians...”⁷³

[Jana:] So long as I lived in Eastern Estonia, and in Kohtla-Järve, I had never had a problem with it. In a sense that I was an Estonian and it was pretty clear to all the society around me – so to say, the village community that there was – I was an Estonian for them, exactly the way I was. In a word: this was Estonianness. When I came to Tartu to study at the university when I was eighteen, then I had the first shock, and it was a serious 'culture shock.' – Well, now I comprehend it like that, in retrospect, when I look at my first year at the university. – These people with whom I went to study history, well, they were the *real* Estonians. People who were banging on their chest and waving the blue-black-white flags. The Estonians in Eastern Estonia were no wavers of blue-black-white flags, they were the entirely different Estonians.

[Uku]: *Was it difficult, in your studies, due to this different background?*

--- No it wasn't, rather it was the other way around. It was easy, in the class of Russian language – I did not have to take Russian language, I was excused from it after the first class, they said that I had nothing to do there – the rest of the group could not form a single grammatically correct sentence; like 'I graduated from the First gymnasium in Haapsalu.' They could not say that correctly in the Russian language. And well, after this first lesson I was pretty much shocked because I had never seen an Estonian who could not form such a sentence. [---] In Eastern Estonia, there were no such Estonians. Even now, I remember that a guy [...] stood up and said '*ia, ia kontšila Haapsalu*' [I, I, finished Haapsalu].⁷⁴ And then I thought that, oh God forgive me, how can this be possible that you have studied Russian for eleven years and you cannot form this sentence.

--- *And what concerned the studies of history?*

--- Maybe there were some problems with identifying with the course mates. They were all like *real Estonians*, they read Ivan Orav, and were quoting him, so to say, next to drinking beer. And I had, like, never heard of this man,

⁷³ Jana, 1976, nr. 90/28-30.

⁷⁴ In addition to the lack of a meaningful sentence, Jana also stresses that Vello, who is a man, uses a feminine ending of the verb.

I thought: 'who is this Ivan Orav?'⁷⁵ Well, when you studied in the department of history you had to be very Estonian-minded, it was 1993, and it was like a mandatory uniform that you had to wear.

--- *Did you put this uniform on?*

--- I think I put it on by the beginning of the second year. The first year, it took some time to get adapted with all that, well, to perceive all that cultural environment and so on. But well, picking in style “you are from Eastern Estonia, you are Russian.” That “you are *Russian*” I heard until... well, maybe I hear it up to now sometimes from these course mates. Apparently, I was pretty different and foreign for them. Well, [there were] some Tallinn people, but most [of the people] on my course were graduates from the Tartu high schools. Well, and for them, seeing a Russian was a phenomenon of its own. I was totally Russian for them, they called me a Russian – “but you are Russian.” This was totally incomprehensible for me that in Eastern Estonia I was totally Estonian, no one suspected me of not being Estonian.

--- *But did you find close friends from your department?*

--- Hmm, yeah. From among these people who called me a Russian. I get along with them today very well. In a sense, they are my best friends. It is amazing how these ultra-nationalist course mates have become, so to say, my life-long friends.

--- *They did not stay ultra nationalist and you did not stay a “Russian”?*
[laugh]

--- I guess that they are not wearing that ultra nationalist jacket any more, and I have, I have integrated into that cultural space, indeed. We have walked towards each other within these years.⁷⁶

Jana's memories stress that important connection between the ethnic perception of ones surroundings and of oneself. Jana being a “Russian” was a joke for her friends – a good-willing teasing comment that friends often make among each other (after all, Jana could always tease the others about not knowing Russian after eleven years of

⁷⁵ Ivan Orav (1900-2009) was a popular authority on the matters of past and present in the 1990s among many Estonians. He was a life-long and hard-working smith who knew personally most of the historical figures in Estonia throughout the century, especially the interwar personalities. He died in 2009 at the time the new glass victory monument was erected on the Liberty square – that was his tombstone. Orav is a fictional character authored by Andrus Kivirähk, his stories are collected in *Ivan Orava mälestused: minevik kui helesinised mäed* [Memoirs of Ivan Orav: the past as the bright blue mountains] (Tallinn: A. Kivirähk, 1995, Varrak, 2001, 2008, 2013). In Russian: Andrus Kivirähk, *Memuary Ivana Orava: Byloe kak golubye gory* (Tallinn: Aleksandra, 2012). Ivan Orav's memoirs offer some over-ethnicized humour from the 1990s in hyperbole. His stories were popular both with the nationalists and moderates, he mocked the idealized depictions of life in the Estonian Republic in 1918-40, as well. At present, he writes his opinion columns from Hell, where he reunited with all the historical figures whom he had known in life.

⁷⁶ Jana, 1976, nr. 90/28-30.

studying it which was not a matter of pride). However, Jana's mother *was* a Russian. And the discourse against *poluverniks* (the “half-blooded”) was pretty fierce in some nationalist circles, especially within the restored fraternities and sororities of Tartu at the time as some of their members saw *poluverniks* as a clear indication of the dangers in which the Estonian nation was. The history students were some of the most active in fraternities and sororities.

Jana mentions the “real Estonians” with irony and some inferiority, at least in 1994 she had to adapt to the new surroundings, and this was also the environment that, at the time, matched with the ideals of the nationalizing state and publicly heralded memories. Her physical dislocation was coupled with the change of public discourse. Little does it matter then that Ivan Orav had actually been a working class smith and held a rather ironic view of nationalism, or that Jana could easily remark on her new friends' linguistic disabilities. She did not fit well, but she also had much cultural capital to adapt fast. In 1994, the Soviet, now Russian, troops left Estonia. Much less Soviet military was to be seen in civil spaces since autumn 1991 and Tartu had changed. But Jana nevertheless makes it clear that Tartu of her course mates did not include the Russians who lived in the city.

But beyond the ethnic connotations of two different localities of Eastern Estonia and Tartu, Jana moved also between the social class environments. She moved from an overwhelmingly working-class Kohtla-Järve to study humanities in Tartu. In this way, her story depicts upward mobility by socialization towards the national elite. It reminds of different ethnic experiences among different social strata – a theme that occurs at several places throughout the thesis and that we will continue with in the next and last part of the chapter.

2.5. A place of living: Eastern Estonia

The region of the North-East of Estonia – Eastern Estonia, today's Ida-Virumaa county – has a special connotation for Estonians due to its overwhelmingly Russian-speaking “newcomer” population, the polluting industries, and the city of Narva. In fact, the region hosts significant diversity – desolate industrial and wild forested landscapes, old villages and modern towns, beautiful seashore and the lake Peipus. Narva, amongst the others, had been an old town, “a most beautiful baroque town” in Estonia that was destroyed in WWII and not rebuilt in the old form – except for the fortress, town hall, and 1-2 other houses that were renovated in 1960-70s. But the heart of the region beats at some distance from Narva – the industrial hinterland is located 50-100 km towards Tallinn in the towns of Kohtla-Järve, Jõhvi, and Kiviõli, around which lie the oil shale mines and the related industries. But even closer to Narva lies Sillamäe, an establishment which was a closed town throughout the Soviet period, a site of nuclear industry.⁷⁷

The story of **Jana Kask** (b. 1976) is primarily about Eastern Estonia. She knows that most Estonian inhabitants in the towns of the region have moved there from elsewhere. Peasants moved from the poor farm lands to where the modest

⁷⁷ Much more has been written about the ethnic identifications in Eastern Estonia than in Tartu. The works normally discuss the situation of ethnic settlement, and people's identities with short historical overviews. Tiit Tammaru, *Venelased Eestis: ränne ja kohanemine* (Russians in Estonia: migration and localisation) (Tallinn: Siseakadeemia kirjastus, 1999). Raivo Vetik and Jelena Helemäe, *The Russian Second Generation in Tallinn and Kohtla-Järve*. The following is a thorough anthropological work based on an Eastern Estonian mining city: Eeva Kesküla, “Mining postsocialism: work, class and ethnicity in an Estonian mine” (PhD Diss., Goldsmiths, University of London, 2012); and based on fieldwork in Narva: Alena Pfoser, “Between Russia and Estonia: Narratives of Place in a New Borderland,” *Nationalities Papers* (2013): 1-17. Approaches by human geographers: Tiiu Jaago, Anu Printsman, Hannes Palang, “Kohtla-Järve: One Place, Different Stories,” in *Place and Location: Studies in Environmental Aesthetics and Semiotics*, ed. by Eva Näripea, Virve Sarapik and Jaak Tomberg (Tallinn-Tartu: Estonian Academy of Arts, 2008), 285-303; Anu Printsman, “Moral Geography and Life Stories: Estonian “Siberia” in Kohtla-Järve,” in *Oral History: Migration and Local Identities*, ed. by, Ieva Garda Rozenberga, Mara Zirnite, 232-250 (Riga: University of Latvia, 2008).

mining industry had started off. Jana's paternal grandmother grew up in Eastern Estonia, she had moved there as a child with parents from the villages near Tallinn in order to work in the mines; the parents of her paternal grandfather had moved to the region for work from the island of Saaremaa in 1920s.⁷⁸

Jana's father **Aivo Kask** was born in 1951. Actually, he grew up with his grandmother and spent much time in sports camps and boarding schools, and did not develop cordial relations with his parents (a pattern that we might notice repeating, especially among the men of that age). When Jana thinks about her paternal family in the Estonian context she says that they were the “totally ordinary, poor workers, labour folks, people who work in mines.” She relates this social position right away to a certain absence to Estonian national discourse: “They were not touched by these... absolutely no deportations or 'occupations' in any way. At least there is no memory in the family that there would be something tragic in relation to the World War II.”⁷⁹

After graduating from a higher technical school in Tallinn, **Irina Kask** (b. 1950) was allocated to a job at a factory in Kohtla-Järve. In Jana's words, mother often tells her that, being born and raised in Yaroslavl, and moving to Tallinn in search for more interesting experiences, she had never imagined to end up in a small remote industrial town. Irina and Aivo met at the oil shale chemistry factory where they both worked, and married in 1974. Initially, the couple lived with Aivo's mother; they got a new three-room apartment in 1979. When the changes of the early 1990s reached the town their factory was closed down in stages, Irina was dismissed from her engineer

⁷⁸ But her roots go to Russia on her father's side as well: her great-grandfather “was actually a Russian man” who had come “from somewhere behind the Lake Peipus” in the beginning of the 1920ies, but this man had left his past and origins behind.

⁷⁹ Jana, 1976, nr. 90/3.

position, Aivo worked on until 1997. After that Aivo found another job later but Irina did not find stable employment.⁸⁰

The fact that Aivo “was born, raised, finished school, and still lives in Kohtla-Järve” seems a bit extraordinary to Jana.⁸¹ Most people of his age have left the town through studies or moved on to other places but he has stayed. Jana thinks it is partially due to the lack of initiative, but her “father has got a job, they do not really live in squalor. Father has got a pretty good job, and he is certainly not the guy who would be ready for great life changes.”⁸²

Mait* (b. 1949) and **Maria*** (b. 1955) **Kits** met in the late 1970s in Eastern Estonia at a social weekend gathering. Maria had a child from a previous marriage, delivered the same year they married, Alla (b. 1975) who grew up with initially with her mother and grandparents, spoke only Russian, and then went to a Russian school.⁸³ Mait’s and Maria’s child **Marko** (b. 1984) went to an Estonian kindergarten and school, but in the late 1980s “the times were already different.” Due to the delay in divorcing from her previous husband, Mait and Maria were married only in 1982: “officially... this is a difficult matter. One thing is by the book, the other is in reality. Actually, it could have been around '80, but by the book it is, damn, was it like '82?...”⁸⁴

Mait grew up in Eastern Estonia. His parents worked there in a small town, but he spent much time away from them in school dormitories as he was doing sports.

⁸⁰ Jana, 1976, nr. 90/11. “She has done some totally random jobs, then has been long years without a job, and then has again done some odd jobs – [been] cleaning lady or shop assistant, has been in a sewing factory, now she is unemployed again. She is on unemployment benefits, sitting and waiting for this one year that she has left till reaching retirement age.”

⁸¹ Jana, 1976, nr. 90/4.

⁸² Jana, 1976, nr. 90/11.

⁸³ Mait, 1949, nr 35/14: “Well, the situation was, that, in a word, well. [paus]. The daughter was older, let’s say. She was born before I got to know my wife.”

⁸⁴ Mait, 1949, nr 35/12.

After graduating from the department of electricity at the Technical University in Tallinn, he was assigned to work at the industrial complex in Kohtla-Järve. Mait worked at the same place from early 1970s until recently when he was given an early retirement package “due to conflicts with the management – they have such post Soviet views there.”⁸⁵ He belongs to the more nationalist party and has run for local elections, but it remains unclear if his forced retirement was really political.

When I ask about Mait's reasons to return to Kohtla-Järve after studying in Tallinn, he says that he had had a choice, but he did not wish to stay in the “big city.” People from the factory had come “to fetch me, to talk it over with me, and this was... I imagine, that this was the major influence on me, as to why I came here. Well, I had a choice, you see.” This had been in 1974. However, his living conditions in Kohtla-Järve improved only slowly:

The apartment I got... I was not married, you see. For six years I lived in a dormitory. Then I got one with a room. I lived there for a couple of years, as well. Then I got married, and I got a two-room one, then a three-room one, then a four-room one. That one with four rooms, this I already bought myself. [---] Well it was as it was with the apartments at that time... [...] There were the queues and all, getting an apartment at that time was... but I have been lucky with the apartments in a sense that every time that I have asked I have also got one, in this sense there was no special problem... But I do know that people have had their adventures.⁸⁶

* * *

With the next stories we move from the central mining region to the city of Narva which lies on the current border with Russia. **Leonid** (b. 1943) and **Tiina*** (b. 1947) **Semtsov** met there when he was in the Soviet Army as a border guard at Narva-Jõesuu – 15 km from Narva at the mouth of the river. Tiina's family had lived near the Eastern Estonian coast line for generations while Leonid came from Russia. When

⁸⁵ Mait, 1949, nr 35/3.

⁸⁶ Mait, 1949, nr. 35/2-3.

demobilised in 1965, Leonid returned to Russia, but the next year he returned to Estonia and got married to Tiina. “It seems that his soul longed towards mother, and so he came here with one suitcase and now they have lived here for more than forty years,”⁸⁷ says their daughter **Anastassia*** (1969).

When marrying, Leonid told Tiina: “Consider, that I have almost no one else.”⁸⁸ His siblings and mother were in Kaluga oblast in Russia, his father had died in World War II around the same time that he was born. Semtsov's family was dominated by Tiina's connections and Estonian relatives – they spent the summers in the Estonian countryside and gathered with relatives for bigger anniversaries. Initially, Leonid worked in the militia, as did Tiina's father, and then as a long distance truck driver for the car base for a long period until he retired. Tiina was employed at the sanatorium for collective farm workers in Narva-Jõesuu as a waitress and an administrator.

Helju Dimitrieva (b. 1934) was not originally from the region; she grew up in the central Estonian countryside. However, her memories of Narva start from earlier times than for Tiina Semtsov who lived in the small town of Narva-Jõesuu in her youth. After her graduation from university in 1958, Helju was allocated to a job in Narva. She remembers that it was partially due to the living space deficit – Tallinn and Tartu were available for people who already had a place to live there. She and her friend Liisa had decided right away that “we go to Narva.” “Tartu was not an option, there were many locals, and there were already two student marriages [into Tartu] from our group. [---] In Tallinn there were also too many locals, who lived there and whose parents were in Tallinn.”⁸⁹ Then the Narva workplaces transferred some money

⁸⁷ Anastassia, 1969, nr. 81/2.

⁸⁸ Tiina, 1947, nr. 82/10.

⁸⁹ Helju, 1934, nr. 80/22.

and off they went. But actually they could not find a place to live there either. Industry of the city was being rapidly restored and expanded, it was in short of manpower but also acutely short of living space. Helju remembers vividly the conditions that she had to cope with at her arrival in 1958.

We arrived there two days earlier, on the 1st of August we had to be at work, we felt that as we were required, that we would be waited upon, that there is a free work-place right away and that the table is ready and a chair, or something. We came with our suitcases and they got so nervous, that we cannot be sent back, that no one before us had come from the university... [...] And then they started to look for where to place us, the suitcases all stood there and... [...] There was absolutely no apartment, then, well, these guys who worked then at the office of commerce, they were mostly all the former military. – Well, after retiring, they came [to work there] and they were the Party members and could work anywhere, [...] and everywhere they were the specialists. – Then there was the chair of the cadres department, he was sitting there, and there were the phones. But not like today, the telephonist connected, [he] had to say [where to]. And he was all the time on the receiver that '*Ust-Narva*', we thought that what is that, like 'New Narva' or what? But this is Narva-Jõesuu in their language.⁹⁰ '*Ust-Narva*', we did not know, '*Ust-Narva*, *Ust-Narva*', what a damn, there is still 'New Narva' somewhere? [...]

And then we were indeed placed to live in Narva-Jõesuu in the beginning. [...] Near the Market stop there was a grocery store – and [we were placed] to the attic floor there. There was no chance for heating and also no electricity. But because that August in '58 was especially beautiful and warm, we did not even think about it in the beginning.. There were two beds in there, no table [...]. I guess Liisa had some coffin [with her] or was it in there already, we put a mirror on the top of it. We kept our clothes in the suitcases, in the morning we ran to the sea to wash, in the evening we ran to the sea to wash and to look at the sunset. In the morning to work by bus. [---] But when the weather turned cold – we could not live there any more, we had to wear all our clothes but it was still cold. [...] It was already October, pretty cold, the water froze already, we could not go to the sea any more. [...] Then we said that we are leaving from here now, we rode to Kabala – to [Liisa's] ancestral home. But [at work] they did not return our work-registration books to us. They could not give them, they were afraid to. Then we talked with the

In 1956, my maternal grandmother graduated from the Tallinn Pedagogical University as a teacher of physics and mathematics. With two other Tallinn girls from the group she went to the job allocation commission and claimed resolutely that they prefer to go to the island of Saaremaa. The chairman had nodded his head and said “girls, you really have no idea what you are doing.” Saaremaa was remote, it seemed challenging and exotic. But after the war it was also notoriously “empty of men.” My grandmother “married back to Tallinn” in 1957, the other girl followed soon, but the third girl was “stuck” on the island for longer.

⁹⁰ '*Uus*' is new in the Estonian language. Narva-Jõesuu is a small town down the river at the mouth of the Narva river, it means “Narva river mouth” if translated directly from Estonian.

ministry all the time. [---] When we returned [to get our books] and they put us into a hotel. A guest house, it was paid by – this is again another story how it was settled every month. The chief accountant was a very smart man, a Finn, but he spoke Russian, a solid man, handsome man. This one said that no, it cannot be paid for. Every time I went there with my advance payment report, that I have paid so and so much there, with the invoices attached, the reply was “no, I cannot pay for it.” Then I had to call the ministry again and, it was only after they issued a written order from there, to pay, that it was paid again.⁹¹

After half a year in the hotel, Helju was given a small shared room at a dormitory for the next 5 years. In 1965, she got her own apartment. At this time there were, relatively speaking, many Estonians in Narva, around 5% in statistics (compared to 3% now). There were even some others with her in the Office of Commerce and Distribution. However, all the communication and paper work was in Russian. Helju remembers that when she became more senior in the office, they had bought a Latin-script type-writer and started to reply to some letters “from inland” in Estonian.⁹²

Helju (b. 1934) and Tiina (b. 1947) spent their childhood in very different times but married (1964; 1966) and raised their children at the same time in the Narva of the 1970s. Their husbands were both rather absent from home – Helju's just grew apart from her and Tiina's was away for work. While Helju speaks a lot about the former times, her childhood, youth, loves, life motivations, successes and failures, Tiina is quite the opposite, she hardly tells me anything. First, I met with her daughter **Anastassia** (b. 1969) and then in the same day with Tiina and her older daughter **Sirje*** (b. 1967). The interview with Tiina and Sirje consisted of very short or

⁹¹ Helju, 1934, nr. 80/24-25.

⁹² Helju's story is not so much about career but about diligence – she worked a lot and did not cheat. She has not much good to say about the honesty of her colleagues and party bosses in relation to commerce; but her work did not go unnoticed. Her career was as follows: pricing specialist, senior commodity expert [*kaubatundja*], chief commodity expert, vice head of the office of commerce [*kaubandusvalitsus*] (1972-84), and then the head of the office of commerce (1984-89). The last job was in the Party *nomenklatura*: her candidacy was confirmed by the city soviet, commerce offices, the ministry, and the city party committee. She retired exactly at 55, but kept on working small jobs until into 2000s.

monotonous answers, there were only a few moments of easier conversation. Concrete reasons were hard to point out: lack of memories, mistrust towards me, difficult choices between possible answers – all these elements were probably represented.⁹³ This turns attention to the narrative skills that are needed for verbalising experiences, and also to the nature of questions I had posed, which had “worked” in other contexts but were less useful in this concrete case.

In summary, the stories of Kits, Kask, Nikolajev, and Semtsov families offer a wide panorama of the Eastern Estonian family backgrounds, especially in terms of migrations inside Estonia. The moves of Aivo Kask's grandparents refer to an often forgotten story of the pre-war industrial mining developments in the region and of the intra-Estonian migration of the workers. Mait Kits' parents moved to Eastern Estonia during the Stalinist repression of wealthier peasants as they wished to avoid being dekulakized in the late 1940s. Helju Nikolajev came from a small village and a poor family; by moving to Narva she started her path of upward mobility. Tiina Semtsov was from the nearby fisherman's village and moved to live in the nearest town at the time of general urbanisation in the 1960s – it happened to be an almost exclusively Russian-speaking town of Narva.

* * *

The social experiences of younger generation who grew up in the inter-marriages in Eastern Estonia are often expressed in sharply ethnicized terms. **Andres Laas** (b. 1969) perhaps sums up the self-perception of his generation the best. His comments

⁹³ Anastassia (1969, nr. 81/16) told me prior to my interview with her mother in passing that “perhaps she is a bit panicky, to give an interview, she does not know 'what and how.' She did not agree very much to it and she would say that 'I do not know anything to talk and...' But she can talk and I bet she will talk.”

illuminate well the complex simplicity of Estonian distinction in that region that was dominated by the Russian world.

Maybe the local Estonians, due to these 'hard' living conditions, were also more nationally minded. [...] It is clear that, like, when your way of life and culture and language is under the bigger pressure then the mentality is also... there is some inner.. something. [...] like a defence mechanism. I have a sense that my generation, the ones that I know and that I have met, from the school-times and from later, that they are mostly like that. I would not say that they are hostile to all [things] Russian – no. They all know the Russian [language] very well, they all communicate with Russians normally, because they all would have to do it all their life. This is the normal living environment for them. But what concerns all that language, culture, all that what comes from the national... convictions, then at theirs, this line has perhaps got stronger contours than maybe for a village guy in the Põlva county [in Southern Estonia].⁹⁴

Among the Eastern Estonian youth, who went to Estonian schools, everyone was capable of, and experienced in, communicating in Russian. Andres remained in the region and perhaps therefore he refers to the struggle for cultural self-maintenance more than Jana Kask who moved to Tartu and spent her adult years outside of her home region.

However, these were references to adolescence. The childhood stories from Eastern Estonia, in contrast, either Russian or Estonian, focus on the lack of ethnic differentiation. Things would change at the later classes at school. **Jevgeni Smirnov** (b. 1943) was a Russian boy who arrived in Kohtla-Järve in 1951.⁹⁵ His autobiography starts with his mothers' hard life in Russia which was also the motivation for their move to Estonia (his father had died in the war). Jevgeni's mother had to escape from their village because getting a passport and official warrant to leave was impossible, and she succeeded. Arrival to Estonia was made easier by relatives who had come earlier. "In 1951 my mother arrived in Kohtla-Järve thanks to her sister who had

⁹⁴ Andres, 1969, nr. 44/5.

⁹⁵ Jevgeni Smirnov, "I do not exchange Estonia for anything," in *My home is Estonia*, 268-283.

arrived in Estonia earlier. She got a job as a guard, she was not taken anywhere else.

[...] Then, she fetched me from my aunt with whom I had lived meanwhile.”⁹⁶

In the beginning we lived in a shack [*barakk*], later we moved to a small house with eight apartments on the Victory street, the present Central avenue. The almost thirty years that we lived in this 2-room apartment were the dearest to me and remain best in my mind. [---] In the new house I befriended a Bulgarian, Ilya Rizov, an Estonian Mati Mäekivi, and a bit later, a Russian Valentin Spazhov. In my childhood, no one had a TV, stereo- or video-players. We created our fun activities for ourselves. In winter we had the checkers tournaments and we chased each other in the courtyard. As precious rewards we had our self-drawn diplomas. We organised the world championships, in spring and summer our stadium and the play-field were made up of the same courtyard and the sports field of the third school. The funniest thing was the fact that in the beginning we all spoke our own language but we understood each other [---] One day we played at Rizov's, we were literally walking on our heads, but very friendly aunt Lena only smiled. The next day I sat at Mäekivi's at the lunch table of that big family. There were five children in that family, the Rizovs even had six. They were themselves crammed in the two room apartments, but I never heard that I should not come. It was the opposite – parents somehow gave us the freedom, and a place, to play. This cannot be forgotten!⁹⁷

In addition to childhood nostalgia and a contrast that Jevgeni Smirnov is building up with references to Estonian nationalism in the 1980s later in the text, he makes one thing clear: ethnic distinctions, let alone violence and hatred, had no place in his youth in the 1950s in Kohtla-Järve. Such a childhood image is pretty typical also for the later years. Andres Laas remembers that he lived “there at the chimneys of the Viru Chemical Group” – which was then part of the Oil Shale Chemical Factories. “And actually there we had both Estonian kids and Russian kids. I remember that we played and communicated with each other quite well, pretty well. I do not remember... such ethnic distinguishing.”⁹⁸ Jana Kask does not remember that her parents had drawn ethnic differences between the people.

⁹⁶ Smirnov, “I do not exchange Estonia for anything,” 269.

⁹⁷ Smirnov, “I do not exchange Estonia for anything,” 272.

⁹⁸ Andres, 1969, nr. 44/3.

One friend was Valdur, another was Pavel, and for me they were exactly the same type of people. I could not distinguish, because the adults did not distinguish which nationality you were, and actually they also do not do it even today. If you go there today, then for the local inhabitants there really is no difference if you are called Petrov or Suviste by the family name. [...] It's more that 'I have been to the same school with you, or worked together with you.'⁹⁹

Jana also knows that the public ethnic confrontation grew much tenser in the late 1980s and we talk about it in the interview. Well, some nagging, teasing and even fights, especially among the boys, would be naturally there also at the early childhood years – but most of it has been forgotten or is not biographically relevant.¹⁰⁰

However, the tone will change with the description of the teenage years when school and peers have had more impact on children. By the 1980s, Sillamäe had one mixed school with parallel tracks (and two Russian-speaking schools); Narva had an Estonian school (and twelve Russian ones); Kiviõli and Jõhvi (then both part of Kohtla-Järve) had both an Estonian school (and more Russian ones); there were two more Estonian schools in other parts of Kohtla-Järve.¹⁰¹ **Tiiu Meripuu*** (b. 1978)¹⁰² was born and raised in Kohtla-Järve and she would say that

all the Estonians have been to one school, because this is the only school here. – On the Block [Ahtme] there is also a school, but that one is half... half-Estonian and half-Russian. – And all these Estonian people, who have been to this school, they know each other. Five years younger, five years older, practically all are acquainted. And the parents know, say, the parents of the other children, they know each other, because they all have been to one school. [...] And from there, again the brothers-sisters, their friends and so on.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ Jana, 1976, nr. 90/5.

¹⁰⁰ Andrei Hvostov (b. 1963) has not forgotten. He grew up with a Russian father, who was often absent for work, and an Estonian mother in the closed city of Sillamäe that dominated by Russian language and Soviet mentality. Hvostov's memoirs depict a traumatic childhood and contain ample references to the school and juvenile violence and to the parent's neglect of children's problems. The narrative is written from an "Estonian perspective" as an introduction to the exotic world of otherness. See: Andrei Hvostov, *Sillamäe passioon* (Sillamäe passion) (Tallinn: Petrone Print, 2011).

¹⁰¹ Toomas Karjahärm and Väino Sirk, *Kohanemine ja vastupanu*.

¹⁰² Andres, 1969, nr. 44, Anastassia, 1969, nr. 81.

¹⁰³ Tiiu, 1978, nr. 36/13.

Estonian school was the centre of the Estonian world in the region. When Tiiu mentions her parents, she stresses the importance of inter-generational links in passing on the awareness of Estonianness in Eastern Estonia. For children, the peer-group socialisation at school would be over-riding the connections with neighbourhood kids. The development of a social network beyond one's immediate environment is certainly universal with modern communication, but the current example demonstrates the emergence of an ethno-cultural element in the redrawing of social boundaries; it also demonstrates how the familial heritage is reconfigured simultaneously with the development of the peer-group relations. In school, the Estonian kids developed a growing sense of belonging to a community that was like a web in townscape, whose nodes were scattered around in the apartments of blocks around the city. In Narva, due to a small number of Estonians, this was perhaps the most explicit. Anastassia Popova (b. 1969) says that

the Estonians were only the schoolmates, the classmates, there were no other ones. When you interacted with the classmates, then you interacted with the Estonians, when you interacted within your own courtyard, then you interacted with the Russians.¹⁰⁴

The contemporary situation in Eastern Estonia is such that many native Russian-speakers go to Estonian kindergartens and then – schools. “You cannot hear Estonian spoken in the corridors during the class intervals,”¹⁰⁵ says Aleksander Dimitriev, especially in Narva, where the number of native Estonian speakers has dropped from 6-7% in the 1960s to 2-3% today. This is often perceived as a pidginization of Estonian world and has created new perceived threats among the Narva Estonians. In contrast, in the Soviet period, the Estonian school in the region was solely for the Estonian. Estonian language marked the border of Estonian world sharply and clearly.

¹⁰⁴ Anastassia, 1969, nr. 81/11.

¹⁰⁵ Aleksander, 1966, nr. 37/??

In Jana's words about Kohtla-Järve, “all the Estonians were bilingual, and all the Russians were monolingual. They didn't know anything – not that they didn't know a lot – but [they] did not know [Estonian] at all.”¹⁰⁶ Speaking Estonian on the town was often noticed and remarked upon by the others, especially in Narva, where there were very few Estonians. “It was normal that, when you talk with your friend in Estonian at a bus stop, you would be told to stop talking in Estonian, to speak so that people could understand. “We do not understand what you are talking about – maybe you are talking something bad,””¹⁰⁷ remembers Aleksander. Andres Laas confirms:

There was no question about it – the saleswoman would tell you off right away that '*ia ne ponimain'* [I don't understand] – that speak in Russian, you will not get this sausage if you do not speak in Russian, I will not serve you at all. This was totally normal everywhere, also at the doctor's and anywhere, where ever. It was not possible, it was not, and it was a great fortune... if you happened to get together with some Estonian somewhere. [---] There were certain places, where you could communicate in Estonian: I know that in Kohtla-Järve, there was a bookshop, where all were Estonian people, and in Narva there was the ARS shop on the Peter's square, where there were Estonian people. If you wanted to get Estonian service – you went there.¹⁰⁸

Such public interactions are asymmetrical – they take place for dealing with everyday business and the statuses of interlocutors are different: one wants to get something from the other. Andres remembers a few specific places where Estonian language was spoken in service sector, but in reality, of course, people were concerned about getting their daily business done rather than “getting Estonian service.” People spoke in Russian.

However, the children from mixed families could mostly also pass *as* Russian in public. This was noted several times, especially by the girls in their relationship to the boys. Jana said that she also went to the disco “to which only the Russians went,

¹⁰⁶ Jana, 1976, nr. 90/16. At the time that Jana refers to, 30-40% of the part of the town where she lived was Estonian speaking.

¹⁰⁷ Aleksander, 1966, nr. 37/11.

¹⁰⁸ Andres, 1969, nr. 44/12. “ARS” was the Estonian national consumption art producer.

my half-Russian half-Estonian heritage allowed me to go.” But it was not only about the language skills: “Actually, when you were female, you could go these clubs anyway, no problem, [...] but you were not let in as an Estonian man.”¹⁰⁹ By allowing Estonian girls but not guys in, the Russian youngsters clearly marked their ethnic dominance through gender dominance. In this setting the dispositions of a man would be expected to dominate the man-woman relationship, this expectation renders social boundaries for women more porous as they are expected to adapt. Naturally, Russian guys at the door of a disco hall did not have such far fetched considerations; but they could and did draw the border and showed that this is their territory.

* * *

To get to school Estonian youngsters had to pass through a longer or shorter distance on town: their daily route to school and back, between the Estonian hubs, would go through the Russian world. Helju Dimitriev said that it had often been that a boy would return home with a swollen lip or some bruise. This may happen to boys everywhere, but from the 1960s to the 1980s the danger was increasing and had an ethnic undertone. However, while describing the ethnic confrontation then an important distinction should be drawn between the Eastern Estonian countryside (Estonian dominated), towns of Narva and Sillamäe (absolutely Russian-speaking) and the Kohtla-Järve urban complex which included Jõhvi and Kiviõli districts (increasingly Russian-speaking). In general: it got tenser spatially towards the west,

¹⁰⁹ Jana, 1976, nr. 90/8: “They were just standing on the doors and you could not. And well, you would not push ahead very much too, would not wish to get beaten up. [---] Estonians-Russians had totally different places of meeting, [there was] no more communication among the adolescents. But I think that my father's generation was the same, that the school discos took place still separately. [---] In the 1980s, when these disco places sprang off, they were like totally differently. Estonians were separate, Russians were separate. Russians went for discos in the club. The club organised disco evenings and Estonians had no business to go there. I cannot say, how was it divided up like that, but well, somehow organically it happened, I guess that Russians started to frequent that club and the Estonians, as the Russians started to come, the Estonians disappeared from there. [---] The Estonians went to the surrounding culture houses in the country, so to speak, where the rest of the Estonians lived.

where both cultural worlds were largely represented, and temporally towards the 1980s.

Jana Kask (b. 1976) says stresses the time element: street-fights and confrontations increased significantly with the perestroika, with the growth of nationalism and separatism in the Estonian world, and the distrust and anxieties about the future in the Russian world:

In the 1960ies and 1970ies it was like *fifty-fifty*, that there were quite many Estonians. Our [Estonian] school [...] was still pretty vital and big. At the same time, next to it appeared the Russian school, at first with eight classes. But when my father studied [there], then by the end of the 1960s it had [already] converted into a high school. [But] this thing came in the 1980s, towards the end of 80s, when the Soviet Union started to crumble. All that ethnic conflict swam [*hulpis*] to the surface. [---] If you were an Estonian, it was dangerous. [...] As a woman, as a girl, is was not, but as a boy, yes. That the Russians, the Russian gangs roamed around with these chains and hooks and bats. [---] These were not noted [down] as an ethnic conflict, it was written down as... being beaten. But I can tell that this was firmly... based on ethnic grounds. That these gangs of Russians... [...] And it was known to everyone, and the Estonian boys could not show their face on the streets very much.¹¹⁰

Aleksander Dimitriev (b. 1966) says that there were no such confrontations in Narva like in Kohtla-Järve where the number of Estonians was and is rather big in comparison to Russians: “It all totally depends on the relative size of the Estonian population. The higher the percentage the more there are fights.”¹¹¹

I had a group of acquaintances meanwhile in Kohtla-Järve and Jõhvi – we went to this construction camp in summer [*malev*] with these Kohtla-Järve kids to Moldavia, some 'inter-group.' I guess this was after the 10th grade [in 1983-84], and then I visited them [in Kohtla-Järve] pretty often and the situation there was pretty awful. This guy there whom I knew, whom I used to visit, he knew exactly to which street you cannot go... you will be beaten up, on which street you cannot speak Estonian. For him, the whole town was

¹¹⁰ Jana, 1976, nr. 90/5; 6; 7. One example: “I have not heard of murders, but I know one case when... was beaten though. I don't know what has become of that boy by now, but he was beaten up so much that... An Estonian boy, a boy from the Estonian school, two years older than me, he was going to school then, I guess in the 12th grade – he was beaten so that [...] I guess he is still vegetating, or maybe by now he has got on his feet. [...] But he has not become a capable person.” (Jana, 1976, nr. 90/6)

¹¹¹ Aleksander, 1966, nr. 37/10.

as if it was divided into zones. [---] Here [in Narva] the number of Estonians was pretty small. And let's say that there was no such big confrontation, that there is one big Estonian gang and one big Russian gang. [In Narva] there were Russian gangs, divided by districts, who were then competing for power in the town and we had to weave between them. [---] But the main thing was that Narva is a Russian town, that you speak in Russian.¹¹²

An Estonian in Narva was and is perceived rather like a curiosity, a foreigner, or sometimes also a guest – “our Estonian.”¹¹³ Aleksander remembers one episode from the time when he was drafted to the army (around 1986) when this patronising attitude towards “our Estonians” served him well.

When I was drafted to the army, we were three Estonians on the bus and forty Russians, we did not know any of them, actually. [...] Then in Tallinn, at the gathering point, the Tallinn Russians come and say 'so, let's start to beat the Estonians – who is here?' Well, it seems that the three of us are. [But] then comes one sturdy Narva bro and says '*ne nado, eto nashi estontsy*' – 'you shouldn't, these are our Estonians.' Meaning that: look for your own Estonians and beat them but not ours. [---] The attitude towards the Estonians was somehow more tolerant here, let's say... that there is this small ethnic group who [is] somehow... here. So what to do with them as they are already here...¹¹⁴

This story illustrates the general feeling that Aleksander has from living in Narva for all his life. In any concrete case, the triggers for more protective or aggressive approach could of course differ: after a 3-hour bus ride it could have just felt intuitively wrong to that sturdy guy, and anyway – why should these people from Tallinn decide what to do? Andres Laas grew up in Kohtla-Järve and his memories are about the mid-1980s:

I remember that I was really panicking as it was frightening to go outside in the evening... [...] I mean, it is hard to imagine the extent of it. [...] First, these gangs, the gangs of Russians who were just looking for Estonians whom to beat up, just because they were Estonians – this was the everyday reality. No other reasons. [---] And then these school parties, right – when these gangs

¹¹² Aleksander, 1966, nr. 37/10-11.

¹¹³ Andres, 1969, nr. 44/5.

¹¹⁴ Aleksander, 1966, nr. 37/12.

besieged an Estonian school house, and also at all kinds of sport competitions [...] this was ordinary. [---]

The Police [Militia]? The Police did not have much power and I do not know if they were really willing to mess with these things. I remember a certain case – one of a most difficult memories of my life – it was when there was a hand-ball match in our school between the Kiviõli Estonian school and Russian school of Ahtme [a part of Kohtla-Järve]. And there was some conflict during the game, I think the Estonian player had hit, accidentally, the other team's player with the foot. Now, this unleashed a gathering of like two or three hundred Russian youngsters. Such a mass or mob came to the school and waited to the end of the game. The school was besieged, the teachers perceived that this is not normal any more, that it might end sadly and called the Police. The Police came with a Moshkvitch, there were two or three persons inside and... When everyone dispersed, then there was this awful beating and fight and... quite a serious fight. There were many times less Estonians, well, so they were just beaten up, there. And the Police was just watching and when it was over, then the car came and there were these Estonians who sat there or were lying on the ground and they were taken away. So this was their action. I don't know what they did with them at the station, probably they let them go home. Some people had been seriously hurt. [---] And no, we did not hear anything about it later. It is as if it had never happened.¹¹⁵

Andres asserts that he was present there – it is “one of a most difficult memories of his life” – but towards the end of the story he offers quite a distant look at that “battlefield.” Did he run away, was he taken to the police, did he get by better because he was from a mixed family? I did not learn that from him. This concrete event, however, illustrates the general social atmosphere in the public space for Andres and his peers in their teenage years. Young people felt that they were left quite alone to settle the socially emergent ethnic conflict which “was in the air” but to which, in the concrete social setting, also the adults did not have a solution. In comparison with the protective parenthood practices of today such abandonment of the young – both by the state and by the parents – might come across as little surprising.

Helju (b. 1934) remembers the swollen lips or some bruises that the children came sometimes returned home with from school (“but what to do?”). And Jana (b.

¹¹⁵ Andres, 1969, nr. 44/3; 4; 5.

1976) asks: “Which parents really meddled with the kids at that time? – Kids grew by themselves.” When **Kadri Lennuk*** (b. 1982) thinks back to the already later times of the 1990s, she does not remember of the parents meeting the kids after the school parties.

When there was a party at the school, there was always a group of Russian youngsters to pick a fight at the end of it. And our boys always had to put the group together in order to go home safely. [---] We tried not to fight, but it was like a constant readiness, but of course, there were fights too. [---] Well, I was lucky in the sense that I was, well, like a 'halfer,' then it depended on the company. I either spoke one or the other language, it was better and more peaceful [for me].¹¹⁶

When I ask people where do they think that the roots of such a conflict were, they say that probably most of it comes from homes as, eventually, children are their “mirror.”

[Andres:] I think it all comes from home, well, these stories about 'fascists' – they do not come up only today. These Russians came... well, the kind of late-migrants, they needed to, perhaps, somehow explain their arrival and presence. And then there were these stories that 'we came to Estonia to bring culture' and all these other... Children do not come up with all these things by themselves. Why should children think that the people of Estonian nationality are their enemies and that others are not?¹¹⁷

Up to now, I have discussed many cases with children from mixed marriages who went to Estonian schools; it could be noticed that most of them referred to Russian-speakers in ethnic terms, as “Russians.” **Teet Laansoo*** (b. 1986) was born and raised in Kohtla-Järve; he has a Russian mother and an Estonian father, and he went to a Russian school. In fact, he effectively learned to speak Estonian during high-school in the linguistic integration summer camps in the late 1990s, when some Russian-speaking children could spend their summer in a country farm. He refers to the Eastern Estonian situation from the personal perspective of the late 1990s but instead of the temporal difference it should be worthwhile to focus here on the changed tone:

¹¹⁶ Kadri, 1982, nr. 50/11.

¹¹⁷ Andres, 1969, nr. 44/5.

[Teet:] I know, there were these... fights. We of course had more Russians [in town]. If perhaps some drunk Estonian came, or say, a gang of drunk Estonians came to one or two Russians and wanted to take something from them or to pick a fight with them, then these Russians would try to leave calmly. But the next day... like a hundred people would go to them and... Well, I am not sure actually, were these the real fights or not. Personally, I have never taken part in them.

[Uku:] *So, were the initiators of these fights normally the Estonians?*

--- Not always, this of course, depended a lot on with whom the fight was going on at that moment. A lot of the Russians studied in the Estonian school [by then]. Therefore, when it was like... let's go to beat up Estonians, then this half of the Estonian school went to beat them, because no one else knew why they should be beaten...

--- *You think there was more friction between these people who all went to the Estonian school?*

--- Yes, I assume so. Well, of course, not always, sometimes there were just these morons from either side who where like, *come on*, let's go and beat someone.¹¹⁸

Teet's story differs from Kadri mostly by the point of reference: Kadri was talking about her own experiences and Teet was generalizing about his sense of “how it mostly was” – he claims that he was not there himself. Both stories were prompted by the question about possible ethnic confrontations in their youth.¹¹⁹ In an interesting way, it is quite difficult to hear the opinions of the “other side” that contributed to the escalation of social inter-ethnic tensions in the region because many of them are not physically in Estonia already for a long time. Jana Kask has vivid memories of the rotating habitation of some of the apartments in her building:

I lived in such a four-story “khrushchevka” [block of flats] in Kohtla-Järve, in an apartment, and in our *paradna* [corridor] [...] we had four apartments on the first floor, and in two of them the neighbours changed every two-three, maximum five, years all the time. [...] They came, worked their time in the factory, and left. Then came the next, worked their time and left. They changed all the time, with children too, we had quite a lot of children [in the house]. But well, such, with a very low educational level, often with alcohol

¹¹⁸ Teet, 1986, nr. 65/11.

¹¹⁹ It should be noted that it was difficult for me to interview Teet at this point; he had not been at these fights but his reasoning made it clear that he knew whom to blame. I also realised how easy had it been for me to go along with the interviews of the people who had been to Estonian schools.

problems and so on. Well, a few, some were not. And then came the year 1991, when the Estonian state claimed independence, and in 1992 half of the house emptied out. They all just moved away to Russia, even the ones who had come around three to five years ago. All moved away, packed their things and went. Only the ones whom I remember from an early childhood remained, well these girls and boys, with whom I grew up together, and whom I know by face, and these, I reckon, are still there. But around 30% of the house population was such who came and went, came and went, all the time. [...] Our neighbours on both sides just changed all the time, endlessly.¹²⁰

* * *

Up to now, I have shown how important was school as a hub of the Estonian world in Eastern Estonia as a mediator between “children” and “adult” worlds. I also discussed the violent ethnicized confrontations in the public sphere among youth in the 1980s in the places where both the Estonian and Russian worlds were significantly present. The familial networks and connections will be explored more deeply later, but their importance is worthy of mention in the case of regional differences, as well.

When I talked to the Semtsov family, I heard little about the importance of ethnicity in their life: father had been a Russian man, he had often been away on his travels – so the children turned out “rather Estonian” – “had he been more at home, perhaps then...” But when I heard Tiina Semtsov (b. 1947) talking about her own grandmother and how is resonated with her daughter Sirje's (b. 1967) memories, I realised that they connect quite strongly to their Estonian origins in the countryside close-by.

[Tiina:] Well, what do I remember of my grandmother – my grandmother. She had the sprat, well it was named *silk*, under the name *silk*. You go there, the grandmother had a full bucket of...

[Sirje:] She roasted, she had such a roasting... thing connected to that stem. In the morning when you woke up then the [great-]grandmother sat there at the stove and was turning that sprat around like that. *Vot*, I still have that smell in my nose. That I really miss.

¹²⁰ Jana, 1976, nr. 90/41.

[Tiina:] Up to now, yes, sometimes one wants the roasted sprat.

[Sirje:] Yes that morning-roasted sprat, that was there in those days in my childhood. That's what I remember up to today. I often tell my husband that, gosh, how I want it right now. Like that roasted sprat of my great-grandmother. That you wake up in the morning to its smell. That it is cold in the house and great-grandmother tells you to stay under the blanket, the room has not got warm yet. Right, this is what you miss indeed.¹²¹

These familial connections are stamped with time. For the Semtsovs, the great-grandmother of the children lived in Narva-Jõesuu on the coast and continued to prepare that old coastal village food. The road to the family goes through the past. “Aunts, uncles, nephews, nieces. [...] We have all of Estonia full of them. Tallinn, Jõgeva, Võru, Pärnu, they are spread all over Estonia. Now there are so many of them, mother had three siblings and they have children and grand-children, so with all that the family is very-very big.”¹²² Anastassia spent her summers at her relatives in the country – quite close to Tartu.

I cannot imagine that I wouldn't have this huge family here in Estonia, where you can continue speaking this language. Thanks to the fact that I have this family and we communicate with each other very much, I do not feel here that [...] I would be missing something out. But I miss that Estonian communication here in Narva. Right, that if I had to be here all the time and alone then it would be really sad.¹²³

Two out of the three Semtsov sisters live in Narva (one is married to an Estonian, the other to a Russian man) and one in Tallinn. In general, it is said that the younger generation of the Estonian speakers had continuously tried to leave the region. “No one would link one's future to Narva. At least not in words. Maybe later it would happen that a person stayed to live and work in Narva. But it was normal to go somewhere at the end of school,” says Aleksander Dimitriev.¹²⁴ This is certainly also

¹²¹ Tiina, 1947, nr. 82/14; Sirje, 1967, nr. 83/14.

¹²² Anastassia, 1969, nr. 81/8.

¹²³ Anastassia, 1969, nr. 81/11.

¹²⁴ Aleksander, 1966, nr. 37/9.

an autobiographical reference: at the end of school he, with some friends, had chosen to study at the “furthermost point to study as there were no professional preferences, never mind, to deal with.” Not being good students, there was no point to try entering a university – they chose a vocational Sovhoz school [*sovhoostehnikum*].¹²⁵ Jana sensed the same atmosphere in Kohtla-Järve.

By the 1980ies, the balance was totally on the Russian side. [...] As for the Estonians, there was a tendency that they finished high school and they were gone. They would never return any more. They went away to study elsewhere, mostly to Tallinn, some to Tartu, and would not come back. In Tallinn, there are many such people, whom I have met, who say that, yes, my grandmother lives in Kohtla-Järve. Well, it is partially also the general urbanisation process...¹²⁶

And the parents were left behind. Jana Kask expressed some surprise and simultaneous understanding about her parents staying back in Kiviõli – perhaps she could have helped them to move on. But in the case of Dimitrievs, Semtsovs, and Laas there is the question – “where could one go?” Their children have returned to where they were born – with or without some remorse – and some of their Estonian roots are in the region.

Helju Dimitrieva's roots are not in the region and she has also divorced her Russian husband. She speaks about herself in Narva in a different, more melancholic bitter, manner. Aleksander says that “mother has openly regretted her marriage to a Russian. [---] That retrospective regret I have seen very much as a child in my family.”¹²⁷

¹²⁵ Aleksander, 1966, nr. 37/9. “They promised also that maybe [we] can get an extension away from the army. But later it appeared that there was no extension and we went directly to the army from there.”

¹²⁶ Jana, 1976, nr. 90/7.

¹²⁷ Aleksander, 1966, nr. 37/18. In Chapter 4 the reactions of mother-in-laws to their children marriages will be discussed in more detail, but this is what Aleksander remembers about his grandmother: “She has even been telling off [kirunud] her daughter for marrying a Russian. [---] Grandmother was like, “damn, you are not going to marry a Russian.” But love, love – see that love now. [---] Grandmother has always got some example from life. Once they had somewhere, in a village or something, a situation when a young Estonian boy took a Russian wife. The first thing he got from

[Helju:] I had this problem, where do I go with this Russian man, and well, later, then came the new times and where would I go now in my old age, anymore. But I still do not have that real feeling of home. When I go around in Estonia, I do not get this real feeling of home in the city of Narva. I do not wish to say anything bad, but if I go somewhere, even when we go with this pensioners [club], then when I look even at these abandoned villages, small villages, I think I could have lived somewhere in Estonia. Never mind where, even in some small place. But as I do not have a farmstead home – and I have wandered around in Estonia a lot – I am sad that I do not have such a real home like the others do, when we start to talk there, everyone remembers...¹²⁸

Well, many Estonians have left from here. These who were here before me, there were many of them from the technical school, and they left. And those who did not leave earlier, they still left when they reached retirement age. At retirement, they still left for somewhere, so that the children and grandchildren could be in Estonia. Yes, the ones who did not have a mixed marriage...¹²⁹

When Helju was active and progressing in her career, there were also the children, aunt-in-law, and her own mother to take care of. Today she does not have a place to long to go. But she refers to an ambiguous “Estonia” as her homeland out there, Narva is not “Estonia” for her. How has she put up with such discrepancy? Helju says that she “is such a very adaptable one. [---] In my youth I went to sing in a choir, in an Estonian choir at the city culture house. We still gather there, now all these grannies [*mutid*] have got old. We sing there as pensioners, but well yeah, that was it.”¹³⁰ She has always had her Estonian female group of people there, now that she has become old. Many Estonians do not feel that Narva is really “their” place, but this sense is more ambiguous in reference to the other parts of Eastern Estonia in which population is more mixed, that host smaller towns and that are closer to Estonian countryside.

* * *

this Russian wife was a punch in the face in the wedding table. It's not needed, it's pointless etc.”

¹²⁸ Helju, 1934, nr. 80/50.

¹²⁹ Helju, 1934, nr. 80/54. Helju uses the idea of a marital “sacrifice” – “where do I go with this Russian man?” that is similar to Daria Poska's description of her marriage to Mart in Chapter 1.

¹³⁰ Helju, 1934, nr. 80/54.

In conclusion, it should be repeated that the ethnically loaded social experiences in Tartu and Eastern Estonia do not allow for a direct comparison. Tartu is a small and coherent city whereas Eastern Estonia is a region that is in itself internally diverse. The ratio of Russian and Estonian speakers in Eastern Estonia is seminal for understanding how sharply ethnicity was experienced there especially during the socially ethnicized late 1980s and early 1990s.¹³¹ It was “easier” to be an Estonian in Narva than in Kohtla-Järve where the sense of ethno-linguistic domination was constantly contested – and “acted out” in street violence among the youth.

Eastern Estonia was by and large a working class environment. At times it appears that in this industrial region ethnicized language provided a way to express problems that had to do with experiences of ethnicity *and* social class, but that could be expressed only in ethnic terms as that language had become publicly most available. This was especially the case in late 1980s and early 1990s when many people were looking for the ways to express anxieties about their lack perspective and inability to improve ones living conditions. Similar concerns and experiences about their living environment were not voiced by the inhabitants of Tartu, I did not hear any stories of everyday street violence even if youngsters gather in gangs also there in the 1980s.

Both regions had asymmetrical cultural structures which influenced how people experienced their worlds. These asymmetries were not similar and they were differently “marked.” In terms of language, Russian language remained the “glue” of the larger Soviet world and this language could be used in most of the public contexts (e.g. on street or shop); only Russian was used in the army. Estonian was the language of the “titular” ethnicity in the Soviet Estonia but its status was much more vague. The

¹³¹ The effect of that period on familial live will be discussed further in the Chapter 3.

significance of the place being Soviet *Estonia* decreased toward North-East and acquired a sense of exoticism or lovable curiosity on arrival to Narva.¹³² As for Tartu, it was perfectly possible to live there without knowing Estonian (one might have gotten some bad looks at times) but it was not possible to live without knowing Russian in Eastern Estonia.

Russian world was *nested* within the Estonian one in Tartu and it was the other way around in Eastern Estonia. In Tartu the rather disparate *nests* of the Russian corners in the university, Red Army air base, KGB, some other institutions and schools were connected by the thin but firm layer of Soviet connotations and Russian language that was *expected* to connect these nests, and it did. The Soviet underlying power structure enabled the majority of Russian nests to exist.

Estonian world was *nested* in Eastern Estonia in some offices and clubs but most essentially it existed and was regenerated in Estonian schools that connected also the Estonian parents and regenerated the Estonian world. However, for an absolute majority of Russian speakers in the region, the Estonian world was a *parallel* one, people did not possess any means to linguistically penetrate it. The Eastern Estonian example illustrates therefore more brightly another division of worlds, that between children and adults, and the transitory age of youth in-between. Ethnicity exists also for children, and it can acquire existential dimensions but it exists in the context of concerns.

¹³² An anomaly could be the secret factory town of Sillamäe between Kohtla-Järve and Narva, where Hvostov claimed that there were many inhabitants who “were not aware” that they were not officially in “Russia” anymore. See: Hvostov, *Sillamäe Passioon*.

Chapter 3. Time and perceptions of the other world

3.1. Introduction

I will continue the discussion of how the Russian-Estonian cultural divide in Soviet Estonia was perceived and experienced. Here, I will focus on two significant, tense and difficult periods in 20th century Estonian history by discussing the period of Stalinism in Estonia (1944-1953) and the Singing Revolution (1988-92). These are the times when the Estonian and Russian worlds in Estonia stood apart from each other the most and when one or the other suffered significant and sudden changes in its cultural texture (i.e. leading figures, dominant values, future perspectives).

Aili Aarelaid studied the same periods in Estonia and pointed out that the Estonian and Russian cultural worlds in Estonia suffered sudden cultural changes in the late 1940s and 1990s, respectively. She labelled such changes as *cultural trauma*, designating “sudden and steep breaks in the cultural structure” caused by rapid social changes which people are unable to adapt to.¹ I remain hesitant about using the pathologizing psychological “trauma” metaphor and the conclusions which assume wider unity among both groups that my research attests to. But I do agree with her basic observation that the Estonian and Russian cultural worlds were affected in different ways.

¹ Aarelaid maps the leitmotif of discourse and titles the Estonian cultural trauma discourse as “Testimonies of the Soviet Reality” and the Russian discourse as “Fall of the Dreamland.” Her research among Estonian-speakers is much more thorough than among Russian-speakers. See: Aarelaid-Tart *Cultural Trauma and Life Stories* (Vaajakoski: Kikimora Publications, 2006). The articles about specific themes were also published separately: Aili Aarelaid-Tart and Anu Kannike, “The End of Singing Nationalism as Cultural Trauma,” *Acta Historica Tallinnensia*, 8 (2004): 77-98; Aili Aarelaid-Tart, “Theory of Cultural Trauma and Its Application to Explain Estonians’ Soviet-time Mentality,” in *Inheriting the 1990s. The Baltic Countries*, ed. by Baiba Metuzale-Kangere (Uppsala: Uppsala University Press, 2010), 38-64. See also: Jeffrey Alexander et al, *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

With rapid and steep social changes, the human dispositions to behaviour (*habitus*) are prone to lose congruence with socio-cultural norms; social changes ask for rapid individual reactions, but often point to human inabilities to react in their own best interests. This incongruence in a way forces a reflection about one's social position and life "before and after."² Unexpected changes to the patterns of everyday life connect historical events and private lives more strongly than usual. The foundations of the Soviet presence in Estonia in the 1940s and the collapse of the USSR in the late 1980s are at different temporal distances from today; these periods are located differently from the perspective of remembering and in terms of personal relevance to the age groups in this study.

With the "Stalinist foundations of two worlds" I will discuss how the new social situation after the World War II and the Soviet annexation is remembered and how that period was later dealt with in inter-marriages. It appears that the foundational cleavage between the Estonian and Russian cultural worlds was fixed through the negative experiences with ethnic and ideological connotations and basic linguistic incomprehension. Whereas the newcomers were mostly viewed negatively by the locals and guilt for the loss of Estonian independence was projected onto them, the locals tended to be rather ignored by the newcomers. The common "Soviet" cultural layer that could have eased communication between the two worlds was largely missing. Using the oral histories I have collected, I will also touch upon how these experiences which had already become memories and stories about the recent past entered inter-marriages from the 1950s onwards.

² Robin Humphrey, Robert Miller, and Elena Zdravomyslova, "Introduction: Biographical Research and Historical Watersheds," in *Biographical research in Eastern Europe: Altered Lives and Broken Biographies* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2003), 9: "While the behavioural dispositions of *habitus* are resistant to change, the circumstances and context in which they are expressed can alter, with the effect that the same behavioural dispositions can result in radically new or unanticipated behaviours, with consequences that may be harmful or helpful."

In the second part of the chapter, I will touch upon the social changes that were brought about by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the local process of regaining independence – the Singing Revolution. This discussion will come closer to the experiences of spouses and children in inter-marriages due to being more contemporaneous and related to people's present concerns.

The Singing Revolution appears as a period of cross-generational national unity for local Estonians. The tales about inter-war independence, its loss and difficult and traumatic experiences of socialism rose to prominence in the Estonian world; the resistance to the Soviet regime was celebrated by the nationally minded intellectuals who projected their vision of the recent past onto their nation. An ethnicity-based national body gained prominence through the framework of legal restorationism that instituted citizenship based on the inheritance of inter-war citizenship. Public othering and the neglect of people who had not been citizens before World War II came concomitantly.³ The tales about Stalinist crimes, criticism of the regime and reform proposals were naturally not a local invention; they were empowered by the processes at the Soviet centre and they were suddenly topical almost everywhere. While there was a genuine plurality of meanings and the future remained ambiguous and open in the both cultural worlds in Estonia during the Singing Revolution in 1988-91, after the restoration of the Estonian Republic in 1991, the Estonian nationalist discourse prevailed and public debates were reduced to its confines.

I will show that the narratives of *perestroika* were received ambiguously in the Russian world in Estonia, dependent on specific biographies, family stories, and sense of cultural ties. As *perestroika* was accompanied with Estonian national

³ For a legal perspective, see: Lauri Mälksoo, *Illegal Annexation and State Continuity: The Case of the Incorporation of the Baltic States by the USSR: Study of the Tension Between Normativity and Power in International Law* (Leiden, Boston: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2003).

demands and the rise of Soviet occupation discourse, it also raised questions about the legitimacy of “newcomers” for being in Estonia, which was increasingly perceived as dependent on the unequivocal acceptance of the nationalising narrative to which people could not always adapt.

Responses to the Singing Revolution and the following socio-economic changes in inter-marriages depended to a great extent on the environments that people were active in – on where they lived, on workplaces, on schools their children went to. However, it appears that in a great majority of cases, the “newcomer” and the “local” spouse perceived the social changes differently; the perceived threat from the Estonian side rose with the discourse against the occupants. This, naturally, does not only attest to the exclusivity of Estonian nationalism, but also to the taken-for-granted manner in which the Russian world had accommodated itself in Estonia under the Soviet auspices. In the majority of households, these social changes were discussed only a little – the lack of discussion about cultural differences during the Soviet era continued and even gained further strength – inter-married spouses understood that they could not possibly come to an agreement even in the face of intense public discussions. This is attested forcefully by the children who grew up at the time and have no “special memory” of the era, the lack of which they strongly feel today while living and working mostly among the Estonians.

Regaining Estonian independence was a powerful motivator for focusing on the traumatic life-experiences of older Estonian generations in historical research of the 1990s; these “poisoned” biographies containing loss, absence, and suffering sometimes marked a scandalous difference from the Western experiences. By now, the scholarly interests and social mnemonic tropes have widened. However, this

chapter will demonstrate that the Estonian national narrative templates, reaffirmed in the 1990s, continue to confine and restrict the process of remembrance and storytelling, at least people feel compelled to excuse themselves while they are not thinking along its lines.⁴

3.2. Uncanny Stalinist foundations of two worlds (1944-53)

Viktoria Kisseljova's (b. 1953) father **Juri** (b. 1915) was in Tallinn on a Soviet cargo ship in summer 1941 during the evacuation of the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic (ESSR). It was quite chaotic on the Finnish bay, several ships that were bombed by the *Wehrmacht*, sank, meanwhile the German troops were entering Estonia. When Juri returned in 1945 – he had told Viktoria many times – he was greeted on Tallinn Freedom square by many people with flowers (the square was soon to be named into a Victory square). “Now they say that half [of the people there] were disguised [NKVD] then, my father always told me that on the square they were warmly welcomed.”⁵ But then Juri had also added that “it sufficed to go in a dark alley and a brick could fall on your head. When they arrived here, in 1945, in the square it was one [thing], but in the town he had felt some innate condemnation [*vrozhdennoe osuzshenie*].”⁶ Juri was 30 years old in 1945, he had lost his family in the Leningrad blockade. He was certainly not friendly towards the Germans, “the fascists,” or the local collaborators whose life standard in the bombed Tallinn seemed unimaginably richer than in devastated Russia.

⁴ See, for example: Kõresaar, *Elu ideoloogiad.*; Jõesalu and Kõresaar, “Continuity or Discontinuity.” As I also explain elsewhere, the new dominant Estonian “memory landscape” formed by the idealized memories of the Interwar Republic that was seen as “ruptured” by the subsequent Stalinist regime – a rupture that lasted throughout the Soviet period. This was based on the recollections of older Estonians, born around 1920-30. Younger Estonians, born from 1940s until the 1960s, were socialised directly into the Soviet reality. But they followed largely the interpretations of the older generation, cherished the change of regime, and attempted to reconfigure their life at the time.

⁵ Viktoria, 1953, nr. 7/15.

⁶ Viktoria, 1953, nr. 7/15.

Nevertheless, he voiced something to his daughter which I have not encountered much in the other post-war stories by the newcomers.⁷

Perhaps it is partially because it is *not* a contemporary story: Juri Kisseljov died in 1973, he expressed his opinions to his daughter in the late 1960s and Viktoria's memory is vivid. She comes to thinking about her father's arrival to Estonia at the moment she tells me about her Muscovite friends who, in the 1970s, had expressed a dissident idea that "the Baltic States should be let go, that they were occupied." She had been shocked: "how, occupied? Everyone wanted [to get] into the Soviet Union by their own will. [...] And my father, he was met [...] on that square..."⁸ – with flowers. This quite curious reference to the Baltic "occupation" discourse is brought up by Viktoria's Russian friends and already in the 1970s.⁹ Had these friends come to the same conclusion and had they voiced this openly while also living in Estonia? Or rather: had the friends expressed the idea of "occupation" still in the 1990s after the Baltic nationalities had so vocally expressed their will to separate – we may doubt.

Lidia Sander (b. 1956) is pressured by the present, by the judgement that a listener would have in mind: how to relate to and make sense of the military role that her father Grigori (b. 1925) played in the post-war Estonia; "did he take the place of someone" who had lived in the apartment into which he moved? Where were the

⁷ In the scholarly community there is currently quite a widespread consensus that it would be right to call the period 1940-41 that followed the *coup* in June 1940 a Soviet occupation that involved an annexation of Estonia in August 1940. This was followed by the Nazi occupation in 1941-44 and the return of the Soviet occupation power. However, the period of 1944-1991 should be rather called an annexation than occupation; mostly due to its length and to many affirmative policies of the USSR in the region – the local population had equal rights to the other Soviet populations. See: Mertelsmann, *The Sovietization of the Baltic States, 1940-1956*; John Hiden, Vahur Made, David Smith, eds, *The Baltic Question During the Cold War* (London: Routledge, 2008).

⁸ Viktoria, 1953, nr. 7/16.

⁹ This story ends for Viktoria with the statement that she has spiritually remained *Homo Sovieticus*, she was then, and is now. For her it means primarily that she is not willing to take a nationalist stance, she refers to a certain non-practical idealism. (Viktoria, 1953, nr. 7/15). See Chapter 5 for details.

former owners? Lidia is deeply religious today, she places an emphasis on the question of violence – and from her father-in-law Richard (b. 1933) she knows well that “these Russians, [...] the Soviet army, did not come with good intentions. My father-in-law was eight years old in Tallinn, when this Soviet power came about. And these are horrible things that he tells me, ugly. Through the eyes of a young boy, it is awful.”¹⁰ She herself is rather distant to “these Russians” – the occupants who came with the Soviet army – but her worry is the following: was her father an “occupant”? Such a perspective would be disconcerting to her. To deal with the societal pressure, she had asked Grigori in the 1990s: “Did you kill anyone during the war or after the war?” He had replied that he did not. “So he has a right to be on Estonian soil. The first years, he cleansed [the sea from mines], he did such a hard job, and well, then, got married.”¹¹ This is the first thing during the rather long interview Lidia told me. She has prepared it in her mind and it is important for her to fix that personal, uncomfortable matter of “occupation”; her father's role had not been to bring destruction and death but to clean the sea from mines, and this works for her. On the other hand, Grigori had told her that as a soldier it was dangerous to be outside of the city, on the roads and in the country:

He indeed feared the forest brothers to a certain extent. When they had to drive through some forest and, say, a group of marines were in the lorry – they had such partially open lorries, covered from the top – so the guys who were more outside, had to keep low... so that it would not be visible, that the bullet would not fly... [...] There was a certain fear at that period for sure. It was a serious time.¹²

This is the story that Grigori had shared with his daughter. For him it was primarily about the soldier's experience on duty and his stories were removed from the

¹⁰ Lidia, 1956, nr 86/11.

¹¹ Lidia, 1956, nr 86/1.

¹² Lidia, 1956, nr 86/10.

ethnically perceived everyday confrontations “which he did not see.” For him it had been important to stress the liberation from fascism, to have contributed to ending the war. “And he took it also, also in such a way, he did not distinguish that us [Estonia] versus the USSR. He certainly did not do that.”¹³ During the Singing Revolution, already in the end of 1980s Lidia had asked him:

'Father, did you really not understand – when you married, when you were here for the first years – did you not see that here everything is so different – another culture? And when you took an Estonian wife, did you not get that your children, that... this is all a different land?' He looked at me a bit and said: '*Niet, nie ponial!*' Did he really *nie ponial* or did he just say so – I am not sure.¹⁴

Lidia is unclear about what happened to her “father's children,” but as we discuss later, she struggles with telling her deceased father that she has not become a Russian. Grigori's response is in Russian: “*niet ne ponial*” – “no, I did not understand,” as if for a moment impersonating her father, taking me as an interlocutor back to being present at their dialogue that had happened in Russian. During the Estonian national revival Lidia wanted to know if the inter-ethnic family situation had not influenced Grigori's understanding of his family-members' belongings: Grigori had claimed that it hadn't, but of course at that moment he could have also been on the defensive. After the army, Grigori had got a job at the ship renovation factory, Tallinn shipyards, he was a worker who had gotten medals, certificates, and also an apartment. In a euphemistic phrase Lidia says that “these historical difficulties, which they talk about so much now, these had generally passed them by.”¹⁵ “He was indeed the one who lived in the generous communism, [...] he was one of those who fitted in and who was provided for. Back then, initially with a small family, they had two rooms. Then they had a

¹³ Lidia, 1956, nr 86/23.

¹⁴ Lidia, 1956, nr 86/28.

¹⁵ Lidia, 1956, nr 86/4: They did not suffer from Stalinist repressions or carry significant World War II losses.

larger family, three kids and then they had four rooms,” adds his granddaughter Aive (b. 1978).¹⁶

Lena Poska tells the story of her mother that **Daria** (b. 1931) would herself not tell me – this refers to the years 1952-53. Daria had visited her parents-in-law for the first time when she was still pregnant with Lena. She had been walking alone to a distant bus station in the countryside when she was unexpectedly approached by some forest brothers. There were still people in hiding even if their numbers were diminishing rapidly at the time. Russian-speaking civilians – in contrast to the NKVD troops that would also be labelled “Russian” by locals – were a rare sight in the countryside at the time. According to Lena, her and her mother’s life were saved because Daria’s mother-in-law (Lena’s grandmother) had helped these guys, who had been their “own village boys”. “Some one of them remembered that... this was Hanna’s daughter-in-law, and that Hanna had helped us,”¹⁷ said Lena. Daria did not mention this event in the interview. She chose to repeatedly stress her good and friendly reception and relations with the Estonians in the village. (It should be noted that the murders of civilians by forest brothers were rather rare, but in addition to the direct emissaries of the regime such as the local chairmen of soviets and others, Russians could have indeed fallen as target.)

At the time when **Helju Dimitrieva** (b. 1934) was in her teens, the forest brothers were for her indeed the boys from the neighbourhood families: “these were the great boys, our village boys.” They attended local events but also escaped the NKVD raids; essentially, they survived with the help of the local villagers who were their relatives and friends, and maybe more. Helju was a teenager then and she

¹⁶ Aive, 1978, nr. 74/4.

¹⁷ Lena, 1953, nr 89/22.

expresses certainly a more general sadness for the destinies of many of these boys who were only a bit older than she. It all came towards the end by the 1950s, with the great deportation of March 1949 (mostly from the villages), following collectivisation, and the more intense penetration of forests by the NKVD. Ethnic elements are not stressed here, but it is implicit and mentioned shortly later in the discussion.

[Helju:] Everyone knew the forest brothers; we knew them by their faces. They were our village guys. They were great boys, well afterwards there were some people from elsewhere among them – I remember one Harri, he was not a local. But otherwise these were 'Anni's boys' from Eivere village. Anni Heino¹⁸ was, I guess, their leader. Every time when these NKVD men caught him, he managed to somehow run away on the road. Until, in the end, he was shot. Someone had turned them in. There was a wedding in some farm and they all came to the wedding, but then – for sure someone had given a warning that they are coming – and there was a big round-up...

[Uku:] *Had the forest brothers killed anyone too?*

[Helju:] They... I knew the guy, his two children went to school with me, he was the chairman of the village soviet, and [his] wife had been murdered by the forest brothers. [...] His wife was killed somehow, brutally. [...] But I don't know more, that there were killings by the forest brothers. But these raids lasted for longer, when I already went to vocational school [elsewhere], then there was this NKVD garrison there, the Internal Forces. [...] Around Paide, there are these marshes and swamps. [...] Yeah these troops were there exactly in order to go from raid to raid. They were all Russians.¹⁹

“They were all Russians.” For Helju in this context this seems to imply primarily that they were not Estonians, there were no Estonians among them – they were the Russian speaking people and alien to the land they were brought to fight on. Juri Kisseljov had been driven through the Estonian woods on a lorry, but his daughter does not know which assignments he had been on as a soldier.

¹⁸ Helju uses here the family name in front of the given name.

¹⁹ Helju, 1934, nr 80/6. The NKVD troops which aimed at crushing the military resistance were not the same as the Estonian Rifle Division – the Red Army unit that was formed on the basis of the draft of 1941, and that had been allowed explicitly by Stalin to liberate/“liberate” Estonia in the fall 1944. The homecoming of Estonian boys as the first, made its emotive point but also avoided potential destruction and civilian suffering.

Juri had also been to Estonia before the war, during the “first Soviet year,” in 1940-41, as a Soviet sailor and then he was evacuated from Tallinn in 1941. At the same time Helju Dimitrieva was 7 years old and she remembers that time vividly with a socially shared sense of liberation that reflected also upon her as a child: “Gosh, I remember going to meet the Germans with garden-phlox [at the roadside]. When the Germans came in, we were glad that the Russians had left. Half of our village had been deported by then, of course.”²⁰ Actually, the greater deportation from the countryside happened in 1949 prior to collectivisation and the purge of the Estonian CP and cultural elites in 1950.

During WWII, which for the civilian population was greatly marked by the German occupation (1941-44) as a “German time,” many Estonian farmsteads could take prisoners-of-war as farm-hands in exchange of food and lodging. This was thought of in rather non-ideological terms and the relations between the villagers and the prisoners are mostly described as having been fine. (For the Soviet prisoners of war it often meant survival, but the farms were mostly dekulakized later. These prisoners of war ran away right at the return of the Soviets, they knew well that another camp in the East would have been waiting for them.) The prisoners did not know Estonian and almost no one could speak any Russian in the country.

During the war Helju's mother stayed with children in the country at the state run chicken farm. She had found work there after the forest-keepers' retirement residence had been closed down by the Soviet regime in 1940 (she had been eligible to live in the residence in 1939 when her forest-keeper husband had died of pneumonia). Now, during the German occupation, Helju says,

²⁰ Helju, 1934, nr 80/56.

we had one Nikolai and one Georgi in our state farm, and then I always thought that their trousers' waistband was not at the right spot, hanged all the time too low. [...] They had those kind of trousers; they did not get salary of course; worked for food. Of course, they were on foreign land and among foreign people, they did not know a word of Estonian and we did not know Russian before these Russians started to come [after 1944]. [---] One of these prisoners, he was especially angry, he was especially ugly too, Georgi, [...] he taught us Russian, these awful words – we of course did not know – we jumped up and down... I cannot tell you these words into the microphone ... And when the Russian kids came afterwards and I told them that I can speak Russian...²¹

There is nothing good about Georgi, even if he might not have been bad person and also not because he was a Russian – it is more about his burden of ugliness and character. But then again, he is one of the first Russians Helju vividly and, ethnically, remembers; and she remembers Georgi's foreignness. Ten years later, in 1953, she stayed with her mother and step-father in a flat at the former farm house which was primarily inhabited by the Red Army Border Guards close to the Estonian (Soviet Union) Western coast line. She remembers being asked to sing to the soldiers and that she was afraid to talk – afraid to use wrong declinations. Estonians, who had to, were already picking up Russian by then.

I had nothing against the Russians really, either me or my mother. [---] [I remember that] we went to a party. [---] These soldiers they had a horse and [said that] 'lets put the horse in front, lets ride to the party.' But there was this girl who worked at the fishing factory, she had graduated from [my] vocational school, and she said that 'gosh, what will the people think of it, that we come with the Russian soldiers, with their horse, driving to the party.' So we ran away [from them, and] did not go to the party.²²

Mingling publicly with the Russian soldiers bore some stigma in this small Estonian place in the country. People would look down on arriving to a local party with them, maybe some fights could arise. But as she says – these boys could not have been

²¹ Helju, 1934, nr 80/14

²² Helju, 1934, nr 80/18-19.

considered as enemies, alien or something of the sort. They were friendly, simple guys.

It had however been different later in the border regions in the 1960s where there were many Soviet troops. **Nikolai Alekseyev** (b. 1977) refers to his grandparents farm on an Estonian island: “As paradoxical as it might be, there they always have good words about the military who once inhabited there, who had helped doing hay... sometimes my grandfather could acquire more provisions, so to say, more abundant goods through the military shop system [...] – there was no such national hatred.”²³ Nikolai's mother **Luule** (b. 1955) refers also only to the positive memories in her youth. When she thinks back to her life in that coastal “border zone,” she says that:

my childhood was [full] of military barracks. We had closed zones, where one could not enter, and the seashore was all blocked from access... [---] But on the personal level, there was no such animosity between Estonians-Russians. [...] At least in these circles where I moved... [---] They created military bases there, the forbidden zones. [...] But I also remember our village parties, we had them together with the soldiers. We went together to the cinema, and they came to the swing, the marines. This was all pretty phenomenal. Once someone asked, how did you interact? But we did not really interact. They were there, then they said that “let's go”, and put us on the cars and we went and we did not have any kind of moral... or such interactions. So that there_would have been some ugly stories. I do not remember of any. [...] Such that a girl would have been in trouble or something.²⁴

Luule starts by telling me the story about her youth and about the positive relations with the locally based military; this reminds her of another conversation and she says that “they did not really *interact*” with the military. It is hard to trace the origins of this sexual reference: had the person who “once asked her” posed the question in such a context, were the young girls warned about the soldiers, or was she speaking to the prevalent Estonian image of soviet soldiers at the time? In any case, Luule asserts that

²³ Nikolai, 1977, nr 60/10.

²⁴ Luule, 1955, nr 20/20

the lack of such experiences proved her general point about the amicable relations between the locals and the army.

* * *

Ülo* (b. 1933) **and Polina*** (b. 1936) **Kesamaa** report about their stressful experiences with the military invasions from their childhood. They met in Leningrad and theirs was a student romance; she studied at the pedagogical and he at the ship-engineering institute. They married in 1957 and arrived to Tallinn in 1961 after short periods in the towns to which they were allocated the jobs. They have two daughters.

Kesamaas both share the story of a failed escape by ship, of “missing the last boat.” Ülo was born to the school director's family and raised in a province town, where his family had kept apart from the local establishment, in his words. Ülo's family had tried to escape the Soviets in 1944 but someone had paid more for the lorry driver and the vehicle which was supposed to take them to the coast never appeared. The family had remained waiting with boxes and bags – a story shared by many Estonians.²⁵ Polina was born in Yalta, Crimea to an urban family. Her Jewish father had been a pharmacist and lost his life in the beginning of the WWII, her Russian mother worked as an accountant at a bank. Polina and her mother had not managed to

²⁵ In September 1944, at the latest hour, the family and relatives of my grandmother started a way to the West coast to catch a ship to Sweden. They were very late as my grandmother's father had got wasted drunk for days and they – my grandmother and her mother – had been “sitting on the suitcases” waiting for him to come home. Finally, as tens thousands of others, they arrived too late to the Western Estonian coast. Then they had stayed in the countryside for a while as the war front passed through Estonia. It was autumn and as my great grandfather was a lorry driver he had some gasoline with him. He had gone around and helped to operate the crop threshing machines in exchange for food provision. They returned to Tallinn in October. All was intact in the neighbourhood of Nõmme as if nothing had happened. But the regime had changed. For my great grandfather, it would have been better to leave Estonia and not to get so drunk. He owned a transportation company with three lorries; he was driving one of them and hired a few other drivers. In 1947, he was arrested, in 1952 he died in the Gulag. My grandmother remembers that in March 1949 she and her mother were hiding at some relatives and escaped the new deportation; at least she claims that they had been looked for. In the archives, I saw that a file for the deportation of their family had been opened for the June 1941 deportation, but it was incomplete and discontinued since.

flee and remained in Crimea for the duration of Nazi occupation. Polina describes vividly how the last ship had left the port of Yalta.

As Polina told to her friends in Leningrad that she was moving to Estonia some had replied: “Where are you going to, to the Baltic States? It’s terrible, they are all fascists there! [...] Where are you going to... oh god, with your personality [*harakter*], going to the Baltic States, there they are all...”²⁶ Did they refer to her being generally from Russia or to her being specifically “half-Jewish”? The theme of Jewishness does not appear in her story otherwise, without my explicit questioning and Polina would not remember any Jewish traditions in her family. Most probably, her Leningrad friends meant that she was a Russian who had suffered under the Nazi occupation – as all the Russians had.

Indeed, Polina remembers the Nazi occupation of Crimea with anxiety: “I am raised in such a spirit. I feared the Germans so much. I, of course, I thought that it was all because of them. Later I saw it all, I realised.”²⁷ At another moment in the interview she expresses quite similar ideas even in more detail.

[Polina:] Oh, I was afraid, I was so afraid of the Germans. Gosh, [...] one morning we went outside, in Yalta, and mother had [to go to] the bank, when the bombing started, she had to go right away to the bank and close all the finances, and then she would pick us up and we had to hide in some cellar. I remember it was 'Massandra' [cellars] with all the good wines in there and all. There we were all hiding. And once we came home, and I saw that there are dolls there [on the street], but there on the trees there were all the partisans, all the family [was] hanged right on the tree, hanging there. Children, grandmother, mother, and the children hanged up like this. [---] We slept there in the cellar, and then went up to the third floor, and then they started bombing again, and I came down at midnight, and then my neighbour was sitting there, like this, and blood... [dead] [---] It was pretty terrifying, I had grey hair, started like, that... I was 6 years old, and white hair appeared.²⁸

²⁶ Polina, 1936, nr. 92/42.

²⁷ Polina, 1936, nr. 92/40.

²⁸ Polina, 1936, nr 92/21.

For Polina in her youth the bad things came from the Germans – specifically the Nazis, who in Russian were mostly called the “fascists.” When Ülo looks back at his childhood, he feels similar anxieties, but in reverse. The division between the bad and the good had been quite clear, he remembers his emotive experience.

[Ülo:] The German soldiers were, well, normal people, they did not kill anyone or rape; they walked around the farmsteads and were like normal people. But then came in the Russian soldiers. The first thing, [he] came into our courtyard and shot our dog. Right away. Then [he] came in, and my older brother was like..., well, we hid him, he would have been shot too. – This was very real, all the men in the way were shot. – But because... he came in and shot the dog, and our aunt fell on the dog, crying, and we, the children, were all sorry for the dog. Then they got somehow confused. [They] went in, and did not find my older brother, and went away. Total rubbish, I saw with my own eyes how they ran about, looked for girls and other things. I mean, the German occupation and Russian occupation were really like heaven and earth. And the Russians came in like robbers – I have seen it myself – and we all ran away into the woods when they came, because they killed and raped, it was clearly visible.²⁹

The stories of Ülo and Polina are both highly personal witness accounts about experiencing important historical events. The ethnicized images that they present respectively of Soviets (“Russians”) and Nazis (“Germans”) stand out even if there had been other bad-willing people and negative experiences at the time – for example, in Polina’s case the NKVD and in Ülo’s case the German occupants. However, this straight-forwardly contradictory ethnicized imagery did not cause familial frictions in Kesamaa family, Polina and Ülo comprehend the radically different historical contexts and these are in dialogue through their emphatic knowledge about the different

²⁹ Ülo, 1933, nr. 93/18. We should suspect that Ülo’s older brother had been previously drafted to the German army, but it is also possible that he had managed to hide from it. // There are many of such stories. Richard Sander (b. 1933) – the father of Sergei and grandfather of Aive – remembers, in Aive’s words, from his childhood that “when there was German occupation and he heard the German spurs [*kannuseid*] then he knew that he can walk home with peace in mind, that no one would touch him. At the same time, when came the Soviet occupation, just afterwards, if you heard that a soldier is coming, then you had to run away.” (Aive, 1978, nr 74/6.). This is a childhood memory, but it was shaped by the presence of invisible adults: who told to Richard that the Germans are safe and the Russians are not?

circumstances that created fear and hatred. As such, their stories both convey the message of loss, helplessness, injustice, and violence.

Nevertheless, the other-images of “Russian” and “German” are not symmetrical when being used by Ülo (“Estonian”) and Polina (“Russian”). Ülo praises Germans for being “normal,” for acting comprehensibly whereas Russians were hostile beyond reason. But for the Estonians it is clear that Germans are not Estonians, when Germans at the time of World War II could be generically labelled as “fascist,” then this does not apply to Estonians: due to political and ethnic reasons. At the same time, the Soviet soldiers were generically labelled as “Russians,” and all of them spoke Russian. They were perceived to be of the *same* ethnicity as Polina who moved to Estonia. Both while attesting to their experience and how they might be perceived from outside, it is easier for Ülo to distance himself from “Germans-fascists” than for Polina from “Russians-Soviets.”

Ülo's later experiences with the highly educated “Russians” in Moscow and Leningrad complicate that uniform picture that he had taken with him from the childhood. As he says, most of his class in the university were “very smart Russians, almost all Jewish”³⁰.

I grew up with the opinion that all the Russians are stupid and, well, an inferior company. I went there and I was very surprised that all the Russian boys who studied with me were, damn smart. And then I had this thing that I fell into, well, I was studying in the elite group, we had one. There were 120 students in the faculty and they chose 16 smartest ones out of these to make an elite group, to prepare for big science and all that, and I fell into that group, too. There were a few, let's say, a few were real geniuses, mostly indeed the Jews. I was not Jewish there and one boy was also, I mean, he was purely Russian, all the rest were Jewish. And they were very smart, they are now all professors, one is a super-banker... [...]

Russian boys – I compared [them] to the Estonian boys [...] – I mean, the intellectual difference was enormous. With these geniuses, it was a special

³⁰ Ülo, 1933, nr. 93/14.

case, but also at the dorms, I was very surprised that, in the evening, we were five boys in one room, we sat on our beds and the Russian boys could talk hours of Pushkin by heart. By the way, it is the speciality of Russian nation, they know all the poems, and we did not know any, and then these [guys] read Pushkin for hours. It was such a level, [it] was totally unexpected for me. Then I realised that [it is a] damn stupidity that all the Estonians here talk that we are so smart, so very smart, that Russians are morons, and all that.³¹

Ülo's life-story about being in the wider world, looking at things with a bird's eye view, and growing intellectually serves also another purpose. Ülo claims a superior position among the Estonians based on these experiences. He is not such a petty person who “talks that we are so smart, so very smart.” His interview has many references to the positionality of an intermediary between the centre (Moscow-Leningrad) and periphery (Estonia). But in the context of the World War II, it helps him to paint a larger after-picture of the war and of the potential doom of Estonians, had the Nazis won.

[Ülo:] Naturally, afterwards, when they were [already] in here, when it was the local Russian power, this was another thing. Well, how to put it, [...] in retrospect, had the Germans conquered the world, then it would have been worse, because at ours they didn't kill or anything, but elsewhere they really did an awful job. This is why I don't get the point of his Afghanistan war either, why should a person go voluntarily to occupy a foreign country and to kill and rape there. I mean, I know why people do it, there were people... at the German time also... no one forced you to go to be the guard at the concentration camp; you went there voluntarily, because you got your pleasure out of it. Now, it is exactly the same, no one forces you to go to Afghanistan to kill and rape.³²

How did Polina's ideas about “ours” and “theirs” in reference to her youth-time experiences change once in Estonia? For her family, for her mother, the difficult times had actually not passed with the war that they had to spend under the Nazi occupation. The post-war Stalinist regime was distrustful toward anyone working under the Nazis – and her mother had continued her job as a bank accountant throughout the war. So

³¹ Ülo, 1933, nr. 93/14.

³² Ülo, 1933, nr. 93/18.

she was not permitted to continue in the profession. “The KGB invited her many times, that 'what had been there, how had it been?' And then mother goes and I do not know if she will return or not.”³³ Polina’s mother wished to work again in banking and to have her work experience counted. The story goes that at the same time that she got this permission from Voroshilov himself (around 1955) she died of a stroke, Polina was then in her second year at the university in Leningrad. As for Stalin, she remembers that in her youth she shared the general sentiment of “loving him a lot,” “everyone cried when he died” – even if later “she had understood *it all*.”³⁴

In the older life-stories of the Estonians born prior to 1940s, there are a lot of comparisons between the Russians and the Germans: the first are civilizationally lower, “Asiatic,” dirty, cruel, alien, dangerous, and latter civilized, cultured, orderly, safe. The Nazi occupation for the Estonians had been poor but personally relatively safe. The Germans used different policies in the Baltic States compared to (Slavic) Eastern Europe, perhaps because Nazi race theories and old German connections to Baltic lands contributed to a sense of recognition between Germans and Estonians. The grassroots level compliance with the occupational authorities surprised even the Germans. Local discontent only grew with the forced mobilizations of 1944. However, this relative peace during the war also showed up as the sign of collaboration at the return of the Soviet army in 1944: the land and the cities were not totally destroyed (and ironically much of the destruction that there was had been caused by the Soviets).

³³ Polina, 1936, nr. 92/20.

³⁴ Polina, 1936, nr. 92/20. For example Polina (1936, nr. 92/44) is saying that Ülo's mother had talked about the past without hindrance and that she had learned a lot from her: “I heard a lot from Ülo's mother, I heard a lot. [...] She talked about all and all the time. [...] She also told that they had there some Russian soldier, who worked at them, and then they sent him away, he actually did not return to Russia but to Germany. They had cried that he had been such a good one. [...] But in general, she of course did not like the Russians.”

* * *

Ljudmila Alehno was born in 1949 in a small Estonian coastal town into a Russian-Estonian family. She knows little of her family past – but there had been repressions on ethnic and class grounds during the Stalinist 1930s as her father was of Ingrian descent and mother came from the St-Petersburg family of “owners.” After a longer post-war wandering, their family settled on the Western Estonian coast in 1950. Ljudmila’s life-story is published in the collection of Russians’ life-stories in Estonia.³⁵ Her vivid memory of waiting for the White Ship is remarkable and worth quoting at some length.³⁶

From my childhood I remember clearly the fear: I was afraid of the White Ship. [...] Everyone knew for sure what will happen to them when the White Ship would arrive. [...] It appeared that out of all the yard’s kids – and of the two neighbouring yard’s kids with whom we were in touch – only I was afraid. I even went to the seashore to see if the ship was already visible. When it was not, I would be at peace for the day and could take part in the games. The problem was that my Estonian girlfriends knew that the White Ship will bring them freedom, and the Russian girls [knew] that they will have to hide. It appeared that only I did not know what to do. This uncertainty was very torturous. My fear had clear contours; it even felt tangible. [The White Ship] had to come from Sweden and liberate Estonia from the Russians. I could not consider myself either part of one or the other; therefore, it was also uncertain what would happen to me. No one could however tell how the liberation would look like. What to do, where and how to hide the people who had to seek refuge. [...] But everyone knew for sure that the Ship will come. In my dreams it was a large sail ship. But where are the sails, there is wind, so I much preferred the still days. [...]

The Ship was long time in waiting, but would yet not have come. There were several versions in the air about why the delay of liberation and these were spiritedly discussed. But I do not remember any divisions on the national grounds, in relation to this or otherwise. We went to different schools but shared the yard. The yard connected us and we all talked in two languages or in some mixed one that was invented by the older kids.

³⁵ Ljudmila Alehno, “Valge Laev” (White Ship), in *Mu kodu on Eestis*, 370-377.

³⁶ This is a metaphor for a kind of saviour in Estonian culture. The White Ship idea was transformed into the image of altruist Allies in the post-war Estonia as people were caught in the net of Cold War propaganda, KGB disinformation and rumours while facing the stressful Stalinist reality. It was hoped that the White Ship would come and “save us.”

In the neighbouring house there lived an inconceivable individual. She had a small room for living, shelf in the corridor and on every shelf – a cat. I called this woman a Cat Mother. She was very friendly both to cats and to us. She had huge binoculars, heritage from her father who had been a seaman. We came to her and observed the sea, waiting for the appearance of the White Ship. Once she asked me: 'Are you afraid?' I replied honestly: 'Yes I am.' [...] She did not send me away with the others. Then she told me that there was nothing to be afraid of, that the Ship will not come. We sat for quite a long time in silence. Later, she added that the captain of that ship had to be her father, but by then she knew for sure that her father would never return. That was the end for my fears; I did not wait for the White Ship any more.³⁷

Ljudmila Alehno offers a fascinating insight into the problems of the “adult’s world” through the eyes of a child. She describes a sharp division between the Russian and Estonian worlds with regard to a hypothetical choice at the arrival of that White Ship. At the same time she “does not remember any divisions on the national grounds” – the people who knew that the arrival of White Ship would affect their lives in diametrically different ways formed a friendly community. On the level of everyday experiences Ljudmila did not sense a conflict but on the more abstract level there was a “clear divide” – and on these grounds people knew where they belonged to. Her principle problem was exactly this: while belonging to both the Estonian and Russian worlds, she also belonged to neither *at the time* due to the undetermined *future*. Ljudmila could only hope that the future would remain only a projection and that it would not materialise in present. This was also the consolation that Cat Mother offered to her as a child.³⁸

Ljudmila Alehno's story also illustrates a generational difference in the making: personal life-experiences (migrations, war, personal losses etc.) of the former

³⁷ Alehno, “Valge Laev,” 371-372.

³⁸ The actualisation of ethnic difference is here like a derivative financial instrument that is cashed in the case of another event happening in the future. Its future value gives another type of derivative values to it also in present.

As for Cat Mother herself, it is not clear if her story refers to the iron curtain that had divided her family, had her father just left her, or was it a story more-or-less made up on the spot to be told to children.

generations form “structuring structures” (*habitus*) for the younger generation; the children know where they belong, even if all play together, based on ambiguous contents of clearly divided realms of meanings. The resulting ethnic division that Alehno describes can be understood as an approximation to another division – to the division of locals and newcomers. In addition, it may be said that White Ship returned to Estonia in 1992 when the society was divided into citizens and non-citizens based on the inheritance of inter-war citizenship.

As Swedish peasants left their native West Estonian coast in 1944, many empty houses remained. “So, some of my aunties and uncles, and my grandmother came here in 1944, decided to live here, put their foot down in this small town,” says **Andrei Gurjev*** (b. 1947)³⁹ – it was the same town where Ljudmila Alehno grew up. Andrei's mother's relatives arrived in 1944 – right after the German army had retreated – from an Estonian village near Leningrad. She was from a family of ten siblings, and their father had died in 1933. They were not been repressed in 1937 in Russia as many Estonian intellectuals and villagers had been. Andrei's parents met in 1941 in Central Asia. (She had come to visit her ill sister there and was kept put by the war that had just started). Andrei's father was Chechen and an officer in the Soviet Army, but working on the rear front. In 1944, he was asked to leave the army immediately, since the Chechens as whole ethnic group became a target of repressions due to their alleged collaboration with the Germans. Andrei's parents were not repressed and moved instead to Estonia, where they joined his mother's relatives who had move to Estonia a few years before.⁴⁰ Andrei also claims that his parents formed a

³⁹ Andrei, 1947, nr. 41/1.

⁴⁰ Andrei does not know or does not tell me about his father's military duties in Central Asia during the war, about the exact conditions of his dismissal from the Army, and about his professional work while he was already in Estonia.

'red family' through and through. My Mother was an active red one, already before, so she worked here [in Estonia] on the county committee, women's committee, resourcing committee, and everywhere. [---] And, yes, they were both the party members and and believed profoundly in communism.⁴¹

Andrei Gurjev grew up in the same small town parallel to Ljudmila. His childhood is overwritten by that “active red” image of his family. Even if Ljudmila's courtyard was a special microcosm, White Ship would indeed reflect the hopes of most Estonians at the time.⁴² Did Andrei and his parents not notice local anxieties or were they rather more effective in pushing these empty hopes and the past shadows aside? Either way, there had been several small and distinct experiential worlds present there in this small Estonian town in the mid-1950s.

In the context of Andrei's life-story, his idea of a transparently “red” childhood transforms from the slight tone of teasing about his parent's world-views

⁴¹ Andrei, 1947, nr. 41/1. According to Andrei, they rather spoke in Estonian at home and his father had learned the local language pretty fast. Andres still went to a Russian school. Andrei does not remember any talks of the past or ideological confusions in his youth and also as a student in the University of Tartu (e.g., I asked about the 1968 Prague events as they had had some resonance among the students). After graduation, he worked for the party, in the 1980s in the committee which oversaw Tallinn municipality. His Estonian wife worked in the soviet commerce.

⁴² A commentary to post-war feelings of Estonians is given by Jaan Roos who was a strange “Stalinist vagabond.” A former bibliophile and school administrator, he heard of his potential arrest in 1945, he went away from home and wandered around until being caught only in 1954 by KGB. He never stayed at anyone for longer than a few days and managed to use the network formed from his former pupils. He also managed to keep a diary for most of these years that has been published in five volumes. A diary entry from 24 Oct 1952 is the following: “People are very disappointed here, because nothing has really happened [about our situation] this year. They do not believe that anything will ever happen, or at least fast enough. They say that the United States and the Soviet Union are both a similar bunch of Jews who collaborate and that America has no serious intentions to save the enslaved peoples. The transmissions of the 'Voice of America' only frustrate people, who say that it is nothing more than propaganda similar to the Soviet Union. The radio promises that soon they will come and rescue us. But when is 'soon'? It is a very dragging concept. Normally one considers 'soon' to be the matter of weeks, or months, at most. Now, it continues a year after a year and still they say [in radio] that the change could come earlier than expected. Already three years ago President Truman told that in hundred days all the enslaved peoples will be free. This spring he said that before he would leave the presidency, he would free all the enslaved peoples. In few days there will be the elections of the President of the United States, and Truman is not running for office. Soon he will leave, but what about his promises? Whom should one believe if not the President of the United States! [sic!] Keeping all that in mind, the people do not want to believe in anything anymore. Many do not even want to listen to the 'Voice of America.' They say that there is no reason to listen that one day our country would be liberated if soon there is no-one left to liberate. These are all very pessimist views.” See: Jaan Roos, *Läbi punase öö IV: 1951. ja 1952. aasta päevik* (Through the red night IV: Diary of 1951 and 1952) (Tartu: Eesti Kirjanduse Selts, 2004).

into the description of his own practical societal radar to justify Andrei's life-choices. He made a career in the Communist Party and, in the early 1990s, he went into business. Today his view on society is purely libertarian, and he says that he “built it up brick by brick while being in business.”⁴³

When attending a vocational school in 1950-51, **Helju Dimitrieva** (b. 1934) lived in a small Estonian town of Paide, where the landlords rented a room in their private house. The owners had come there after WWII from Tallinn (a bit confusing property arrangement). They had been “very Estonian-minded, listened to the Voice of America under several blankets – there were a lot of disturbances [on the broadcast]. There was a permanent whistling.” They had also been waiting for the White Ship – “that this Russian order would end, [---] that the Americans and the English would come and save us.”⁴⁴ In 1941, Helju had greeted the Germans with flowers, and some years later she had seen the forest brothers around in the village. On the other hand, she says that

... of course this brainwashing was pretty efficient. [...] Steadily, it became so that [by the time of] vocational school I was hesitant. I talked to [this couple], I said that it cannot be true that people are sent to Siberia without any reason, there has to be something, some cause. They [would go]: 'Oh, Helju, we would like to meet you in ten years...'⁴⁵

Waiting for White Ship characterises quite well the situation where many Estonian adults could not arrange their lives to fit the new circumstances and at the same time it was already hard to imagine a prompt change. There is a clear generational difference here: Helju's future lay ahead, she was poor and she would fit in Soviet Estonian society – she did not *need* that ship to come. Ten years later she would be working in Narva, in search for happiness and an apartment, trying to remain honest in managing

⁴³ Andrei, 1947, nr. 41/15.

⁴⁴ Helju, 1934, nr 80/16.

⁴⁵ Helju, 1934, nr 80/17.

the local commerce. She married Vitali Dimitriev in 1964 and joined the Party in 1972 when promoted to the leadership job in commerce. She did not forget, she has a brilliant memory, but such dilemmas as her landlord had forecast to her, did not materialise. The actual problems were different.

A fictional film “The White Ship” was released by Tallinnfilm in 1970. It is thought that the film was made on the order of the KGB as a late response to growing contacts with the West. It depicted the post-WWII struggle of the Estonian émigré community and the Western foreign services to misinform the Soviet Estonian people about western life, and promises of “liberation” and to cheat them into “waiting” for the Ship. For a contemporary watcher it might look like an American 1950s rebel film, perhaps with James Dean: it depicts the dissatisfaction of youths and has a sad ending as the young who are lured to flee to the West find only unfairness there. The film was not popular, and only a few people remember it today. Ljudmila Alehno remembers having gone to watch it and being disappointed – there was no connection between her childhood struggles and the imagery of that propaganda film.⁴⁶

3.3. The silent Singing Revolution and its aftermath (1988-92)

An Estonian folklore monster, the Northern Frog, with the head of a giant frog, the body of an ox and the tail of a snake, appears in In *The Baltic Revolution* by Anatol Lieven.⁴⁷ Lieven describes the story of Baltic nationalisms as a variation on the Sleeping Beauty tale, as rewritten by the Wicked Witch. For Lieven, local nationalism had been “asleep” during the Soviet rule and was then kissed awake by the “breeze of

⁴⁶ Alehno, “Valge Laev,” 372.

⁴⁷ Anatol Lieven, *The Baltic Revolution*, xxxv – xxxvi.

freedom” – but it awoke as the Northern Frog.⁴⁸ What may have appeared as culturally innocent nationalism during the Soviet period turned into a politically exclusive practice once it was properly “awake.” An obvious question remains: Who perceived the social situation in such a manner? For most Estonians, their long awaited White Ship, that had departed in 1940, had returned; and many would claim that their nationalism had never been asleep at all.

Both **Daria** (b. 1931) and **Lena Poska** (b. 1953) stress a loss of security and a fragile sense of future when asked about this period of change. 1989 – 1992 was a frightening time, and it became “really serious” for them with the August 1991 putsch attempt in Moscow. After that “life went on, already fitting into the framework of the independent state...”⁴⁹

[Daria:] You know, it was unclear, *everyone* was afraid, did not know what would happen next. [...] Because these Russians who happened to be in Estonia, you think that they wanted to come by themselves? No, no one came by themselves. The military personnel came – and stayed [after their military service ended], this is for one. For two, [...] there was a need for specialists. Where should they have been taken [from]? Well, they came from Russia, [they] were invited.⁵⁰

For Daria, the socio-political change was related to the fact that “*everyone* was afraid.” Quite unconsciously, she draws the border between her world and the world of those who were not afraid. This division was not necessarily the same as the one between Russian and Estonian worlds; she does not mention such terms, she just speaks about her own social circles, about her “everyone.” However, while doing so, she steps in dialogue with suspicions from “elsewhere,” with the people from the

⁴⁸ Ibid. // The Sleeping Beauty comparison has been widely re-circulated. Amidst World War II propaganda production, was Walt Disney's *Education for Death: The Making of the Nazi*, directed by Clyde Geronimi (1943). It was based on Gregor Ziemer's, *Education for Death: The Making of the Nazi* (Oxford University Press, 1941). The film starts with a scene of how the fairy tale of Sleeping Beauty had been remade for the growing *Hitlerjugend*. In this new tale, Germany is the Sleeping Beauty and Adolf Hitler is the Prince who wakes her and takes her for a journey.

⁴⁹ Lena, 1953, nr 89/12.

⁵⁰ Daria, 1931, nr 95/19

other, unafraid, world. Perhaps in an attempt to avoid being identified as an “occupier,” she adopts a position of helplessness for choosing her own destiny as the reasons for being in Estonia. This is how she explains it to me, and it comes across as a reply to an accusatory question that burst out in 1988, that has not faded from the Estonian public discourse even now, and that has remained a pressing theme for her.

Daria's story about the presence of *her* Russian world in Estonia is built on the Soviet trope of the need for “necessary specialists.” Tellingly, the idea that “no one came by themselves,” does not match well with her own active and self-assuring attitude in life. She does not have cheerful associations with the Singing Revolution and she does not mention any of its events in our long interview. But what about Mart, Daria's Estonian husband? Their daughter Lena is more articulate about her father's position – she does not appreciate his “strange behaviours” post-1991. **Lena** (b. 1953) remembers an event which involved her own husband, who had come to Estonia to serve in the Red Army in the 1970s:

We sat together on a St. John's Day [Midsummer day] and I don't know what this story was really about, but he declared then to [my] husband that he should go back to Russia. [...] When it is heard that he does not speak Estonian then he is often told that. However, it is a little bit strange for one's [own] father-in-law to say that. [...] As [my father] was then a bit repressed, and not able to accomplish anything in his life, now he suddenly 'woke up.'⁵¹

In general, Mart remains a marginal figure in the family, but he is still a family member. Therefore, his “awakening” is unpleasant and it reminds them that when Daria spoke of “everyone being afraid,” her own husband was not included. For Lena, this is an example of an uncomfortable dominant Estonian discourse about “Russians,” it reminds her of her colleagues who make her feel unpleasant at work and also of her husband's difficulties to adapt to Estonia after the Singing Revolution.

⁵¹ Lena, 1953, nr. 89/14.

The moment at which Mart expressed himself to his son-in-law, is an example of a social situation that goes beyond or outside everyday communication. Birthdays and large social gatherings that invite longer conversations between the people who otherwise rarely meet often create such situations. These events, then, function as a way to test and affirm individual identifications with groups and wider cultural worlds. However, as I demonstrate, they rarely influence deeper family dynamics; after such events the discussions are mostly closed and “life moves on.”

Such hostile “declarations” like Mart Poska's happened mostly in contexts where people did not perceive the others as belonging to the group against which they express themselves. **Tamara Lebedeva*** (b. 1947) was born in an inter-marriage with Estonian, local German and local Russian heritage. They mostly spoke Russian at home and she went to a Russian school; her brother had a different father and he went to an Estonian school. Tamara remembers well how her brother was boasting to her in 1989 that it was the time for Russians to start going home: “My brother arrives from Tallinn, just jumps in [from the door] and starts to tell me about all this – that again ‘these Russians’ – I was so insulted. [---] Finally, I told [him] that you know what? ‘I go to Pskov to my nieces, if I am not needed here I will leave!’ Then he shut up.”⁵² At this moment, Tamara's brother did not really pay attention to the fact that, while participating in both Russian and Estonian worlds, Tamara considered herself to be primarily a “Russian.”

* * *

Lidia Sander (b. 1956) says that her mother Valve (b. 1925) respected Estonian independence a lot and was “very content and happy about the fact that our republic

⁵² Tamara, 1947, nr. 39/16.

was restored. [...] Even though she did not show it to the father, or anything.”⁵³

Indeed, her father Grigori (b. 1925) had been in bad mood at the time.

[Lidia:] Father... in the beginning [of the Singing Revolution] he longed for getting away from here. Like, 'what the heck, I am an occupant?' *Takoi okupant* [such an occupant] he did not want to be... 'He is not an occupant!' [---] Father was very nervous for a period. [...] He was convinced that mother will leave with him, and there would be no discussion, that he is the head of the family and... He couldn't... he didn't...so much that he said then. [...] And he also said that 'well, right, emotionally [*hingeliselt*], you [all] do not take after me at all.' He only realised this when we he was close to eighty [years old].⁵⁴

Lidia expresses Grigori's inability and unwillingness to grasp his changed social situation: in relation to his presence in Estonia and also within his family who would not consider leaving with him. He had also become old. But there had been no conflicts in the family. In retrospect, the situation appears rather clear to Lidia: Mother had been happy on her own and father had shared his anxieties with other family members. On the other hand, Grigori was the one who was alone, whereas the other family members shared their “Estonian” sentiments about the social change. At another moment in the interview, I asked about the family discussions on the differences between Estonian and Russian worlds again.

[Uku:] *How did you talk to your father about it?*

[Lidia:] We didn't. We did not talk about feelings. [...] He does not understand. I knew that he did not understand. It was painful enough for him, why should I make it worse?

[Uku:] *But mother and father, between themselves?*

[Lidia:] Well, they talked and might have had some nagging [*nagistasid*], too. But not too much. But, my sister has explained that father was generally nervous at the time and quite conflictual on various matters... He would not

⁵³ Lidia, 1956, nr. 86/28. See also Chapter 2 for Lidia's reference to the question whether her father was an 'occupant' or not; and also Chapter 5 for a longer discussion of inter-personal relations within Lidia's family.

⁵⁴ Lidia, 1956, nr. 86/28.

raise that political topic. No not that, but he was nervous, so I guess it had an impact on people.⁵⁵

Leida (b. 1931) and **Ivan** (b. 1928) **Arhipelagov** keep together and refer to each other in a caring manner. When Leida thinks back to the political changes in 1988-91, she recalls mostly family affairs and that she stayed at home with her daughter's son. In contrast with the general sentiments of the other Estonians of her age, Leida's references to domesticity are rather striking, all the more so in the light of her training as a historian, her knowledge of history, and her ability to connect her personal life to the larger events of her time. She recounts some anecdotes. Having once worked at the archives, she volunteered to return and help out in the 1990s with documenting proof of ownership rights from before the Soviet occupation, for the purposes of property restitution. She remembers working in Tartu, where she had had to formulate documentation for returning houses near the city hall to their former owners:

[Leida:] These [houses] had all been built on loans, in 1938-39. [---] The city could have checked that these people had not paid these loans [back], that these [houses] were built with money from the Tartu City Bank – [the houses] could have totally been taken by the city. But no one... cared about it, and I was then like... a temporary work force. I was talking a bit to one, a bit to another, but there was a new director [...] and [he] could not care less.⁵⁶

Leida began by referring to people from Israel who came “to see their houses,” but then she also refers to other nationalities. For example, the descendants of Baltic Germans had visited her in the archive and studied the situation: “They checked the documentation, that these had not been their houses [before the war], but that [they were built] on the bank's money.” Leida saw that these people were aware that they were not really entitled to the ownership. But then they “came here with the

⁵⁵ Lidia, 1956, nr. 86/33

⁵⁶ Leida, 1931, nr. 18/36.

documents that they had not got any compensation [for repatriation], and Estonia gave them all these houses,” as they had formally owned them prior to the war on loans.⁵⁷

After retirement in 1986, Leida actually remained an active participant in social affairs, but she claims that she had become old and that she did not take part in the Singing Revolution. However, her son **Viktor** (b. 1962) offers some more disturbing evidence on the effect of that retreat, when discussing his father Ivan (b. 1928).

[Viktor:] Yeah, my father was not happy at all and he was quite convinced that the Soviet power will be restored any time, and that it will all end with a very bloody counter-revolution – like an antipode to the Singing Revolution, right. [...] No, he certainly has at least humanist ideals. [...] But this myth is really strong in my father. Not all the Russians are like that, they sometimes Europeanize easier than Estonians, I have noticed. [...] But yes, his adaptation in Estonia... he has many fears, fears and suspicions. [...] I think it causes depression in [his] life. But, indeed, he knows pretty little about Estonia, Estonians, Estonian politics and it has never interested him. All the time he watches... [the Russian TV].⁵⁸

For Ivan, Estonia remains in the Russian cultural sphere. In Viktor's interpretation, Ivan's fears during the Singing Revolution, on the one hand, stem from his life-long ties with the Soviet Army and the sense of its might; on the other hand, there is an honest continuity in his father's views which, in addition to his age, also reflects the integrity of the father's thinking.

[Viktor:] Let's say, in our house, [people] were honest in the Soviet time and were honest also after the transformation. [---] Many other Russians started to 'speak along' very much. And this is where father departed from many friends who suddenly changed their singing tune. My father has never changed his tune. Initially, he gladly went along with perestroika, but he realised very fast that Estonians were willing to drive the Russians out – which is right, they were willing to...[---] And now he is in the same position as the dissidents were in the Soviet times. He knows what it meant to have a dissident in the

⁵⁷ Leida, 1931, nr. 18/37. Repatriating Germans had been promised compensation on their move to Germany in 1939-40 by the agreement between Estonia and Germany from October 1939. Proof of not having got compensation was a condition for restitution of property in Estonia in the 1990s.

⁵⁸ Viktor, 1962, nr. 10/25.

family. [...] [He's not going] to mess up the lives of his children, that's for sure. [And] I have also not gone along with politics [...] at the time when, lets say, I have had some chances.

[Uku:] *And your mother?*

[Viktor:] With my mother, there is nothing [no problem]. Mother is a very good adapter.⁵⁹

With Viktor there was “nothing” too – he had no problem with going along with the events of the Singing Revolution, and he was excited about the outburst of social activism in these times. He had gone to an Estonian school, and he was involved with the heritage protection movement during the perestroika period. Referring to his father, he also clarifies the background of his mother: Leida was working with Estonians and living with Ivan, she could not “bring her work home.” Leida and Ivan came across as a personally close couple despite the different social experiences that they encountered.

Vaida Lodjapuu (b. 1970) and her sister had gone to an Estonian school at their father's insistence, “because we live in Estonia,” but otherwise, the domestic sphere and parental obligations were more on their mother Valentina's shoulders; father Leo was absolutely dedicated to his work. Vaida also thought that her parents were rather close. She experienced the sense of love and mutual respect in her childhood. “Until the moment when my father put his slippers into his brief-case,” she

⁵⁹ Viktor, 1962, nr. 10/24. Andrei Gurjev (b. 1947), on the other hand, has a radically different opinion about the ways that smart people should react. He had a successful party career up to 1991 and converted his social capital into a material one as he started his private business. He is currently a large-scale entrepreneur: “This transformation from red to white appeared to be rather soft. I indeed finished within one day. [---] Instead of Volga I got to buy a SAAB already in a year, and instead of going to a sanatorium to the Black Sea, we went to Spain already in '92 at the time when many people were still counting their rubles [here]. We had the convertible [money]. --- [Uku:] *How is it so that some people are able to make such choices that are like... reasonable and beneficial at the time?* --- Well, apparently, one of the indicators of intelligence is the flexibility and ability to adapt to the changing circumstances. Of course, one can easily slip into some other [problems], but in order to see two-three steps ahead, [to understand that] the things are anyway turning in this direction and that now would be the time to finish with the past and that there can only be a way forward.” (Andrei, 1947, nr. 41/1)

explains, “there were no tensions.”⁶⁰ Leo left the family in 1989. There are two contexts that Vaida refers to when trying to explain his action: the domestic situation in the apartment and the times of the Singing Revolution.

[Vaida:] My sister had a small child and she was waiting for the second birth. She broke her leg during the pregnancy. So she came to us with her two-year-old child, and she herself was with such a big belly and in plaster on the couch. So that, well, all this atmosphere obviously got on my father's nerves. [...] And then I was hanging around and did not get into the university. [...] We did not fit very well into that standard three-room apartment. [...] It was the time when all these things, like, piled up together. [...] This was unacceptable [to him] [*vastuvõetamatu*] that there was some noise and fuss all the time. He wished to be alone and to do his work.⁶¹

But this was already in '89 and in the end there was some national tension. And their separation was, I think, partially due to the times and to these totally different emotional approaches... I think it had to be the fall of '89 or so, there was some speech by Indrek Toome. It [Estonia] was not independent yet, but it started to go in this direction already. And father sat in front of the TV and was crying, and then mother went – and slammed the door demonstratively – and she went to the bedroom to read a book. Well, like [it] was in the air, and it seems that my father went even too much in this direction emotionally, [I think] he could have supported my mother more in all that... And mother was left alone, with all these [social] cogwheels, like... a husband who is there in tears, and a child who is running around at some [public] events all the time. And then you are alone in all that and do not understand what is going on and which position you should take. And all the rest [of your family] are taking the other position. I think it was a terribly difficult time for her.⁶²

“And then all these stories started that, ‘you see, now Estonians regained independence, he does not need you anymore, because you are a Russian. He needed you as a Russian as long as it was useful,’” Vaida recalls the comments that had distressed her mother the most. She cannot really forgive his father when she thinks of the effect her father’s departure had on her mother. But she does not think that her father could have had such mercenary considerations for marriage, she believes

⁶⁰ Vaida, 1970, nr. 61/9; 20.

⁶¹ Vaida, 1970, nr. 61/19-20.

⁶² Vaida, 1970, nr. 61/19. Leo had not gone out to the streets or public events during the Singing Revolution, but “emotionally – he went along immediately with all these Estonian things,” says Vaida also at another moment (1970, nr. 61/10.)

Ljudmila's fears were triggered by “someone saying something,” most probably a Russian colleague at work.⁶³ Ljudmila's personal feelings of inadequacy and “not being good enough” merged with the shared collective anxiety among her Russian peer group. “Estonia got independent and everything totally changed for her,” Vaida comments on her mother's experience.⁶⁴

As for her father, Vaida says that she “will never really know what was going on in his head.” By that time, Leo's illness had progressed to the stage where the doctor's prognosis had been three more years (he lived for seven). “And perhaps mother did not pay enough attention to him, because all her efforts went to taking care of that domestic mess [*selle mansa kantseldamise peale*].”⁶⁵ Leo married an Estonian female colleague but Vaida does not remember whether her father had really warm relations with his new wife.

I heard of only two family break-ups during the Singing Revolution, which were directly or indirectly motivated by the political changes; in both cases, Estonian husbands seemed to “discover” that they were married to a Russian woman, although formerly it had “not mattered.”⁶⁶ However, in other references to divorces, people would explicitly state that these were caused by private and personal misunderstandings between spouses. Regardless of divorces, personal difficulties in family are a very common way to talk about that period. **Marina Toompuu's** (b. 1955) Estonian father did not see the Singing Revolution as he died in 1986. Marina saw the struggles that her mother had to go through after that: “For her, it was of

⁶³ Vaida, 1970, nr. 61/21.

⁶⁴ Vaida, 1970, nr. 61/20.

⁶⁵ Vaida, 1970, nr. 61/20.

⁶⁶ Maria Lender (1950, nr. 42) also said that the political changes and her Estonian husband's attitudes drove them further apart.

course a very hard time. It was the hardest because... because it was also personally very difficult [for her]. Because father had died and she had to adapt.”⁶⁷

The parents of **Ariana Rahumägi** (b. 1972) had separated before the end of the 1980s and she lived with her grandparents and her mother. Ariana refers to her grandfather's health problems in relation to the general sense of insecurity.

These were quite difficult times, and in that sense, we did not really think about that political part. We thought more about how to get by. There was also that inflation and I remember... well, here was no, there was no such bright hope. Rather the other way around. There was such a fear – how to go on. There were even some discussions, I heard that they discussed that... [...] There was such a slogan that like, 'Russians go back to Russia,' 'Go back to Russia' and so on. And I have, for the sake of joking, I have asked my grandmother that 'Grandmother, do we at all have a place where we could go to in Russia?' And she said that there was no such place, that it was all totally burnt down.⁶⁸

Ariana's grandfather was Estonian, but it appears that she and her family were touched by the “negative side” of the Revolution as they identified with the group that could potentially be driven out of the country. During some of the social gatherings on the song festival grounds in Tallinn, Ariana worked there as a kitchen assistant to earn some pocket money, but she did not really participate in the event itself. She says: “I saw the 'kitchen side' of that Singing Revolution.”⁶⁹ During these concrete events she was “there but somewhere else,” which serves also as a metaphor to the fact that she could see how things had been “really” organized and what effects they had.

Some family stories depict some sense of fear: what will happen to their ex-Soviet army fathers? Will they be sent back? Yet there are also references to joyful participation in the Singing Revolution events both by the children and spouses

⁶⁷Marina, 1955, nr. 8/20.

⁶⁸Ariana, 1972, nr. 66/15.

⁶⁹ In Estonian: “*ma nägin selle Laulva revolutsiooni köögipoolt.*” (Ariana, 1972, nr. 66/14.)

together with some relatives or peers. Nevertheless, in the inter-ethnic family, there was rarely a discussion about these events.

* * *

Luule Alekseyeva (b. 1955) followed the Singing Revolution, as she says, from the radio and she was not actively involved. But she remembers her father's joy and she does not mention any specific opposition from her Russian husband and his parents to regaining the Estonian independence. As we talk, Luule pays more attention to the changes that happened a few years later: "Personally, being the wife of a Russian, I think that in Estonia, some things were plain wrong in the 1990s. [...] There was a kind of public direction towards the discrimination of Russians."⁷⁰

Luule gives two examples of the hurtful discrimination that she personally encountered. One is about the closing of some Russian-language vocational schools, which left many young people in a difficult position at the start of their life. The other is about her husband's workplace, where the personnel department conducted psychological placement tests that were manipulated in a way as to enable dismissing Russians.⁷¹ Her husband was dismissed and first found a new job after some years. Luule hesitates while telling me the story – should she give me the names of the people who had organized this procedure? She should not, but obviously she would like to. She becomes very emotional and tells me the names of these prominent businessmen. It seems as if she feels that she should have done something as an Estonian to prevent injustice, but that she could not; she can only tell me these names now. However, I cannot name them here.

⁷⁰ Luule, 1955, nr 20/14.

⁷¹ Luule claims that she knows about the intentionality of the managers from more reliable and neutral sources than from her husband or hearsay.

“On the human level, the relationships had been really different [before] [...], there was no such antipathy between Estonians-Russians. [...] At least not in these circles where I moved,”⁷² says Luule, admitting that the change of atmosphere in the early 1990s came as a shock to her. She was forced to face that she was married to a person who was not Estonian, who did not inherit citizenship and speak the language. She admits that after 32 years of marriage, she might see these things “from a different angle” and that the majority of Estonians “do not think much about it.”⁷³ Their son **Nikolai** (b. 1977) attests that it had been a rather difficult time in the family.

Father was unemployed for several years. [...] There were conflicts in the family. [...] I also remember that father had some drinks and came home and put a record on, very loudly. [...] This of course was a bit traumatising and I did not like it. [...] But father was very liberal in his attitudes to upbringing and he never pushed his views about the world or history on me. [...] We did not talk about it in the family.⁷⁴

The father of **Maris Romel** (b. 1979) hailed from an Estonian-Russian intermarriage in Russia. He spoke Russian but had always been a “rebel,” as Maris says. In her words, he was among the first ones to go to vote for Estonian independence, when there was this referendum in 1991, but then followed “all these feelings of injustice. That everything is just imbued with nationalism and discrimination that comes along with it, and the most disgusting is the fact that it is like hidden and people keep their polite faces. This certainly upsets him a lot.”⁷⁵ Her father also lost his job and had to look for a new one for a long time. The fathers of Maris Romel and Nikolai Alekseyev were born in the 1950s and they belong to the generation of Russian-speakers who had started their working life in the 1970s; the careers of many people of their age were

⁷² Luule, 1955, nr 20/16.

⁷³ Luule, 1955, nr 20/18.

⁷⁴ Nikolai, 1977, nr. 60/21-22.

⁷⁵ Maris, 1979, nr. 32/7-8.

disturbed in the hardest way, they also had no option for retirement to privacy as the people who were 10-15 years older than them.

Marina Toompuu (b. 1955) argues that these times of change were actually comprised of the period when many Russians had come along with the initial ideas of *perestroika* and *glasnost*, but the rise of nationalism and separatism had scared many away soon afterwards.

What initially happened to the National Front movement [in 1988] was a really powerful thing. There were different – I cannot say that from side-to-side – but there were all sorts of ideas about where and how to move on. And when Independence Party and National Front joined together, then the ideas became clearer.⁷⁶ [---]

And then at one moment, it started to unfold... that if you are of that blood, then you are an a priori enemy, and then you have to very strongly, [...] [unconditionally]... then you had to be very radical to still appear as trustworthy.⁷⁷

* * *

Vaida Lodjapuu (b. 1970) does not discuss political matters with her elderly mother. But she adds that her own point of view on how to interpret the Singing Revolution and its aftermath depends largely on the conversational context. Vaida compares the ways in which she discusses political changes with her mother to the discussions with her friend who is a descendant of the Estonian émigré community in Canada.

[Vaida:] We have agreed with my mother that we do not talk about it. We have tried to talk, and I am also a pretty emotional person, and – no – we start to fight. [...] We cannot find this compromise, and we also cannot emotionally deal with this topic in such a peaceful manner. And then we, did we actually agree on it in speaking or not... But with another friend [...] – this is like an example from the other side. One of my very good friends is a foreign-born Estonian, [he was] raised in Toronto, born in Toronto, in this community of émigrés. And he has like a totally different view on Estonia. [...] Let's say that when I communicate with him then I am in my mother's role, so to speak, so that all the time I would say that the Soviet time was not

⁷⁶ Marina, 1955, nr. 8/19-20.

⁷⁷ Marina, 1955, nr. 8/19-20.

that bad and that we were not so repressed here and so forth. And with him we have [openly] agreed that we do not speak about it...

[Uku:] *But shouldn't it be easier with him? I mean that with the foreign-born Estonians it is easier as they lack a 'real experience'...*

[Vaida:] Well, the best example... We were at the Estonian house in Toronto six-seven years ago and we sat at the table and they did not know that I was half-Russian. Then they started to say that its incomprehensible that Russians would not leave from Estonia, get out, so on. Then I asked why don't you leave Canada, that you are also an alien here, that why don't you leave [...] and return to Estonia – no one prevents you [now] from going back to Estonia. – 'But we have families and children.' – I asked whether the Russians do not breed [*ei sigi*] indeed, that they do not have families and children. Well, this capacity of transfer is like 'zero'. Actually, one is exactly the same kind of foreigner, because a Russian is not... not all the Russians who live here are 'occupants.' That Russian is not the one who came here to... That this is just a person who has happened here due to one or the other political pressure, who lives his peaceful life here. But never mind, in short, we agreed on this with my friend,

I do not really remember that I would have agreed with my mother in such a way that 'listen, mother, let's agree that we do not touch upon this topic,' but we just do not talk about it, it is such a silent agreement. [...] Even though my mother's positions slowly change, too. [...] I'd say closer to mine. [...] I mean, our positions are getting closer to each other with the years, I think that we mutually approach each other. However, there is a cleavage, and I do not wish to quarrel with my mother. I have many other things to talk to her about rather than to argue about political matters.⁷⁸

The summer of 1988 was the first of the two summers during the Singing Revolution where many events happened country-wide. This particular summer is also the most memorable one for Vaida as this was the summer after her high-school graduation.

In 1988, I graduated from high-school, which means that I was in this most splendid age. I'd say I was like a grown-up person – there were quite many things allowed to me. [---] And then there was the Singing Revolution and our entire group, classmates who we were friends with, we went to all these parties and sang all these national songs. We went to all these events, to Tallinn to this huge night concert and... [---] I did not even get into the university because of that. Nobody from our gang [got in], because we did

⁷⁸ Vaida, 1970, nr. 61/24. Contextual ethnic and topical identification is discussed further in Chapter 5, among the others. The Estonian independence movement in 1989-91 had two institutional pillars: one was the National Front movement that was based on local Estonian intelligentsia and former "Estonian-minded" part of the Communist Party; the other was the Estonian Congress that gathered around younger people, some dissidents and representatives of the émigré community. After the proper restoration of the republic in 1992, the government became more dominated by the Estonian Congress.

not have any time to study. [...] I think we all flunked the entrance exams. [---] And yes, the boys [were threatened by the army] and they did go. [---] I think they were released after serving half of their time, in 1990 or so. They did not stay [in the army] for two years. [---] But it was just *fun* to be together [...] and if you are offered free concerts everywhere, that 'go where you wish,' then you go, right? And it was so great to sing all these songs and of course all the tears were flowing. But I think that this summer [of 1988], everyone in Estonia held such a spirit, it was like in the air, all that.⁷⁹

Vaida's memory of the summer of 1988 is another example of entrance to the world of adults through peer group connections. In her case, the activities with schoolmates and the public events offered a connection with the former generations of Estonians; they “finalised” her socialisation to the Estonian world. These were special times, as Vaida says, “everyone in Estonia held such a spirit.” However, at this instant, she forgets that a large number of Russians did not hold such a spirit; it was also not held by her own mother whom she much loves and supports up to today. This active mode of reminiscing about the Singing Revolution among Estonians – this time between her and me – leaves little space for considering others who are present as well. This interview also happened between two Estonians; and even as we talked about her mother and her own ethnic identity just before; we talk differently about this “Estonian” topic of Singing Revolution.

Ariana Rahumägi (b. 1972) arrived to study in Tartu in 1989, a summer after Vaida's high school graduation. She studied in the Russian department. In answer to my reverence to the “eventful” public life, she says that all the major events were taken part by the “Estonian... Estonian-speaking students. [...] In Russian philology, it was all, totally... Russian students and teachers and so on. Well, and [...] my course mates did not... not even a little, I mean not at all, they did not participate in these things at all.”⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Vaida, 1970, nr. 61/18-19.

⁸⁰ Ariana, 1972, nr. 66/17.

Lena Poska (b. 1953) grew up and lives in Tartu like Vaida. She worked, and still works, in a largely Estonian group, but she spoke Russian at home and she had gone to a Russian school. When I ask about her emotions at the time, Lena gets more expansive after some contemplation and arrives at a concrete example which demonstrates that she did in fact follow the events at the time – at least she followed the news and some public debates. Her initial reluctance to speak about her participation seems to hint that she is not inclined to talk about these times with me, an Estonian whose attitude to the Singing Revolution she presumes to know well.

[Lena:] Of course, the people who had probably suffered, who had been repressed at previous times, were in high spirit. [...] For them, it was obviously a joy and I remember seeing that, alright. What did NK [one of the national leaders] say? She said that we would be rather poor, but free. And what were we ready to eat, [if need be]? Potato peels, right. – You see, I do remember something. – [...] [But] I should tell you right away that I was indifferent. I could not understand these people.⁸¹

These people who were ready to suffer for some abstract “freedom,” to whom this idea had been transmitted through generations, were another kind of people, and Lena could not understand them. She is detached from national pathos and has some sense of irony towards it.

Lidia Sander (b. 1956) says that she did not participate in the concrete events of the Singing Revolution, but she was certainly aware of its developments. “This all somehow relatively passed me by. But of course I saw it.”⁸² She connects her rather passive stance with her “Russian father,” but his influence on her remains ambiguous and she may be returning to him in the interview also because we had already talked about her family relations several times by that time. She also returns to

⁸¹ Lena, 1953, nr 89/14. The same is recalled by her daughter Sonia (1976, nr 71/23): “I frankly confess that all these feelings there, that the flag was returned, and maybe even that the culture was returned, and the real Estonia was returned – well for me these feelings – I would not say that I do not care, this is yet a Republic, independent – but these [feelings] were not so sharp.”

⁸² Lidia, 1956. nr. 86/32.

an example of how some crucial events of the late 1980s had somehow run parallel to her.

As I had a Russian father, then to some extent perhaps this... But I am not saying that I felt that this is none of my business, I am not saying quite that, this is not correct either. But somehow, it all came together in such a manner that I didn't [participate]. And even at that moment when people were called to Toompea hill for help, I was in the bathroom and did the laundry.⁸³ [---]

And suddenly the doorbell rings. My father-in-law rushes in that 'what are you doing here?' – 'I am doing the laundry.' – 'What are you sleeping here? Look at what is happening out there!' But I say that 'you know, Richard, you have gone mad. Why should I go there, I have to do the laundry, the children need it.'⁸⁴

When I ask **Marina Toompuu** (b. 1955) if the national events in the late 1980s had reached her personally, she says that they did. However, she adds that “if anyone had asked me in 89, or even in 87-88, whether 'you are supporting this?' or whether 'you are totally supporting this,' then I am not sure... I was not mentally ready to think about it in such a sweeping [way].” Marina also contemplates about the fact that it is hard for her to think back into that period (“maybe I am rationalising again”); she asserts that today, people would be expected to have gone along, but that at the time, there were many options, because the future was fuzzy. Personally, she would have not envisioned Estonia's independence (“but now the interpretation is different”).⁸⁵

The children from inter-marriages who were born in the 1950-60s were young adults at the time of radical political changes and sometimes they were pressed by Estonians to “choose a side” – “are you with us or are you with them?” It was much easier for people who had gone to Estonian schools to go along with the changed circumstances than for people with the Russian schooling experience.⁸⁶ Most

⁸³ Lidia, 1956, nr. 86/32.

⁸⁴ Lidia, 1956, nr. 86/28

⁸⁵ Marina, 1955, nr. 8/19-20.

⁸⁶ More on the influence of schooling language on the children from intermarriages, see: Chapter 5.5.

often, the latter depict the era of the Singing Revolution as a difficult and private one – the time of *non-ethnic* family struggles. This “silenced” pattern of remembrance of the Singing Revolution is clearly in a dialogue with the hegemonic Estonian frames of remembering, which are not shared by everyone within the Estonian world today. Stressing the private aspects of that very public time acts as a mild counter-narrative as it hints at political ambiguities involved. This silence is a step closer to understanding how regaining of independence was experienced in very diverse manners in the Russian world in Estonia depending on people's individual abilities to adapt to capitalism.

Whereas the children from intermarriages who were adults by the late 1980s relate to the social changes, many younger people have no references to that period. “There was just no time [...] we had so much to do in the countryside, so that none of us took part in this 'Baltic chain' or anything, [...] we had other things to do,”⁸⁷ says **Vera Laiküla** (b. 1979), who was busy at her father's farm producing groceries for sale at the market and expanding their small-scale food production.⁸⁸ In comparison to the lack of domestic discussions and emotive references, children remember more about the structural changes that intruded into their everyday life, such as the currency reform in summer 1992. However, in general **Marko Kits** (b. 1984) remarks aptly that “well, I guess it did not really raise much emotions, otherwise I would remember more of it.”⁸⁹ **Inga Ventsel*** (b. 1984) was born in Tallinn to a Russian mother and Estonian

⁸⁷ Vera, 1979, nr. 22/3.

⁸⁸ This is echoed by Vera's father Jüri's (b. 1949) references to their family's material reoccupations at the time: “[In Socialism] salaries were non-existent then and when we needed something, then always [bought] out of this [extra] income. [Monthly] salary was 100 rubles; we earned 6000 there with one summer. And we could indeed buy stuff. A 'Lada' car cost 6500 [rubles], I bought it. [...] Then, it was easy to realize small-scale production as the shops bought it all up.” (Jüri, 1949, nr 20/4-6.)

⁸⁹ Marko, 1984, nr. 70/11.

father, she went to an Estonian school and she compares her experiences with the ones of her peers:

[Inga:] If this was talked about, then in such a way that we could not hear it. All that Singing Revolution [...], which actually happened like during my lifetime – I have learned about it as if it happened somewhere totally elsewhere. I have read about it, I have looked for more information by myself, but I do not have personal memories about it. The others have, like, 'we went to participate in the 'Baltic Chain" and so on. At that point, I have a feeling as if I had been on some other planet at the same time.⁹⁰

Sergei Kormakov (b. 1983), on the other hand, went to a Russian school in Tartu; he had an Estonian mother and a Russian father. He is rather defensive about the lack of involvement in and memories of the Singing Revolution. He refers to the need to follow everyday routines and discipline and it seems that from attending the Russian school, even in the Estonian-dominated Tartu, he did not get the feeling of “having missed out on something.”

[Sergei:] It was more important that a child would go to school and, so to say, would do the homework, and what's the point to start telling a 7-8-9-year-old kid what the Communist Party is, what the National Front is, what the International Front is, and so on?⁹¹

In general, while most of the children from intermarriages feel like “guests” to the Estonian nation, they have heard stories from their friends and learned history, but it is harder to “learn” the emotional ties to ethnicity. They are mostly active today in the Estonian world and they are aware of “gaps” in their knowledge. However, as they were children at the time, they rarely need to justify the lack of that emotion to the others. It could be said that they identify with the Estonian cultural world but much less with the Estonian ethnic culture. For example, the Estonian national song festival takes place every five years continuously since the 1870es; it also took place

⁹⁰ Inga, 1984, nr. 16/18.

⁹¹ Sergei, 1981. nr. 54/14-15.

throughout socialism with strong connotations of national togetherness; it was on the song festival grounds where people gathered for several events during the Singing Revolution. Children of intermarriages use song festivals often as an example of a “different feeling” about that event; a feeling that does not seem quite right to them.

As examples, we can turn to **Oleg Kisslejov** (b. 1983) and **Anna Lauris*** (b. 1983):⁹²

[Oleg:] The Song Festival is a great event for the Estonians. [...] Unfortunately, I have not had that *wow*-feeling, that huge patriotism, that I go now and... Well, I have been there too. But I am more in the role of a listener there... That I do not have this, that there is not such feeling that now I go along with all these people together. [...] It could be a powerful feeling...⁹³

[Anna:] I went to the Night Song Festival last year, and to the Song Festival this year. I was more like... that I looked at it from aside. I do not have that real feeling that yes, [this is] my land and my people and now I sing along with all of them. It is rather that I observe that really magnificent [event]. Very impressive.⁹⁴

⁹² Oleg, who went to an Estonian school and Anna, who switched from a Russian to an Estonian school at the age of 14.

⁹³ Oleg, 1983, nr. 23.

⁹⁴ Anna, 1983, nr. 17/10-11.

Chapter 4. Familial bonds, relations, networks

4.1. Introduction

From the macro-perspective, a family is the nucleus of social reproduction and the primary environment for the socialization of children; for the people within a family, it is the private space in the sense that it is not shared openly with the world, on the other hand, it is strongly inter-connected with other realms of life. In the Soviet circumstances and also today, family was indeed the place where one could express sentiments that were publicly not acceptable.¹

In the current chapter, I will discuss two different aspects with regard to cultural identifications with Estonian and Russian worlds in the intermarriage situation. This discussion is solely based on oral histories as its topical composition was born directly out of the concerns that were shared in the interviews.

First, I will consider the families as units at the borders of which the personal identifications with cultural worlds were strongly experienced and reflected upon. This was primarily the case with entering into a marriage and settling down in Estonia. Estonian inter-generational family ties appear rather weak as children did not feel tied to “family obligations” when marrying and family members had few chances

¹ The interviews, however, place family life into societal frames in much more interconnected ways than through the private-public dichotomy which mostly been the case up to now. For former studies about public-private divide see: Marc Garcelon, “The Shadow of Leviathan: Public and Private in Communist and Post-Communist Society,” in: *Public and Private in Thought and Practice: Perspectives on Grand Dichotomy*, ed. by Jeff Alan Weintraub and Krishan Kumar (University of Chicago Press, 1997); Oleg Kharkhordin, “Reveal and Dissimulate: A Genealogy of Private Life in Soviet Russia,” in: *Public and Private in Thought and Practice*, 333-363. For more sociological and theoretical debates, see: Berardo, Felix. “Family Privacy: Issues and Concepts.” *Journal of Family Issues* 19 (1998). For a discussion on the intersection of “private” and “public” in soviet workplace, see: Jõesalu and Kõresaar, “Working Through Mature Socialism: Private and Public in the Life Story of an Estonian Industry Manager.”

to intervene in marriage decisions (except for a few cases where the young couples had to live with the parents-in-law due to the living space shortage).² However, the “Estonian local” mothers-in-law were often opposed to their “Russian newcomer” daughters-in-law and they expressed that dissatisfaction quite openly. Female spouses were “Othered” using historical and ethnicized tropes which linked the newcomer culturally to the violent presence of the Russian world in Estonia. Even though such conflicts were also caused by gendered struggles over the influence in family affairs, their ethnicized element comes to the fore in comparison to the Russian side of inter-marriages where there was much less animosity against the Estonian spouses (be the family members living in Russia or in Estonia).

This situation also indicates the low status of Russians in the Estonian world. On the other hand, opinions in the Russian world appear much more fractured with regard to Estonians. In general, marriages with Estonians were regarded as neutral, but among members of the local military personnel, it was possible to notice a considerably stronger sense of high status, leading to situations in which wives of army officers as mothers-in-law meddled with the marriages of their children quite extensively.

In the second part of the chapter, I will look at internal communications and dynamics in the family. I will show that references to gendered family roles appear much more prevalently than references to the division and conflict between Russian and Estonian worlds. Fathers come across as distant figures in the family who participated little in household activities and did not invest much into taking care of their children – this pattern was reported regardless of ethnic references. By the same

² This conclusion comes with a caveat that I studied mostly inter-personal relationships which led to marriages that have normally not been divorced.

token, women were slightly more decisive in passing their references to the cultural worlds on to their children as they took more long-term responsibilities in taking care of children; however, fathers would sometimes interfere with decisions that were based on authority and did not need many follow-up efforts.

References to social conflict between the Russian and Estonian worlds were triggered in everyday family life as amplifiers at times of marital discord and had initially little to do with cultural conflict. This general absence of ethnic conflicts continued throughout the Singing Revolution and it could be said that the general dynamics in family life changed slowly in response to social changes. However, there were some spouses who identified strongly with ongoing changes – mostly with the Estonian nationalizing process – and had apparent difficulties with finding a new balance between new social circumstances and family life. This was the case with some Estonian men who left their families, but even in this outcome, it was a mixture of social change and pre-existent marital discord.

4.2. Family borders and the other world: “meet your mother-in-law”

Ariana Rahumägi* (b. 1972) descends the generations of “mixed” marriages. Her mother’s father was an Estonian who married a Russian woman already during the WWII. Ariana's father was from the Russian military officer’s family. Ariana tells me the following story, prepared, as an opening to the interview. It is about meeting her Estonian great grandmother in an Estonian village near Tallinn, in 1976.

I was four years old, it was my first and last meeting with my great grandmother, the mother of my grandfather. [---] My mother had tried to teach me so that, well, that I understood Estonian. [...] At the age of three I already knew what is, like, 'bread' or 'shop' or 'damn ass'; well, children learn very fast these things like... 'damn shit.' [...] So, I remember that [my

mother] taught me that go and say 'hi' and then, maybe, try to kiss her [my great grandmother] or something. And then I went there and I said 'hello, grandmother!' I approached her, and I remember very well what she replied: 'Take away that Russian shit.' [...] And then, somehow smoothly, my mother took me away and nothing else happened. Well, my grandfather's brothers [that woman's sons], [...] they treated me and my mum very well. Therefore, it did not leave such... so bad impression. This is the only thing that I remember of my great grandmother. Pretty soon after that she died, and I did not see her more.³

For Ariana, the great grandmothers' somewhat mythical figure represents authority and power, whereas, on the other hand, it transpires that it was an old peasant woman – who just could not forgive that her husband had been murdered by the communists in 1940. She had not accepted her son's Russian wife at her home for thirty years. That the communists had killed her husband made her son's marriage to a Russian woman a betrayal.

After finishing their studies in Leningrad in 1955, **Heldur Keerpuu** (b. 1928) and **Galja Keerpuu** (b.1930) returned to Nõmme, to the suburb of Tallinn with private housing in the pine forest. (The neighbourhood started as a district of summer-cottages; by the 1930s it had developed more permanent housing, as well, accommodating villas of the rich, middle-class houses, summer huts, some apartment buildings.) Heldur came from a private house in this neighbourhood, but from rather poor conditions. His mother had had 6 years of education and was losing her hearing; his father had left the family for another woman when Heldur was 12. Mother's brother had been a major-general in the Estonian army (killed in Siberia in 1942) but due to his high social status he had not been close with his sister.

When sending Heldur off to Russia to study, his mother had strongly advised him “not to bring home a Russian wife,” but when I ask if coming to Estonia had not

³ Ariana, 1972, nr. 66/1.

been easy, especially for his wife, Heldur replies that he “cannot say that.” “Of course, it was so that my parents would have wanted that there be an Estonian wife. [But] I have been for the foreign women all the way from the beginning.”⁴ As the situation had already turned towards a marriage in Leningrad, the future Estonian mother-in-law had offered to pay for abortion (newly legalised, it was not however for free). As their daughter **Mari** (b. 1955) is telling this story, she mentions that before her “there should have been another child. [---] So [my mother] decided to return to Leningrad but to keep me.” Heldur, however, convinced Galja to return to Estonia. In contrast to her father, Mari says that “it is a painful topic, as much as my mother has told me she suffered from it quite a lot. But as my grandmother’s brother had just been killed, then this feeling against the Russians. [---] Father had no [issues], father just did not let her leave...”⁵

Galja moved in with her mother-in-law. But in Nõmme there are such “very Estonian people there, from the Estonian times, from the old times... They do not accept Russians just like that,” would reflect their granddaughter. It somehow went in this way that their immediate neighbours (in a separate house but with a common yard) “were just quite... terrorising her.”⁶ Galja who had lost her family in the blockade and had always valued privacy kept to her self. Heldur was more of a social person, and as Helen says, “he has always liked the women, too.” In the 1980-90s Galja developed schizophrenia, by then she would communicate only with very few people.⁷

⁴ Heldur, 1928, nr. 21/3. “My first sympathy was, mother was Russian and father was Estonian, other sympathy was... father was Russian and mother was Polish.” I insist: “*But your mother did not come to terms with it?* --- No, mother was against. --- *Was it more from your mother’s or wife’s side?* --- Both. It is rarely that mother-in-laws get well along with them.”

⁵ Mari, 1955, nr. 12/4.

⁶ Helen, 1981, nr. 5/3.

⁷ I did not learn these details in the interview with Heldur. But his daughter Mari and granddaughter Helen were more open about it.

In this unfortunate beginnings a life of muted non-belonging finds its medicalized outcome; and the whole situation becomes layered with a diagnose of abnormality and social stigma of mental illness. It is hard to know if Galja would have enjoyed a life in Leningrad more than she did in Nõmme. Her relations with Heldur's mother turned for better over time, but then again, the mean neighbours remained and her illness got worse during the Singing Revolution. After her mother-in-law's death, the house in Nõmme had become for Galja a fortress that she did not want to leave and a prison that she could not want to leave.

To what extent are the problems between young couples and mother-in-laws due to ethnicity and how much is it a question of more universal kinship patterns? The former and following examples showcase the classical tension between the husband's mother and the wife. This tension in kinship relations is traceable back to the origins of a patriarchal familial order in which the bride leaves her father's home and moves to the husband's family wherein the domestic life is dominated by husband's mother.

The Soviet family discourse advocated women's responsibility for the domesticity and the World War II had created a structural lack of men. Therefore, while men were continuously seen as symbolic heads of the family, domestic power was consolidated by women.⁸ In most cases of this study there appears a combination of both: the specificity of inter-marriage amplifies a strife in a family situation that was rather tense already before, it acts like a catalyst.

In the previous cases, the mother's attitudes prior to and during the marriage remained unchanged and the arriving daughter-in-law was perceived as the intruding

⁸ Helene Carlbäck, "Lone Motherhood in Soviet Russia in the Mid-20th Century – in a European Context," in *And They Lived Happily Ever After*, 25-46; and Elene Zhidkova, "Family Divorce, and Comrade's Courts: Soviet Family and Public Organizations During the Thaw," in *And They Lived Happily Ever After*, 47-64.

ethnic other. Ariana's great-grandmother places her Russian daughter-in-law in the same group with the communist killers of her husband. (The newly-weds were not taken to live in her house as her son was expelled as a “traitor.”⁹) The best solution for daughter- and mother-in-law coexistence is normally considered to be to live separately, but in this case the great-grandmother would stick to her initial views at least partially due to keeping the distance and refusing to learn to know her daughter-in-law better. Heldur Keerpúu's mother's principal reasons were similar – several of her family members had died in the communist repressions – but the tensions remain more subtle. The whole family would live together in Nõmme and familial relations normalized over time, yet, neighbours would continue to target Galja in the fight over the “yard ownership.”

* * *

Most of the reactions of mother-in-laws, however, can be divided into the “before” and “after” the meeting with the daughter-in-law. **Lena Poska** (b. 1953) knows that when her grandmother learned that **Mart** (b. 1932) was going to marry **Daria** (b. 1931) the future mother-in-law “had gone from farm to farm” crying and complaining her misfortune, “about how terrible it was that now there would be a marriage to a Russian.”¹⁰ This was in 1953. Daria confirms the story in her self-confident manner – she frames it as her own initial misfortune of having to live in the Estonian countryside and as her debt and sacrifice to the family: “In the country, at the farm, they had no electricity, no radio, no newspapers, no nothing. [...] Of course, it was a bit terrifying perspective for me to live there...”

⁹ I did not learn more details about that story which could potentially open a more nuanced perspective.

¹⁰ Lena, 1953, nr. 89/5.

When they learned that he was to marry a Russian, it was obviously a tragedy for them. It is understandable, because the witnesses of 1939 were well alive and knew how it had happened. But well – as I understand it – I arrived, I am a Russian woman, and at ours the mentality is somewhat different. I told to his mother right away: 'Mum, Mum.' And afterwards, I was hands-on, helping out with everything: I could sew, I could do it all. And his mother, parents, all his relatives liked me a lot. They liked me a lot.¹¹

Daria's reference to "1939" is to the point and impersonal at the same time. It refers to the loss of Estonian independence. Estonians would perhaps rather say "1940-41" or "the deportations" – but the meaning is clear. She also distinguishes between the ambiguous general mentality of Estonians at the time (comprehensible to her but rooted in the past that she has not experienced) and her own concrete and friendly way of being: "I arrived, I am a Russian woman, and at ours the mentality is somewhat different."

Daria's mixed fortune of living in Estonia with a local man would turn into a "promise" to her mother-in-law. Mart's father had died soon after their marriage and at some point his mother moved in with them in Tartu. Mart's drinking problems got worse, he was generally distant and without much initiative. Considering all the problems in their marriage and a potential divorce, she would say: "I could not have caused her [mother-in-law] the pain – to leave him. Because he was the sole remaining son [of hers] – the other had fallen on the front [on the Soviet side]... to take the child and leave?"¹² Daria's idea is that she sacrificed herself not only to her husband and family – but also to her mother-in-law. But Daria hints also to other problems: she had no where to go back to in Russia.

¹¹ Daria, 1931, nr 95/3. Lena confirms (1953, nr. 89/5): "But when they got acquainted with [my] mother, [...] well, my mother is again a bit different, kind – [...] I guess you will also recognise a difference in temperament – and so, they got a good a good contact pretty fast."

¹² Daria, 1931, nr 95/11.

The initial repulsion against the Russian daughter-in-law and the later care for the ageing mother-in-law is differently connected in the story of **Polina Kesamaa** (b. 1936). After marrying, having a child, and graduating in Leningrad in the late 1950s, husband **Ülo Kesamaa** (b.1933) was allocated to his workplace in Rjabinsk, Russia.

[Polina:] When our older daughter Lea was small, we gave her to my mother-in-law at [the age of] 9.5 months; she was a sick woman and she was overseeing Lea. And this became really like a sort of idol [*kumir*] for her, that there were no better children than Lea. And so it was that Lea lived in Kunda with Ülo's mother, but we lived in Rjabinsk [in Russia]. She took care of her. And, of course, all the time she thought that this marriage wouldn't last and she was very sad when she learned that there will be also a second child, Laura. This was at that time. But in any case, his [Ülo's] sisters, his brother, they treated me very well, they all spoke Russian badly, then, but well, took me very well. His father was such a quiet one, kept silent, but mother, of course, very... With her, I myself was always very good, I am not a scandalizer. I tried and all, but it was simply obvious, that it was a tragedy when she learned that we will have a second child. I mean, this had been for a longer period... Because he [Ülo] had had some options, some Estonian girls. This was a tragedy.¹³

The story reflects some of Polina's fears and insecurities at the time. She did not feel comfortable that Ülo's mother had taken Lea as for an “idol,”¹⁴ while “it already seemed to be in her blood. It was her most beloved son – and suddenly – this son gets married – not to an Estonian.”¹⁵ Ülo had had “other options,” Estonian options, but he had chosen otherwise. Perhaps due to leaving Lea with Ülo's mother, sensing a strong connection between two of them, Polina also developed a more abstract fear of losing her child – a fear that should have been legally ungrounded – had there indeed been a divorce, looking at the court practices, Lea would have stayed with Polina almost for

¹³ Polina, 1936, nr. 92/35.

¹⁴ Grandmother's extensive care was perhaps actually more present in Nikolai Alekseyev's (b. 1977) case. He spent a lot of time at his grand-mother's (Vitali's mother) new apartment in Tallinn (she had remarried to a higher rank officer from Moscow and then they moved together to Tallinn, she left Tartu). To a certain extent perhaps his grandmother also “at the excuse of false illnesses,” kept him at her in Tallinn for longer, “used her acquaintances, networks, doctors who say that the child is ill, cannot come now to Tartu.” (Nikolai, 1977, nr 60/7.)

¹⁵ Polina, 1936, nr. 92/44.

sure. But indeed: Lea was left behind to unknown “Estonia.” Later on, while Ülo was on constant work-related travels and his other siblings somehow did not show up, it was Polina who took care of Ülo's ill mother.

[Polina:] Well, when Ülo’s mother was really ill, in reality I was the one... Ülo was not here, and I took her to the hospital, she was in a very difficult situation, and my friends were carrying her, and she was with us... Then, Ülo’s brother asked how could I... considering how [she] had been... towards me. But this was his mother, I did not have my own mother, this was his mother, and that was what we had to do.¹⁶

* * *

Luule Alekseyev (b. 1955) her marriage to a Russian person “was quite unheard of” amongst the Estonians Tartu in mid-1970ies. However, no negative judgements transpire about Luule’s own parents’ attitudes towards the marriage and towards their new son-in-law. When Luule went back to her native island to introduce Vitali to her family her father had actually been in America [!] visiting his sister. “So my father saw my husband for the first time when we marched in together on Tiigi street [at the Registrar’s Office] and he had said to [my] mother that, 'does not look too bad.'”¹⁷ Luule's father had a humorous attitude and he was of the opinion that children make their own choices. As a man of religion, he was more worried about the lack of religious marriage ceremony than the national belonging of the groom. The groom was welcomed well to the bride's big but distant family without problems that I heard of. Vitali gets along well with Luule’s siblings and parents, he understands Estonian but talks rather in Russian.

Vitali's mother, on the other hand, “had perhaps her own ideas about the proper behaviour of a daughter-in-law,” says **Nikolai** (b. 1977). She would compare

¹⁶ Polina, 1936, nr. 92/36.

¹⁷ Luule, 1955, nr. 53/9.

Luule to a potential Russian daughter-in-law: “not enough humble, cannot cook well.”¹⁸ Their social background status had been very different: Vitali's mother “had grown up as a wife of a military, [...] did not work for a long period, and was such an officer's wife. [...] Their standard of living and status were recognizably higher than mine, I came from the island forests.”¹⁹ Not working or at least not having to work and to be simultaneously in high social status in the USSR – this was indeed the privilege that belonged almost exclusively to the wives of military officers.²⁰ Social status in the current case is a relative matter as the Estonians had a rather ironical attitude towards the officers wives.²¹

Elina (b. 1952) and **Dmitri** (b. 1952) **Nikonov** fell in love at the first sight. In Moscow, Dmitri's mother had right away “liked Elina a lot, so that in general there were no problems. This is where the question is not really a national one – [rather] a good person or not a good person,”²² says Dmitri, while bringing the topic to the level of single personalities outside the realm of ethnic belonging. But Elina says that when she had returned from Moscow and announced that now she has “this big love, a Russian, then, well – I knew my mother's, and in general, my family's, attitude towards the Russians.”

With my mother it was really clear. It was totally, totally out of the question, it was simple. It was very clear-cut, very clear-cut... But she started to like Dima exactly like that, from the first instance. And there was no problem

¹⁸ Nikolai, 1977, nr 60/9.

¹⁹ Luule, 1955, nr. 53/8.

²⁰ On the other hand, she certainly did and does recognize living in Estonia and some “positive moments about the Estonians. They are always punctual, very hard-working.” (Nikolai, 1977, nr. 60/10)

²¹ For a very critical literary treatment of the figure of a Soviet officer's widow (without any ethnic themes), see: Juhan Smuul, *Muhu Monoloogid. Polkovniku lesk ehk Arstid ei tea midagi* (Muhu Monologues. Polkovnik's widow or the doctor's don't know anything) (Tallinn: Eesti Raamat, 1968).

²² Dmitri, 1952, nr. 2/10. At the same time, as for his move to Estonia, he had heard some “typical things”: “Say, at school in which I studied, when they learned that I was going to Estonia, some were like “yeah, oh, wow!” Almost as if it was New York. On the other side, at father's work, there was someone like “What?! Your son, where is he going... Going to these fascists?” Something of the kind there was – the typical, stereotypical things.”

whatsoever. [---] On personal level there was no problem, of course my mother did not really speak almost any Russian. [---] My mother only sighed that [...] one child went to a Lithuanian, other to a Russian, now, well, her son will certainly take a Gypsy now. This was the only comment that she made.²³

That Elina's mother did not speak any Russian as a lawyer is still credible but a bit curious. Her generation (b. 1928) was the one who often had to learn Russian already in their adult life and her world in Tartu was dominated by Estonian. But her liking of Dima was as instantaneous as had also been Elina's. (When Dmitri arrived to Tallinn his contacts to Russia got much looser. Since then he has visited Russia very rarely, he understands but does not speak in Estonian language.) Anyway, at the time when Elina started to see Dima, her younger sister had indeed just decided to marry a Lithuanian, this is vividly told to me by Elina's and Dima's daughter **Lea** (b. 1987) who was born around ten years later after the event:

Then one of her younger sisters got eighteen, ran away from home, phoned from Lithuania, that 'I'm gonna get married now' – he married a... Lithuanian writer. Everyone was like, err.. err.. that, what!? Got pregnant right away, returned home, *alright, chill*. [---] They were like here and there [...] and then they escaped to America. [---] And when that child was born, with that Lithuanian – this guy was such an awkward type actually – then comes [my] mother and says that now I am going to marry a Russian. And then [my] aunt had been exactly like 'what the heck, now some Russian,' and so on. Well, she had just given birth, her psyche, hormones were raging. And then my grandmother was just that 'whatever... you married a... Lithuanian!' [laughs], and so it was decided, and everyone was quite [okay]...²⁴

The generally negative attitudes towards the Russians persisted in Estonia throughout the Soviet era – the tales of initial shock and discontent of the Estonian family members. In the later communication, on the personal-level, some adaptation and resolution is normally found. Ülo's mother had accepted Polina, but “it remained in her blood.” Daria turned her ethnic identity around to her own benefit, to her

²³ Elina, 1952, nr. 1/10.

²⁴ Lea, 1987, nr. 9/4.

individual capacity to integrate: she arrived, she “is a Russian woman, and such an active one...”

Most commonly the single human being and the larger societal ethnic group references are separated from one another, a single case is taken out and beyond the general ethnic reference. By accepting the daughter-in-law (or son-in-law) to the family she or he is let to the group of “us.” A single case is separated from the generalisation: the accepted one is a “good” and “normal” person. However, should the new family member not be to the liking of the receiving group, then the temporarily suspended ethnic generalisations can be readily re-activated.

* * *

Tiiu Meripuu's (b. 1978) father descended from a local, Estonian family in Eastern Estonia. Her mother's was a “totally Soviet family, spoke Russian” – but her mother's mother had been actually an Estonian – from Russia. Her mother's parents had moved to Estonia after WWII and met as they worked in the same factory, “Tets,” which dealt with processing oil shale – in Eastern Estonia'n working class town of Kohtla-Järve. Tiiu's parents married in the mid-1970ies.

When her mother met her father, “and when they started to date – as it is called now – then my [Russian] grandfather went totally nuts. Because, like my mother has told 'you found yourself some kind of *an Estonian*. Some kind of *an Estonian?! An Estonian was totally the second rank.*”²⁵ In a way, Tiiu's grandfather's fears were met: the family turned towards the Estonian world, their home was bilingual, and Tiiu and her siblings went to Estonian schools. In Eastern-Estonia, that kind of a tendency was rather exceptional – the majority of population was Russian-speaking and that language tended to dominate also in intermarriages. But telling that

²⁵ Tiiu, 1978, nr. 36/6. Tiiu puts a lot of pejorative emphasis on that word.

story does another work today, too: it confirms grand-father's loss of social standing, what he had considered “second rate” had turned into “first rate.” But the familial battles over social issues continue.

[Tiiu:] I am 31, and our familial gatherings, where grandmother-grandfather are also present, these end with a quarrel every time. Because grandfather solely tells about how stupid is the Estonian state, how stupid is the Estonian government, and how nice and smart and beautiful is Russia, Russian government, and so on. This is so funny, you know why? Because grandfather's father [...] was sent to Siberia. Sent, deported [...] how is it called, *razkulakovali*, was dekulakized. Was dekulakized, everything was taken away from him and was sent to dig the Belamor canal.²⁶

[Uku:] *But did he realise that it is not quite the real Russia here?*

[Tiiu:] Well, this is a very interesting question, do they really understand that this is not really Russia. Even now, do they understand it?²⁷

Negative attitudes towards the Estonian children-in-law are not expressed often. This has to do with the widespread understanding that his is “still Estonia,” that there are native locals who also have a right to live there among the Russian-speakers. Tiiu's grandfather, however, demonstrates an alternative, he mostly attests to a growing confidence about one's presence among the working-class inhabitants in the Russian-dominated Eastern Estonia.

Zinaida Laas's (b. 1949) strong ethnic interpretative frames for “Estonians” work also in the case of her mother-in-law Mari. Zinaida depicts Estonians generally as “dirty and hungry”, but also “stingy, envious, spiteful”, and somehow weaker in character: “I do not know a single Estonian woman who has been married only once.”²⁸ And Zinaida knows many Estonians as she has lived all her life among them – “so, take it or leave it.”²⁹ All her life she has cleaned after and fed some Estonians. First, it was her step-father's parental home which she cleaned regularly with her

²⁶ It is not clear if Tiiu's great-grandfather was then sent to Siberia to the Belamor canal.

²⁷ Tiiu, 1978, nr. 36/6.

²⁸ Zinaida, 1949, nr. 77/11.

²⁹ Zinaida, 1949, nr. 77/10-11.

Russian mother. From her teenage years she remembers a dirty Estonian family who lived upstairs and whom she helped as they lived in a block in Kohtla-Järve,³⁰ and then came already husband Vambola's maternal home.

And when I married, I scoured so much... Well, every Friday we drove to the country. [---] This was a *kadr* [special cadre] for me. And on Monday morning at five we started to drive back. I would have time to take a bath, and to wash myself up. I washed her [mother-in-law's] laundry, well, everything, everything, yeah absolutely. [---] The children knew that she was a slutty woman [*lits naine*] – You got it, right? – But I said that there is no such issue there. 'You have only one mother, the ones like me there could be hundreds.'³¹

This is what Zina had told to Vambola and thereby she seems to have turned her negative generalizations about the Estonians into a duty. When I ask if it was because Vambola's mother had been also “stingy and spiteful,” she says that not at all: “[Mari] told me: 'Hey, take the money from the drawer, as much as you wish.' [---] She was a pig attendant, and was on the board of honours [*autahvilil*], and was very hard-working.”³² Indeed, they got along well, and Zina's children spent also a lot of time at the grandmother's in the countryside. Mari had actually preferred Zina and her children to the other relatives to the point of embarrassment:

I was the only person that she... she really really cares for me [*õudsalt hoiab*]. 'Oh, my dear daughter is coming...' – She has [her] daughter's children and [her other] son's children, too. – Once we sat all together at the Christmas time, and she said in front of everyone, also the other children, that 'my children, Andres and Maarja.' [...] I felt so bad, that how can you say that in front of the others. 'My children.' The moral!³³

³⁰ Zinaida, 1949, nr. 77/14: “Upstairs there lived one woman, Meeri, she had three girls. Oh well, gosh... They went to a wedding or to a party, [and] asked me to keep an eye on the girls. [...] My God, before I could fall a sleep [there], I had to scrub, to brush, it was such a shit-house there. Honestly...”

³¹ Zinaida 1949, nr. 77/14.

³² Zinaida 1949, nr. 77/14.

³³ Zinaida, 1949, nr. 77/23. In Estonian, the mother-in-law had said: “*Oi, minu väike minias tuleb!*”

What is this moral about? The moral seems to be that you have to take care and arrange your duties. The mother-in-law stories are actually more about the daughter-in-laws – they represent their voices and concerns. The same was the case with Daria Poska and Polina Kesamaa, this is the more general case with the “Russian daughter-in-law.” It is a way to work for and to confirm one's position in the family. Daughters-in-law would have done their duty, but they would also have regenerated their central familial role by becoming the most important family figures for the next generation. This strategy is most apparent with the working class women in gaining position and capital in the family in my study. People with middle-class backgrounds would expect more equal treatment and involvement in everyday work from the other family members; among the Estonian women this tendency is also not so pronounced.

* * *

The older generation of Estonians who had been born in the 1920s did not often speak Russian. For example, this was the case with Lidia Poska's grandmother who was born in Russia in an Estonian village but did not speak Russian. When Lidia's father **Grigori** (b. 1925) proposed to **Valve** (b. 1925), then he had also asked for his future mother-in-law's postal address. Lidia says that

[my father] wrote her [my grandmother] a letter in which he officially asked for the hand of her daughter, as the latter had no father, only the mother. I asked from my grandmother: 'How did you understand what he wrote?' She said: 'Well, I found one who knew the language, that person read it to me and told what was wanted and then I wrote a reply in Estonian, and that's all.' Then my mother had read this letter up to my father. And then they married. He was such a well behaved person [...] why not to marry such a man! I guess mother had no prejudices about the Russians – I cannot explain it otherwise.³⁴

³⁴ Lidia, 1956, nr. 86/10-11.

This was in 1950. And the marriage proposal symbolises an exercise in communication and mutual respect.³⁵ However, eventually, Valve's mother and Grigori would never have a common language as one spoke in Estonian and the other in Russian. Lack of common language was also the case with the mothers of **Toivo Kõlar** (b. 1943) and **Olga Kõlar** (b. 1948) in the late 1970ies. Toivo's mother (b. 1910) did not speak Russian and this had caused her problems both on the street and with the initial communication with Toivo's wife, but Olga herself learned Estonian fast. In his descriptions of Tallinn in changing times, Toivo referred a few times to the stereotypical images of the recently arrived older women.³⁶ His mother-in-law moved

³⁵ There are certainly thousands of similar inter-linguistic communications in history. A case in point could be perhaps one. In 2012, Jaan Kross's letter to Juri Lotman and Lotman's reply to Kross were published. Jaan Kross (1920-2007) was the most heralded Estonian writer of the 2nd half of the 20th century. In 1982 he wrote a letter to Lotman in which he asked for his "sketch, specification, or even definition of historical novel," which he, Kross wished to present at the forthcoming conference in Tampere, Finland. Kross wrote in Estonian: "Dear Professor, Forgive me that I turn to you with a letter in Estonian, to avoid linguistic mistakes. If you bother to reply, please do it for ease of course in Russian. My problems is this. At a sooner time, I have to talk at the University of Tampere about the historical novel in Estonia. Of course it will not be a talk by a theoretician, but only by a practitioner of that literary genre. However, I would gladly like to even shortly introduce your sketch, specification, or even definition of the historical novel. I imagine, it will not occupy you for more than ten minutes: to put the formulation on paper (with perhaps a short orientating commentary) and send it to me by mail. Thankfully and with heartily greetings to your wife. Jaan Kross." His later is dated In Tallinn, 22 Sept. 1982. Lotman's reply is dated with 9 Oct. 1982 and starts with the following: "Deeply honoured Jaan Kross! I am replying with some delay and not only because I have been extraordinarily occupied in the last days, but also because your letter made me think about the questions which for some reason have not captured my attention previously. I am very thankful to you already because of that. When to shortly summarize what I could tell about the heart of your questions, it would be something of the following..." (Source: Mikhail Trunin, "Juri Lotmani kiri Jaan Krossile ajaloolise romaani päritolust ja mõningates erijookest," *Vikerkaar* No. 9 (2012): 45-55.) // Jaan Kross came from the rather modest middle-class background, he was an active and involved student already prior to WWII. He was shortly arrested by the occupying Germans in 1944, in 1946 he was arrested by the NKVD. He returned from Siberia in 1954. By the late 1950s he had already become an authority in a "free verse debate" in which he was certainly on the progressive side. In the 1970s he published his historical novels which brought him fame and recognition (the novels has always some Estonian theme, some ethnic Estonian at the centre). His later works in the 1980s and 1990s spoke for the whole of his generation – especially, the *Wikman's Boys* (1988) – a fictional destiny of his gymnasium class of 1938. Jaan Kross represented the tragedy of the loss of Estonian independence and the idea of intellectual survival. Since the 1960s, he was allowed to have several, even long lasting, travels to the West, with Finland and some other countries he developed rather close relations. Ironically, Lotman's travels were much more restricted; and some of his students had turned (later) into outright dissidents. // Kross expected that Lotman should somehow make it through his letter. Today we know that Lotman he did not speak Estonian and, logically, he had to have the letter translated. With that polite gesture of asking Lotman's ideas – and we do not need to have any doubt about Kross's respect to Lotman's scholarship – the Estonian writer also made another point...

³⁶ See the beginning of the Chapter 2 for details.

to Tallinn in 1978 and had appeared to him quite similar: “she was a typical Russian *baba*, [...] who also had a shitty character.”³⁷ On the other hand, it is part of this “quite an exorbitant story,” as Toivo says while changing his tone:

Olga's mother. Typical grumpy Russian *baba* [*torisev vene mutt*]. [...] She arrived here... we had to... [Olga's] father had had a stroke, we moved [house] for them to move to Tallinn, it was quite complicated, anyhow, we had to help the old man. And right away, [she] went to the language courses, this *baba*, momentarily. There could have been ten people there at the time [at the language courses] – it was around 1978, well, total Russification was going on. [Laughs]. The *baba* went to the language course and, oh yeah, it was all very painful, the kitchen was covered with these labels. But in the end, she got a job at some hospital as a receptionist where she, through difficulties, could also get along in Estonian. I was a relatively late father, I was 42 when my daughter was born, she was still able to reprimand her in Estonian. This is a pretty funny story, but otherwise – she had a shitty character, a real mediocre grumpy Russian mother-in-law. But these things were totally in the right place – that she is on a foreign land, got to learn. This, of course, was very exceptional.³⁸

It might have been generally exceptional but it fit normally and logically into Olga's and Toivo's shared world. She was the mother of Olga, who said that she “had emigrated” from Leningrad. Olga's direct influence on her mother is not clear here – as well her mother's influence on Olga's in her youth – and some crucial details might be also added by Toivo later. But at that time in the late 1970ies Olga started the article series in the Russian press about the lack of classes of Estonian in the Russian schools. Toivo's words remind of the obvious – Olga's mother had looked like a “typical grumpy Russian *baba*” to the people on the trolley bus who did not know more of her. These women whom Toivo had the conflict with on the trolley are anonymous, as for Olga's mother, it is known that she had not been in Leningrad during the blockade but her father had been in the Gulag for 20 years.

* * *

³⁷ Toivo, 1943, nr. 30/3.

³⁸ Toivo, 1943, nr. 30/3.

When I talk with **Aive Sander** (b. 1978) about the marriage of her parents Lidia and Sergei, she says that they had right away moved to Lidia's parents (Grigori and Valve): “They did not even consider the other option.” It appears that for registering the marriage it had been really difficult for Sergei to get his passport – his mother Aleksandra had not given it to him. A bit puzzled, I ask again: “The mother just kept the passport in her hand?” Aive: “Yes, exactly, that's right!”³⁹ But later, when it had become clear that the wedding will happen, then Aleksandra “went as far as to organise their party. That the wedding party took place and everything was arranged. But initially, right, I understand that it was a very difficult story, well, grandmother was over-managing [*võimukas*].”⁴⁰ Aleksandra's fitting “mother-in-law character” is confirmed in several parts of the narrative: she also did not get along well with her son, and had tense relations with her husband. “Their family life was much more edgy, and when people do not have a good attitude towards each other, then they look for whatever reasons to fight. She was such a conflictual person in general, did not get along with many people.” Worth of mention, however, are the episodes which could be titled as “fights over children.”⁴¹

[Lidia Sander:] When I gave birth to my child [Aive] and she started to talk in Estonian with them, then I was told that 'shouldn't she first learn Russian and then be taught Estonian?' I told her [Aleksandra] that I had grown up in a family where I was spoken to in two languages simultaneously and that my development and language skills are all right! That this is my child and she would not become more stupid than I am – would become similar! As we lived with my parents, there was a Russian [grand-]father who spoke to my children. [...] She [Aleksanda] had a sour face, but she never mentioned this again with a word. But even with giving the name... Aive – good heavens, this was a story of it's own [*omaette ooper*]. 'Aljonka! What is this Aive?' That have her called Aljonka! – 'No, I will not give her that name! I do not like that name!' I added: 'Give birth yourself and then give that name yourself. This is our child – we decide what we give.' Me and my husband

³⁹ Aive, 1978, nr. 74/15.

⁴⁰ Aive, 1978, nr. 74/15.

⁴¹ Lidia, 1956, nr. 86/33.

did not have a question what name to give... we both thought right away that we have to give a name what would be pronounceable in both languages. [---] When it was schooling time then mother-in-law was the one who said: 'The Russian school is just next door, why do you put [her] to this Estonian school which is farther away?' I said: 'No!' I went to a Russian school myself and I would not make this mistake again. My child would go to an Estonian school.⁴²

While thinking about Aive's language development, Lidia remembers of her contested name and then about the later schooling decision. In addition to asserting authority, the struggles about the child socialisation carry an important weight in investing one's symbolic and cultural capitals for the future, in order to have the child share similar sense of social belonging. Who has the power to regenerate one's ethnic framework and belonging; and how closely ties it to the sense of regenerating oneself? Would Aleksandra's granddaughter be called Aljona, her going to a Russian school could already be a normally subsequent decision. People's ethnic motivations, however, carry different weights, in Aleksandra's case her conflictual persona was the most important source for ethnicized family conflicts to emerge; and these clash with Lidia's willingness to be part of the Estonian world. Lidia is perhaps even more sensitive about the issue because she has always been in-between Russian and Estonian worlds herself.

* * *

In Ariana Rahumägi's family, familial tensions were not bound to the problems around her Estonian maternal grandfather's marriage to a Russian woman. Ariana's mother grew up in rather poor conditions in the remote Estonian regions, and later in a communal flat in Tallinn. In contrast, Ariana's father was from the Russian officer's family in Tallinn: grandparents had moved there with their child in around 1953:

⁴² Lidia, 1956, nr. 86/33. The details about ethnicity of names and impact of schooling will be discussed further in Chapter 5, also on the example of Lidia Sander.

“Grandfather, he was an officer and he came here as an officer, when [my] dad was seven. [---] They actually had a very big apartment in Tallinn on the Raua street, with four rooms.”⁴³ At the end of the war they had been stationed in Poland but in 1946 the family had to return to the USSR, Ariana knows that they had been a bit reluctant to do that. After some time in the other parts of the Soviet Union, they arrived to Estonia.

Ariana has vivid memories of visiting her grandparents in the late 1970s.

They had a huge apartment and a lot of various crystals, I remember they had wooden parquets – we had a painted floor – and a fire-place, a room with a fire-place! And some souvenirs from everywhere. My father has not told much about how it was at home for him in his youth, but I understand that they... like, because [my grandfather] was a military officer, and he was of pretty high rank. When he retired from the army, he was a vice-director of a cultural centre. They both had pretty high incomes, they always had money, so they could go in for holidays once or twice a year. They liked to go to Abkhazia or somewhere else. Really, they were really pretty wealthy for that time.⁴⁴

Crystals and souvenirs, wooden parquets and a fireplace – and the unimaginable four rooms. This flat had been built before the WWII and someone else had lived there at that time; Ariana's grandparents, on the other hand, had arrived already “later,” in the 1950s, and they had just been allocated this one... Vice-director's job in the establishment such as a central culture house was a political and supervisory one and it was suitable for the retired military. There are many subjective factors that mark Ariana's distance to these grandparents; her own home was different and she felt it. Ariana's mother had also sensed a strong distance to her parents-in-law life-style.

And well, very much... to my mind, they were always eating very much. And [they] were eating various sweet things, various heavy salads, and meats. Me and my mother we were always looking at it... that it is quite a weird habit. And then it was always a stress, it was always stressful for my mother, when, for example, we had some birthdays, for example, my birthday or father's birthday and when we had to lay a 'big table.' – Usually we did not eat at a big table. Mother would make warm food at home but it was some normal,

⁴³ Ariana, 1972, nr. 66/7.

⁴⁴ Ariana, 1972, nr. 66/8.

healthy food [...] simply a soup or some dish. – But then [mother] had to make several types, this, this and that. And when she made too little then [my] father, actually, made a scandal [*skandaleeris*]. – Well, scandals were part of everyday life at our home anyways, such a special life we had. – Then he, my father, started to scream that she is not doing enough, that she does not love his mother, [that she] does not respect his mother. And when his parents came, then they told right in the beginning that they have not eaten anything since the morning or since yesterday evening, so that they could have more space for food in the stomach. This was shocking for me, I hated these family birthdays or familial holidays because it was eating, drinking and then singing together. [...] And I just saw the stress that was for my mother and I did not like the fact that they were shouting too loud.⁴⁵

Ariana's parents marriage was crumbling and later ended; in this context, the visit of her father's parents – actually her mother's parents were also present on the background at these events – turned into a struggle. These times created a chance for asserting one's authority over the ways of arranging life. However, ethnicity was not the grounding principle here; more importantly, Ariana's mother was from the poor small-town origins and her father from that big apartment in Tallinn. Differences in social status transpire from the familial origins to the present living conditions; and even if Ariana's mother could and did lay the “big table” – she was anxious about it, she would prefer not to, it was not “her thing.” Ariana felt it clearly, and also kept (and is keeping) to her side. Eating habits do not need to form so clear a distinction – but here they do.

4.3. Father, family and children

Ariana Rahumägi (b. 1972) says that there was no place for them in “this big apartment on the Raua street” of her father's family,⁴⁶ however, Ariana's mother would also not have wanted to move in with her confrontational mother-in-law. The couple

⁴⁵ Ariana, 1972, nr. 66/8.

⁴⁶ Ariana, 1972, nr. 66/9.

first lived in a run-down communal apartment with Ariana's maternal grand-parents and then moved to their own flat after seven years.⁴⁷ Life in her childhood home had not been peaceful; rather, it was filled with the quarrels of her parents. With regard to these, Ariana returns several times to different family practices that were related to visiting the countryside and working on a *datcha*.⁴⁸

For example, we had one topic for quarrelling, like a reason to pick a fight... that was the summer cottage. Because, for my mother and grandmother and grandfather it was always very important. They all were – well the grandmother and the grandfather – from the rural areas, well, the peasant families, and it was always very important for them to have some piece of land, where they could do something by themselves, plant potatoes there or strawberries, or just to have some bush, under which you could sit down, and peacefully... well, just to sit down. That this is a piece of land, and this is my bush, and this is my place, *vot*.

For my father this was absolutely alien, it was too much of an effort. Why go there, to waste time, energy and money? Better to go to an exhibition, or buy a book, or go to a concert. Well, we went to concerts anyway, the cultural life was quite [...] a rich one in that regard. [...] But he could not really handle [being] there in the country or repairing something at home – [my] grandfather did it all. [---] He built all these things, like this summer house, and grandmother did the gardening with my mother. Father did not really take part in it. [---]

Well, in the beginning he dealt with science, sat in the kitchen and dealt with science, and then [...] he started to go to concerts or exhibitions – but without us, and finally... he went to another woman... I remember that this was again such a life-style difference, basically, it was a very important matter for them when divorcing. Because when they divorced [...] he talked a lot about the fact that mother is too much in the countryside and that she takes too much

⁴⁷Ariana remembers that place vividly because her maternal grandparents had continued living there even after they had helped the young couple to move out: “In this *kommunal'ka*, they all lived in two rooms, my parents lived in one room, my grandparents lived in the other room. And then there was a corridor, and a kitchen [divided] between the three, actually, between four families, and then a bathroom. [...] I visited it in my childhood. It was quite a nasty place, honestly. Such... high ceilings, but in general a very poor one, there had never been any renovation, only old furniture. [...] My grandfather actually worked [...] in a building company, it was *Estonprojekt* or something like that, and he had never asked for getting an apartment or anything. Then he wrote an application saying that, they are with children, and in such conditions, and then it was accepted. Mother says that a commission came and checked that, really, there were, like, too many of us, and there was even no hot water. [...] That you had to boil water, and stove heating. Then they got a two-room apartment in Mustamäe pretty fast.” (Ariana, 1972, nr. 66/9-10).

⁴⁸Ariana, 1972, nr. 66/11. Ariana says that now her mother is quite different, “she is such a calm person.” He mother coexists much better with her second husband. “How to put it, they have [now] the same values, and the same life-style in the sense that they like the same food, cats – they have some cats there all the time. Like they save them and raised [them] and so on.”

care of the summer house, and the apartment, and the car; and that he is not interested in it, that he does not need anything, and he wants to be more free, and cultural life – such considerations.⁴⁹

Ariana's parents found new partners with whom their life-style and interests matched much better. They could not accommodate their different attitudes to life-arrangements that they had inherited from their parents, their concerns illustrate an element that was also expressed in other interviews, most vividly in the context of Soviet military families – It is the lack of connection with the land and the countryside outside of towns. In general, the newcomers stayed in the cities, whereas the Estonian locals almost always had a country place, relatives to visit, or at least some cottage. Lidia Sander remarked that even though she liked to mingle with Estonians while she was growing up, she mostly spent time with Russians, because “there were no Estonians in Tallinn in summer.”⁵⁰

* * *

In 1965, **Helju Dimitriev** (b. 1934) received an apartment in Narva, and **Leonid's** (b. 1937) aunt also moved in with them.⁵¹ The aunt lived with them until she died in 1978 and after that Helju's mother moved into the flat, as she had had a stroke and got paralysed. However, the issue that comes up several times about the family life is actually Leonid's serious problems with alcohol. When he started to drink, he would keep drinking for at least a week. Initially, Helju had kept some money in his account and in her drawers, but she soon learned not to do that. She regrets somewhat that she stayed with him so long:

He was not a bad man, but well, he drank vodka and enjoyed the company of women a lot – but all this I learned later. He did not fit a married life. He did

⁴⁹ Ariana, 1972, nr. 66/11-12.

⁵⁰ Lidia, 1956, nr. 86/38.

⁵¹ Leonid's aunt had raised Leonid since the war and moved with him initially to Narva to her brother, whose children she had also taken care of.

not even strive for it; he had his own fun, right up until today, he has a young wife, even today he is online, looking for dates, putting up photos.⁵²

Once Helju had tried to leave him, but he and his aunt had come and asked her to return. She imagines what life would have been like without him, but in these “what if” scenarios, she would not have had these children; at the time, she was also invested in her work. For Helju it was surprising that after having had no home, no living place at all, and growing up without parents, Leonid did not want to create a home and to provide security for his own children. Of course, it could be that Leonid’s unstable beginnings and absence of family models were in fact a reason for his lack of domestic instinct. Helju remembers a moment with Eduard:

The younger boy was digging these earthworms, because his daddy had promised to take him fishing. I said, dear boy, do not dig them now, when dad comes home then you have enough time to dig. All the worms were ready, but the dad was not coming. [---] And well, the boys did not have that kind of a family...⁵³

In short, by the time the children were growing up, Leonid and Helju had their own parallel lives. Leonid had his own parties and made his own disappearances. Helju could not bring him along to meetings with Estonians as “he would be back at the [party site] door at 6AM asking if some drops had not remained in the bottle,”⁵⁴ or to the sauna parties with colleagues that were much in fashion in what could be called the late Soviet Estonian “corporate culture” (which was widespread throughout the Baltic States and less so in Russia). Aleksander also does not remember much about his parents’ life together: “Their common life was very veiled from us, the relations between father and mother. I just started to think about it now. [---] I didn't see such

⁵² Helju, 1934, nr 80/42.

⁵³ Helju, 1934, nr 80/43.

⁵⁴ Helju, 1934, nr 80/44

great affection or friendship between them. I instead saw scandals, even in my childhood, very colourful ones.”⁵⁵

And this is when and how *ethnicity* mattered for them. We reach this topic as I ask Aleksander if the “historical themes,” such as the World War II experiences, had been a matter of discussion at home. He says that they were not discussed, but then again, ethnicity was used in the domestic quarrels as an expression of an already-extant tension, ethnic labels were called for by the context of conflict. In these conflicts people would accuse each other for *being* Russian or Estonian in reference to some concrete everyday annoyance.

[Aleksander:] Usually, such quarrels would start from some everyday conflict [...], like 'the soup is too salty,' and then it goes like 'all the Estonians do it like that' – 'no, all the Russians do it like this,' and then it hits off. [...] My father's biggest argument was of course that the Russians have Pushkin, Lermontov and who not, but who do the Estonians have? Then they would read up all the well-known names from both sides. [...] This was absolutely not a quarrel of intellectuals. This was a very ordinary everyday quarrel.

However, I think, my father suffered from the fact that that she talks a lot in Estonian, at home. Sometimes, he would shout: 'Tartarians shut up!' He had also learned two or three everyday phrases in Estonian that he normally used. For example, at the festive table as he raised a glass of vodka he said: '*viska viina, viltu lõug!*'⁵⁶ I have no idea where he took it from, but he regularly used it. Not more, not beyond that. I don't know why, I guess there was no need.

Of course these family problems were all very ordinary. Which program shall we watch right now? Shall we watch Estonian TV or Russian TV? We watched mostly Russian TV because for a long time, in Narva, there was actually no Estonian TV. There was none. It only started some time in the beginning of 1980s. [---] In the Narva TV tower there just wasn't that translator. [laughter] There just was not! The local Estonians bought these decimetre antennas and tried to catch something from the Kohtla-Nõmme tower [60 km westwards]. It was like this for a pretty long time. And then his main argument was – father was the one who determined which program was being watched at the moment – that 'stop this Tartar bullshit, we're going to watch hockey.' [laughs] We had to watch hockey.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Aleksander, 1966, nr. 37/4.

⁵⁶ Directly translated as: “Throw [down] vodka, awry chin.” An unusual expression that most people would have not heard before.

⁵⁷ Aleksander, 1966, nr. 37/12-13.

Aleksander has not cut his ties with Leonid, but he certainly chooses a side and he judges his father in negative terms. Helju spoke with the boys in Estonian and they went to an Estonian school in Narva. And Leonid was like “trapped” in the family, discontent but also unable to do much about it. Helju also mentions the topics of family languages and her choice to send the children to an Estonian school. When Aleksander says that his father “did not understand Estonian and does not understand up to now, he never wanted to study, did not bother or wish,”⁵⁸ then Helju rather stresses that her husband “had absolutely no talent for languages, his tongue gets twisted just as he starts to say a word in Estonian language.”⁵⁹ But she had spoken in Estonian with her children: “since they were in diapers, right away, even before they were born, I talked to them in Estonian. I couldn’t have done otherwise, my mother did not speak a word of Russian. [...] My mother could not have spoken with her own grandchildren.”⁶⁰

As for the school, there was no doubt because... should I have started to visit a Russian school? This did not even cross my mind, this option. [---] [Their] father did not oppose, father absolutely did not oppose. But yeah, when agitators came to register the voters before the elections, then the boys put down their nationality – nationality was marked in the passports – and they chose Estonian, as they both graduated the Estonian school, there was no question about that. But the agitators asked my husband, that how come do you live here between the Estonians, Estonians around you. [...] You are a single Russian here. Aren't you being repressed? [*Kas teile liiga tehakse siin?*]⁶¹

This anecdotal incident happened in Narva where there were around 6% Estonians at that time in early 1980s. However, the attitudes of these “agitators,” who were also inhabitants of Narva, does not come across as particularly funny; it is an ironic note on Russian chauvinism that an Estonian would hardly forget, it expresses an expectation

⁵⁸ Aleksander, 1966, nr. 37/5.

⁵⁹ Helju, 1934, nr 80/44.

⁶⁰ Helju, 1934, nr 80/44-45.

⁶¹ Helju, 1934, nr 80/45.

of Russification of the next generation in mixed marriages and an intrusion into the domestic life. Would an agitator have asked the same question from the “only Estonian” person within a Russian family?

As for husbands, then “having absolutely no language skills” or “no linguistic talent whatsoever” is a trope that is used by almost all the Estonian wives (less by husbands) who talk about their Russian spouses. It refers to a mixture of individual capacities and attitudes and social context. Situations of stronger social pressure also raised the motivation to learn the language; in Narva, there was no social pressure, in Tartu the social situation was different, but a large majority of Russian spouses would only use Russian. This trope also expresses a need to find reasons for husband's behaviours and family practices, which are hard to comprehend from today's perspectives.

Lidia Sander (b. 1956) says that they used more Estonian at home because grandmother lived with them and took care of them; she also says that her father Grigori did not speak Estonian, “However, I think we used Estonian even in my father's presence, he was not bothered by this.”⁶² This compels me to ask: “*How much did your father participate in raising you, or how was it?*” Lidia replies: “Right, how much did my father participate in it, indeed. He came home pretty late and...” After that observation Lidia switches to more fond memories about going sleighing with Grigori during some evenings after his work:

He took us to the park to sleigh – we were the best in it. [---] He sat on a sleigh, he took me on one knee, brother on the other knee, and sister then stood behind his back, and so we were then sliding down the hill. And of course our sleigh slid the farthest, because we were the heaviest bunch. [---] He loved us a lot, all three of us. He liked children in general [...] Wherever there were children, there was my dad and a lot of noise and shrieking [...] and fun. [---] And then, when we went out with him, then we certainly also

⁶² Lidia, 1956, nr. 86/16.

stopped by the shop, and we got either some cookies or candies. So we also liked to go out with him. I had the best dad in the world.⁶³

Grigori did not speak Estonian but he had not minded when the others spoke it at home. However, he did not consider his children as “Estonian” and he insisted that they go to a Russian school.⁶⁴ As the main breadwinner in their household, his image confers a quite busy father who was absent from the everyday family life but who was a dedicated “Sunday” father.

In **Filipp Glebov's** (b. 1964) family the father had clearly been the head of the family: “Perhaps mother could get what she wanted, often in her own silent way, but in principle father was still the head of the family whose opinion was most decisive.”⁶⁵ But in comparison with his friends, Filipp feels that his family atmosphere had been “in between” strict and liberal.

There was little discussion, with my mother there was much more discussion. With my father there was more discussion when we already had more thoughts going around in our heads [kui meil oli ka rohkem seda mõistust peas]. There were not many discussions with children.⁶⁶

I would not really say that my father was very active. I think it was more concretely such a situation in which it depended very much on my mother. With regards to how my father was. And my mother gave him a lot of, so to speak, opportunities to do his creative work. Father did not depend on any institution, on any professional job, he only depended on his home, and my mother allowed him to deal a lot with his creative work, perhaps he had therefore less time to deal with children. [...] But I would not really say that I lacked father's attention or doing some activities together with him. When we did something – like we went travelling and so forth, then all together. [---] But domestic work, was on my mother. Cooking, cleaning, clothing – it was absolutely mother only.⁶⁷

⁶³ Lidia, 1956, nr. 86/17.

⁶⁴ In Chapter 5 I will thoroughly discuss the relationship of Lidia's ethnic self-understanding and her father's role in it.

⁶⁵ Filipp, 1964, nr. 56/17.

⁶⁶ Filipp, 1964, nr. 56/17.

⁶⁷ Filipp, 1964, nr. 56/18.

Glebovs were both artists with a higher education, they lived in Tallinn. Leida and Ivan Arhipelagov were intellectuals and lived in Tartu. **Viktor Arhipelagov** (b. 1962) thinks that some of his father's male attitudes in family life have a strong ethnic connotation – that especially in the 1960-70s, in comparison with today, the habits in the Russian and Estonian families had been different.

[Viktor:] Russians and Estonians thought somewhat differently about how everyday life should be organised. [...] Especially, at that time, my father did very little household work. [---] My [Estonian] grandfather was especially critical about my father, [...] that he should really help my mother more. [...] But then I took up this role up a bit. [---] I was very critical then, I was critical about my grandfather that he was taunting, and I was critical about my father that he could have helped more.⁶⁸

However, similarly to Filipp, Viktor also does not remember any “ideological” discussions or arguments in the household. In Arhipelagov's case, he says that his mother had “perhaps much more of that internationalist upbringing,” and “let's say that, my father is a Russian nationalist, but he just knows that Russian culture so well and it is so big and in Estonia we really do not have much to put to stand next to it.”⁶⁹ Viktor also shares similar memories to Filipp in terms of father's gendered absence from the family.

My father was the guy who apparently wanted to talk to a person [...] who could reply to him in a manner that... was adult and considerate. [---] I remember very well that when I wished to talk to my dad I had to use the help of my mother as a translator. And only when I went to school, only then I started to consciously think that, damn, dad is a Russian.⁷⁰

It remained difficult for Viktor to distinguish between the distances that had been created by Ivan's Russianness and gender. There was a double burden to approach Ivan and there is no evidence that Ivan attempted to reach his children when they were

⁶⁸ Viktor, 1962, nr 10/17.

⁶⁹ Viktor, 1962, nr 10/18.

⁷⁰ Viktor, 1962, nr 10/8.

young. Ivan has remained linguistically a bit isolated and distant even within the family.

[Viktor:] It [still] happens very often... that we all talk in Estonian and that dad sits there and does not understand a thing. And then [he] starts to speak in Russian, but totally off topic [*mingisugune täitsa metsapoole...*]. Then we would finish [our former conversation], that alright, like, father wants to be together or something.⁷¹ Sometimes we would switch, so that everyone talks in Russian with him. But we are used to [the situation] that sometimes [he] sits, eats, listens to something or actually is watching the TV, and then the others would talk. That this is, he is such a self-centred guy [*isepäine tegelane*].⁷²

Marina Toompuu (b. 1955) says that they spoke mostly in Russian at home. She brings out the reasons that are quite similar to the households where Estonian was spoken. “Our domestic language was Russian. With my father... father tried to speak Estonian with me. Well, we actually did speak in Estonian. But with my mother... I mean our domestic language was still Russian,”⁷³ explains Marina. As much as she spoke with her father, especially when she was older, she spoke in Estonian, but she makes it clear that mother's language was domestically dominant. Fathers in the 1960-70s come across as distant regardless of their ethnicity.

[Marina:] Father was – pardon me, like all the men, I should not say so... – pretty comfortable with himself. This also meant that, as he had aquired some Russian knowledge with these two years in Moscow (as far as I know he did not know it before going there) [...] so he communicated with mother in Russian. But he was not thrilled about the idea of investing into teaching mother. He chose the easier option, they spoke in Russian.⁷⁴

Marina adds that her parents had a rather “modern” view on the nationality questions, implying that they did not consider nationalism as important. And when commenting on her mother's language skills (she understands a little but does not speak), she says

⁷¹ Viktor, 1962, nr 10/8.

⁷² Viktor, 1962, nr 10/9.

⁷³ Marina, 1955, nr. 8/10.

⁷⁴ Marina, 1955, nr. 8/11.

that “this is another topic and theme: what does it mean for a person who is used to speak Russian and arrives here in Estonia and needs to speak Estonian...”⁷⁵ **Vaida Lodjapuu** (b. 1970) says that in their family they could not make much noise, bringing friends to their home was out of the question – father was working in his room.⁷⁶ They lived together, but “interacted in some parallel way.”

As we lived in one apartment, as he was my father, as I depended materially on him... [---] I played basketball and then he came to watch some of my games, for example. This was really important for me that he valued it. I mean at times he showed some signs of deeper interest, but in general he had placed it all on my mother's shoulders. I remember that once my sister – I guess she was in the last years of high school – was caught smoking, or perhaps it was by the smell only, my father also smoked so actually we had that smell in the apartment, but anyways, she was somehow caught. Then father went to mother and said 'well, now, talk to your child, and deal with her now.' Not that father would go and talk himself. [...] I think father also avoided such critical or difficult conversations. But I guess he still cared and was there and wanted the best, but he was such an introvert [...] and he was not able to descend from the heights of his science to the level of children. I remember that, I think it was the 7th or 8th grade, the time of studying Ohm's law, he passed by and asked jokingly that 'what's the Ohm's law?' And then it appeared that I did not know it and he got so upset that he locked me in the room and said “now you learn all the contents of this year's book of physics; you do not come out of this room before all this book is 'in your scalp,' and when you know it all”. And it was still in the autumn.⁷⁷

In addition, I should mention that the nuclear families where often “extended” for long periods in summer, and sometimes also other school breaks and also the weekends that many children spent at their grandparents. **Aleksander Dimitriev** spent his summers at the grandmother's in central Estonia and was away from Narva: “The grandmother. Three months in summer at grandmother's in the country. Not a single Russian, everything was in Estonian.”⁷⁸ He notes about his bilingualism that

⁷⁵ Marina, 1955, nr. 8/11.

⁷⁶ Vaida, 1970, nr. 61/9.

⁷⁷ Vaida, 1970, nr. 61/10.

⁷⁸ I will discuss more about Aleksander's Estonian grandmother's influence on him in Chapter 6 in relation to her stories about the “former times.”

apparently he had problems with switching language based on the context but he does not remember it himself.

My aunt used to say that this kid will not become an Estonian, that this will not work out. Or the other way around, my father comes to pick me up in three months and I do not remember a word of Russian. I ran to grandmother saying 'grandmother, help, say something!' Grandmother does not know Russian. So what to do. Then after three days in Narva my Russian would return. [...] But now I speak more Russian in the family and the kids speak more Russian too.⁷⁹

Aleksander was otherwise living in Narva with his parents. **Zinaida Laas** (b. 1949) remembers that her children had not wanted to be much in Kohtla-Järve and whenever it was possible they had visited their grandmother, Vambola's mother, who lived in the countryside. "Children grew up more like in the countryside. [---] Right when the school was out, they took their bags and went to the country."

All summer they were there. Here in town they did not go out too much. I was observing that mostly Russian kids were running around [outside here]. The kids were not interacting so much with them. But in the country, there all hell broke loose. They were with their grandmother... And when we came there, then mushroom forests, berry-forests, there they were good kids.⁸⁰

There had also been grandparents in Russia, with them the contacts would clearly decrease after the collapse of the USSR. For example, **Jana Kask's** (b. 1976) contacts with the relatives in Russia that had been rather intense in her childhood decreased significantly after 1991, she remembers being at her maternal grandmother's "pretty long periods every summer, [...] and then she came here during the winters, so we saw her two or three times per year." But this all changed with 1991. "Now she is too old now for taking that road. But mother goes there, twice a year."⁸¹ **Silvi Laiküla** (b. 1985) also remembers that she spent long periods at her Russian relatives when she

⁷⁹ Viktor, 1962, nr 10/20.

⁸⁰ Zinaida, 1949, nr. 77/19.

⁸¹ Jana, 1976, nr. 90/10.

was very young. “Perhaps until I was seven, I was a lot... and they came here. You see – it was easy to travel there.” This all happened until 1992-93 when the border between Estonia and Russia was closed and visa regime started.⁸²

At the same time All **Vaida Lodjapuu's** grandparents lived in Tartu. But she does not remember any deeper conversations with them and she did not spend time at them in her youth, either. “My grandparents have influenced me quite little. So that my father's parents did not take any such grandmother-grandfather role. I have never been there for day care, for example.”⁸³

⁸² Silvi, 1985, nr. 13/8.

⁸³ Vaida, 1970, nr. 61/21-22.

Chapter 5. Marking ethnicity: names, passports, schools

5.1. Introduction

The famous Russian author Sergei Dovlatov lived in Tallinn and worked as a journalist at the Russian newspaper *Sovetskaya Estoniia* in 1973-76. Dovlatov depicts some aspects of his job in the collection of short stories called *The Compromise*.¹ In one story, Dovlatov's chief editor Turonok² tasks him with reporting on a newborn baby to mark the anniversary of the liberation of Tallinn and to symbolise the expansion of the city by standing as Tallinn's 400,000th citizen:³

--- 'Let's cut this short. The general idea is, a happy man has just been born. I'd even put it this way – a man condemned to happiness!' This foolish phrase pleased the editor so much that he repeated it twice. 'A man condemned to happiness! In my opinion, not bad. Maybe we'll use it as a headline: 'A MAN CONDEMNED TO HAPPINESS.'

--- 'We'll see,' I said.

--- 'And remember' – Turonok stood up, closing our conversation – 'the infant has to be publicizable.'

--- 'Which means?'

--- 'Which means meeting all requirements. No damaged goods, nothing gloomy. No cesarean sections. No unwed mothers. A complete set of parents. A healthy boy meeting all the social requirements.'

--- 'It has to be a boy?'

--- 'Yes, a boy is somehow more symbolic.'

¹ Sergei Dovlatov, *The Compromise* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1983).

² Turonok like many other characters in Dovlatov's books is represented by his real-life name. Dovlatov was not published in the USSR; his writings only appeared in press after his emigration, in the USA. The closest Dovlatov got to publishing in the USSR was actually in Tallinn, where the Estonian translation of the collection of his short stories had been approved and printed in 1979. At the same time, he had been published in the Western Russian-language journals and was in the process of being expelled from the Soviet Journalists Union. All the print run was destroyed.

³ This is the first of his ten stories to have appeared in *The New Yorker* after his emigration to the USA in 1979. Sergei Dovlatov, "Jubilee Boy," *The New Yorker* (9th June 1980): 39-47. The other one is next: Sergei Dovlatov, "Somebody's Death," *The New Yorker* (19 Oct 1981): 42-52.

--- *'Henry Franzovich, about these photographs.... If you think about it, newborns can look pretty lousy.'*

--- 'Choose the best one. You can wait. There's time.'

--- *'We'd have to wait at least four months. Any earlier, it will hardly look human. Some people still don't after fifty years.'*

--- 'Listen,' said Turonok, turning angry, 'don't give me that demagoguery! You have an assignment. The material has to be ready by Wednesday. You're a professional journalist. Why are we wasting time?'⁴

The first newborn Dovlatov finds at the hospital is a son of an Estonian woman and an Ethiopian man who studies at the Marine Academy. Dovlatov thinks “this could play up internationalism, the friendship of nations.” When he takes the idea back to Turonok, however, he is threatened with termination “for attempting to discredit the very best!” Turonok leaves him with a firm order: “Wait for a normal – do you hear me? – normal human baby!”⁵ The next such candidate is the son of “a famous Tallinn poet. The mother is a journalist. Both are in the Party.”⁶ But then Dovlatov realises that boy's father is a Jew – it is out of the question as such a case should be submitted for “approval,” a necessity for which there is no time.

The third child Dovlatov finds is wholly “publicizable”: son of an Estonian trolley bus driver and a Russian shipyard worker, a Party member. When Dovlatov calls in his discovery he receives one more order. The child, Turonok says, should be named “Lembit,” a name with “a good, manly, symbolic ring to it.” Dovlatov is given 25 roubles to convince the father of the child's designated name. While the father originally intended to name the child “Volodya,” after a drinking rally with Dovlatov his mind proves suggestible and his son becomes “Lembit.”

⁴ Dovlatov, “Jubilee Boy”, 39.

⁵ Dovlatov, “Jubilee Boy”, 42.

⁶ Dovlatov, “Jubilee Boy”, 43.

If “Lembit” became an adolescent during the Estonian Singing Revolution maybe his life would have turned out differently than for the same person with the name “Volodya” (in any case he would have been among the last birth cohorts to be able to choose his “passport ethnicity” (*national’nost’*) as he turned sixteen in 1991).⁷ However, it was not “Lembit” nor even “Volodya” who was born – but “Kalev” Who was heralded as the 400 000th citizen of Tallinn. The newsreel *Soviet Estonia* has a clip about the celebration event which was held in the Tallinn Town Hall. “Vana Toomas,” Old Thomas⁸ – the medieval guardian of the city, a figure of the wind-flag of the Town Hall – would have personally descended to hand the birth certificate to Kalev's parents and to recite a dedication poem at that public event.⁹ Afterward, the mayor of Tallinn (the chairman of the Tallinn Executive Soviet) announces “to the comrades that, according to the parents' wishes, the 400 000th citizen of Tallinn will be given the name 'Kalev.'” And the commentator continues: “One day he will write down his life-story. At the age of 23 days I was given my first stately document: I,

⁷ “Lembit” is an Estonian name which has perhaps the earliest recorded history. It is mentioned eight times in the Henry's Chronicle of Livonia as one of the leaders of Estonian tribes in the fight against the German crusaders. In the contemporary era, his name was given to children only after the publication of parts of the Henry's Chronicle in the 1880s, and became widely popular among the masses during and after the Independence War of 1918-20. // In *Sillamäe Passion*, Andrei Hvostov writes that among the Russian youngsters in Sillamäe (Eastern Estonia) the names of “ancient anti-German Estonian fighters” were disconnected from the present-day Estonians. These ancient Estonians were in high esteem – especially Lembitu. Indeed, one of the more dubious elements in the Soviet Estonian historiography was the stress on the Estonian-Russian long-lasting cooperation in the fight against the German invaders.

⁸ Vana Toomas certainly merits a history of its own; especial as a symbol of Soviet Tallinn distinction. He was used as a symbol of Tallinn from the 1950s to the 1980s to mark Tallinn's locality and historicity in addition to contemporary Soviet symbols. This old, German, medieval element was used beyond tourist industry. In the musical film *Varastati Vana Toomas* (The Old Thomas was stolen) Vana Toomas escapes his from the weathervane post, while wandering on town in search of the girl with whom he has fallen in love. The film was not popular nor a critical success – it was depicted as silly and pointless. But in addition to films, Vana Toomas was promoted in consumer design – the plastic table lamps named “Vana Toomas” became a widespread consumer item beyond the Soviet Estonian borders.

⁹ The Poem is as follows: “Think, think, young men / guess you zealous guys / announce the witty women / who is sleeping in the cradle / who wrapped in dippers / would shrill a praise on the mouth / this is Kalev, the son of Jüri / Mother Liina's tender son / his own city's sterling son.” (my translation from Estonian: “Mõistke mõistke mehed noored / arvake agarad poisid / teatage naised targad / kesse magab kätikissa / kesse mähkme mässitusel / kiituse suulla kiljatakse / see on Kalev, Jüri poega / ema Liina õrna poega / oma linna tublit poega”).

Kalev Simsalu, was born on the 24th of October, 1973 at 11.15AM.”¹⁰ Kalev Simsalu was born to an Estonian family.

“Kalev” denotes an even more mythological figure than “Lembit.” Kalev is the father of the protagonist of the Estonian national epic tale *Kalevipoeg* (*The Son of Kalev*).¹¹ It could be also noted that whereas Dovlatov's “Lembit” was born in November 1975, the Red Army had entered Tallinn on the 22nd of September 1944 and Kalev Simsalu was born in October 1973.

* * *

The destiny of inter-ethnic children mattered in the late Soviet Union. Dovlatov's piece is written in late 1970s, when the campaign for advancement of “bilingualism” – i.e., enforcement of Russian as a commonly shared language – was under way in the USSR. Children of inter-ethnic marriages provided a vehicle for inter-ethnic rapprochement; in the Soviet borderlands they also provided a reassurance of Estonian belonging and integration to the Soviet state.

This chapter will focus on those who were born 10-20 years before “Lembit,” that generation was born to inter-ethnic marriages after the World War II, in 1949-1962 (although I will also mention younger people and some voices of married spouses). That generation was dealing with the issues of ethnic identification when coming of age at the time when Dovlatov lived in Tallinn, and they were not only

¹⁰ “Nõukogude Eesti,” November 1973, Nr 22 (1059). Other news items are there in the following order: First, Brezhnev's speech at the "World's Peace Forces" Conference in Moscow. Second, obituary for an Estonian actor Ants Lauter (that is is an obituary one can deduct only from the short shot of the funeral in the end; Lauter's Siberian years are naturally not mentioned, but some short film clips from before 1940 are shown). Third, rising efficiency in the mass production of houses. Fourth, about what research in Agriculture Research Academy. Fifth, about the birth of Kalev Simsalu. On the background of the news about Kalev, there sings a most avant-garde national vocal jazz ensemble "Collage".

¹¹ *Kalevipoeg* was based on many collected epic stories but remains all in all rather a fiction work of its author Fr. R. Kreutzwald; this rather literary accomplishment is often compared to the E. Lönnrot's collected Finnish *Kalevala* whose founding sources lie much more strongly in the folkloric heritage.

born but also raised in the stable conditions of Soviet Estonia. In short, the temporal focus of the chapter will run from the 1950s to the present, with the main focus being the period from the late 1960s to the early 1980s. This is the time of late socialism when the children of the couples who married in 1950s reached adulthood.

I will discuss three themes that relate to situational external marking and self-understanding of cultural identification in relation to Estonian and Russian worlds. First, I will look at the ways how names acted as markers of ethno-cultural belonging “from outside” by others and feeling of belonging “from inside” by oneself. Second, I will discuss the ways in which the Soviet “passport ethnicity” as a state-assigned external category worked in the case of intermarriages in Estonia; whether and in which kind of circumstances people assigned relevance to it. Third, I will look at some in-group experiences of ethno-cultural belonging and estrangement that the children from intermarriages went through – largely but not only related to schooling.

I begin by discussing the above-mentioned themes based on a single life-story as a case study; this will provide an example of how ethno-cultural cues inform an interview narrative as entangled articulations of personal identification and sense of belonging. I will follow by taking a more detailed look at the three emerging themes: personal names, “passport ethnicity,” and in-group experiences (mostly schooling).

5.2. A life of entangled cultural belongings

Lidia Sander was born in Tallinn in 1956 to an inter-ethnic family. Lidia's parents met in Tallinn where Grigori was stationed with the army. Her mother **Valve** (b. 1925) was Estonian-speaking and hailed from an Estonian village in Russia. Lidia referred to her father **Grigori** (b. 1925) as Russian, but later it appeared that his ethnic

background was been more complex (I will discuss that below). Here I focus on Lidia's personal ethnic identifications with examples of her name, passport ethnicity and peer group belonging (school). But the complexities of ethnic belonging start already with her father. She would say about Grigori that

he is not a typical Russian. His father was a Ukrainian whose family had moved to Krasnodar *krai* away from that Ukraine. [---] And I know that his family name was changed during the Stalin's era – an 'ov' was added to it. Otherwise my ancestors' family name was such a Ukrainian name. Not so typical one, but it did not have that 'ov' which Russians have [---]: Semyonov – Semyon. [---] I am still telling my nephews to change their passports and take that 'ov' away from there, then it will be a real name, an original name. But my father's mother was Mordvin.

[Uku:] *Did he speak Mordvin too?*

--- No he had not been taught it. He knew Russian. They lived in the place where there were Russians. His mother's family had gone a bit out of Mordvin territory, somewhere, it was not Mordva, it was somewhere near that. [---]

Was it important for him to be a Ukrainian?

--- No it wasn't.

--- *Did he feel himself as Russian then?*

--- Yes, I guess so.

--- *What was written in his passport?*

--- Russian.

--- *He was Russian by the passport?*

--- Of course. During the Stalin's era you could not put down something else. [...] Somehow they stuck that 'Russian' into their passport; otherwise it could have gone wrong...¹²

Grigori did not speak Estonian and he talked to his children in Russian. As for his past Lidia mentions that “the village where he came from is underwater, it was flooded over with [building of] some water reservoir.” Therefore, any ideas that had occurred to him in the early 1990s about going back to the homeland in order to sit under the

¹² Lidia, 1956, nr. 86/11-12.

shady trees had no reference in the real world – to where could he have actually returned? In addition, Valve had asked Grigori in awe: “What trees? There was only plain steppe there, wasn't there?”¹³ Russian language and culture mark Grigori for Lidia, he remains “a Russian father.” The only example which Lidia has about the connections to her father's ethnic pasts is that Grigori had preferred his grandchildren call him “*vanapapa*” (and not in any Russian way). From where did he get an idea to use that Estonian-sounding diminutive of “grandfather”? Grigori was born in 1925, I do not learn from Lidia how he had related to his grandparents during his years of youth that had been so difficult for the Russian peasantry.

Valve's mother was Estonian-speaking and had lived with the family in Lidia's childhood taking care of the children until they went to school. As for schooling, Lidia says ambiguously, with no direct reference, that “there was indeed no will to put me to an Estonian school – I finished a Russian school.”¹⁴ However, she did not feel comfortable in a Russian school and after the first year she had wished to transfer to an Estonian one.

[Lidia:] I was in the first form and I told to my mother to put me to an Estonian school for the second year. It was too noisy there, the Russian kids are noisier, well they were much noisier at the time than the Estonian kids. (Today I would not say so, today the Estonian children have changed a lot as well. But at that time it was indeed so.) I was disturbed by this and it did not suit me. But the mother said: 'No, now as you finished the first form you cannot go to the other [school].' Well, she did not want to do it, she did not wish to do it because of the father, because for the father it was a natural thing that his kids go to a Russian school – *his* kids. He didn't consider them... well, either he didn't think about it or he didn't consider us to be really Estonians. I mean, when we got the passports and chose that we were 'Estonians' he did not say anything, but he did not like it.¹⁵

¹³ Lidia, 1956, nr. 86/6.

¹⁴ Lidia, 1956, nr. 86/23.

¹⁵ Lidia, 1956, nr. 86/24. Lidia will repeat the same idea around ten minutes later again as she is thinking about her father about whom she has generally fond memories. She says that Grigori “never wanted something from me which would not be acceptable for me – except for this school and this I discussed with my mother not with [my] father. How could I have said to my Russian father that, father, I wish to go to an Estonian school? This idea even did not cross my mind. Of course I asked this

Some reasons for school choice might have been based purely on comfort and proximity: the Russian school was a two-minute walk away from their house and the Estonian school was “across the whole park.” However, it had been fundamentally her father's choice. “He didn't consider them... us to be really Estonians,” says Lidia, as if first approaching herself and her brother “from outside,” thinking about “his father's children,” and then correcting it to include herself among “them,” too. Lidia claims that she “never felt herself really good” and that she “does not have any real friends from the school.”¹⁶ However, while generalising about the “Russian and Estonian children,” she is cautious not to draw similar sweeping ethnic generalisations at other times. For example, she was not bullied at school and she thinks bullying is mostly not conducted on the basis of ethnicity:

People are not normally bullied because someone is Estonian or Russian, but when [they] feel that one of the languages is not fluent, which is not the case with me. [---] And then, some child is being bullied at every school; [one] is taken from school to school because of bullying – even if one is not Chinese, or Russian, or Kazakh, or Tartar. An Estonian is bullied by the other Estonians.¹⁷

Lidia's memory of her first years in school (1963-64) is connected to the time at which she turned sixteen and received her passport (1972). As with her siblings she chose an “Estonian” ethnicity instead of a “Russian” one in her passport. In a way, this moment was her chance to express her discomfort and sense of distinction from her Russian-speaking peers at school to whom, she felt, she was not fully belonging (from our talk it transpired that she never wanted to confront or displease her father). Shortly after receiving her passport around the time she was eighteen in c. 1974...

from my mother. I said to my mother: “Mother take me to this Estonian school, because father with his Russian language is not going to take me there.” But mother made it clear to me that she would not do it.” (Lidia, 1956, nr. 86/25-26.)

¹⁶ Lidia, 1956, nr. 86/24.

¹⁷ Lidia, 1956, nr. 86/25.

... there was one New Year party, at my friend's place, where all the young people came together, there were both Estonians and Russians. I have always communicated with Estonians and with Russians. [...] Some were really unknown faces to me there. And [then] some Russian... I absolutely do not remember what he told me, I only remember the feelings which I had [while hearing it]... He said something about the Estonians and I had a feeling as if someone had hit right in my face, and I felt so bad. I had never before... I was like 18 or 19, this was the first time in my life when I started to think about such matters. I already knew that I was not a Russian at the age of 16, but I only began to think about whom to tie myself to for life at this time.¹⁸

Whereas with the references to the Russian-speaking school she expresses a more generic feeling of discomfort, Lidia remembers that particular New Year's Eve because of her bodily reaction to an insulting comment about Estonians. Possibly, there were such incidents for her also at school but she did not talk about them – she rather makes a generic reference to temperament and communication style. However, that New Year's Eve launched for her a series of questions about “whom to tie herself to for life.” This happened at the time when she reached adulthood; here she makes a direct reference to men as *ethnic beings* as to choosing “with whom to tie oneself for life.”

This is how I was thinking: I thought that if this will be an Estonian it may happen that – my mother told plenty of these stories – that people are quarrelling if one is an Estonian and [the other is] a Russian. We did not have it in our family, but I had heard of it. Then, for the first time, I was seriously thinking about it. Perhaps it will happen so that in the beginning it is all right, and that later one will say that 'still a Russian.' Or the other way around: if there is such a Russian, like the one who does not allow one to speak in Estonian, even to think in Estonian... This is very vital. [---] I thought: could I talk in Russian to my children? I could not. – Therefore, this has to be such a person, who would in no way say half a bad word about Estonians. And that was it... I had had various boyfriends, well they were still more Russian – maybe because Russians were more available in Tallinn, Estonians strove to go to the country and to be [away] there in summer.¹⁹

¹⁸ Lidia, 1956, nr. 86/14.

¹⁹ Lidia, 1956, nr. 86/14.

Eventually, Lidia found a man who “totally looked like a Russian [...] who was in a Russian company.” But actually Sergei's father was ethnically Estonian and had met his wife while being stationed in Russian with the Soviet army. The connection between her emotion at the New Year's party and her marriage that was soon to follow describes an important life-course related ethnic moment for inter-married people – about getting to know one's future spouse.²⁰ This party memory sheds a light both to the times prior and after it: on the one hand, it sharpens her feeling of non-belonging to “Russianness” and is intimately connected to stories about schooling and passport choice; on the other hand, it serves as a starting point for her thinking about marriage choices that would match with her understanding of oneself. From the perspective of a life-story telling here is an ethnicized justification of her marriage in a logical sequence that is created after the fact. A few years later Lidia had a clash with her colleague at work in an argument about their ethnic images of each other (about the concrete people and not about the “generic others”).

Once at work, [there was] one Fidelia who was born during the war, she was a bit older than me. Such a... when I saw her, then I thought that her parents must have had slit-eyes. And it appeared that yes, it was true. I saw her mother – she was such a genuine big white woman, and she [Fidelia] was such a small slit-eyed... I asked: 'Is this your mother?' – 'Yes this is my mother.' But during the war, you know these things...

And once she told me: 'You are no real Estonian.' Why did she tell me that? I still cannot understand. Was it about my appearance or what? I don't know why. But I remember well, how I got such a pang. And then I told her: 'Go to the mirror and look at yourself!' [laughs] Then she became silent – she did not say a word. Did she just want to tell me something bad? Well, who knows, right. But yeah, there have been such situations, indeed. I do not say that it has been very sharp or strong. [...] I have managed to be beyond it and I know myself who I am, what I am. Of course, I am not such a typical Estonian for many people, but I am also no Russian. Well, there is a combined effect, such a mishmash.²¹

²⁰ Such ethnic situations were discussed in more detail in Chapter 1.

²¹ Lidia, 1956, nr. 86/15-16.

Lidia asserts that “she knows who she is” and that there is a “combined effect,” but her leaning towards Estonianness comes across pretty clearly, especially as she says: “I am not such a typical Estonian for many people, but I am also no Russian.” She is not Estonian because she is not taken for it by many people; she is not Russian because she does not personally feel like (being) one. At another place Lidia says that she *cannot* be fully Estonian, because, as she says “she went to a Russian school” and “she had a Russian father.” Even if there is “such a mishmash” and she enjoys her cultural in-betweenness, she mostly refers to, and perhaps remembers, the times that have brought her discomfort.

[Uku:] *But if you think about it, who do you consider yourself to be – ethnically or otherwise?*

[Lidia:] Well, not a Russian, certainly not, but rather an Estonian. Yet I am not a typical Estonian because I know many Russians. I work now with one typical Estonian who is ten years younger and he is married to an Armenian. They have two daughters [...] who speak Estonian, and Russian with the father – not even Armenian. They can only say a few expressions in Armenian. Who are they then? They are... their temperament and appearance speak for themselves that they are not typical Estonians. I would say that in my case there is perhaps something similar. Moreover, what certainly leaves one's mark is the Russian school. The reason why I did not want to put my children into a Russian school – it would leave one's mark in any case. Actually, I am happy for what I am. I feel myself to be an Estonian, but not a stupid Estonian, and this is central. [...] Seeing things from two sides – this is a richness too. This is a richness.²²

The New Year's Eve party and the incident with Fidelia are the examples of external triggers that have forced Lidia to question and prove her ethnic belonging. A similar event – hopefully friendly – is my question during the interview: “who do you consider yourself to be...” In the line with the previous examples she confirms that she would be “rather an Estonian,” “but not a typical Estonian” – because she “knows” Russians. In the end, it is difficult to understand Lidia's source for being “rather an

²² Lidia, 1956, nr. 86/45.

Estonian.” There was something in her childhood home that had a strong impact on her but remains a bit blurred: potentially it was her “Estonian” grandmother (even though she had lived in Russia prior to 1940s). Now, during a talk about the absence of religious holidays in Lidia's childhood, she would suddenly turn to her name and family relations. She refers to how it was and is to be contained within a personal name *from within* and also illustrates the dynamics within her family.

As for [my] name, I reproached my mother. I was discontented with her for a long time. Why did she let my father give me this kind of name? [---] This name is given only to Russians here and this oppressed me. [---] She knew that I would not become such an ordinary Russian girl. Why did she let me have such a purely Russian name? – Little did I know then that it is was not a Russian name, but a global one, it exists elsewhere too, right? [---] My mother told me: 'Well, you know, you were born as a second daughter.' My father is quite hot-tempered – people from Southern Russia are a bit different. [...] – And my mother told me [later] that she had been a bit dreadful: 'You never know, second daughter in the family, how will he take it, will he treat you well. [But] when he saw you, he told right away that – 'let's call her Lidia' – and I was so happy that he liked you and you took after him, and I agreed with everything...' [---] I had wanted to replace it [my name] several times – but as my mother told me how it was given to me and that [my] father wanted it, and as my father has always been so good. [---] How would I tell him that I didn't like the name he gave me? I knew that he would take it most negatively. He would take it as some kind of lack of respect. In his culture, in which he grew up, he would not take it normally. Only for this consideration I did not change my name... But now I have fully accepted it, no problem.²³

For Lidia, her name clearly marked and marks the connection between self and the world – the name marks her social belonging through how it is perceived from “inside” and “outside.” Lidia did not wish to be perceived as a “Russian” but in her understanding the name marked it as such from outside. She would like to be perceived “more Estonian” than her name designated, but her Father Grigori's influence would not allow her to change the name. However, it is her mother Valve whom Lidia portrays as primarily responsible for having to be perceived “more

²³ Lidia, 1956, nr. 86//18.

Russian” due to Valve's own struggle for husband's recognition. Perhaps had a boy been born as the second child instead of a girl, Grigori would have given him a “Russian” name too, but in this case, the fact that Lidia was “the second daughter” worked for Valve as a shorthand excuse for not confronting her husband about the child’s request of changing a Russian school for an Estonian one. Lidia refers to her “father’s culture” both as a cause and explanation for the fact that father had not noticed her troubles with her name – Lidia even did not expect him to have noticed.

These gendered family roles reveal some possible familial tensions and anxieties in the middle of which unrolled Lidia's childhood and they mark the boundaries of possibilities: some negotiations were “unthinkable” and “unspeakable.” Lidia did not like to utter her own name as she did not think it made her who she was or perceived herself to be. However, she says that she is really fine with her name today: that is because she has realised that this is a Christian name. Lidia became religious in the beginning of 1990s and in this opened a new world of meanings for her; specifically, her name acquired a prevalent Christian meaning and the Russian connotation subsided. But from our conversation it appears that the way she, then, accepted her name indicates the way she her accepted her life-arrangements, in more general terms. Instead of being in-between the two ethnic worlds, she could fully belong to the world of believers. “I was always religious from within and was not aware of it. I don't know, I don't know, but I do not have any friend from [school]. [---] A real friend I got myself actually from the Church, with her I can really talk about anything – I haven't had such a thing with any [other] girl or woman around me,²⁴ says Lidia.

* * *

²⁴ Lidia, 1956, nr. 86/24.

My conversation with Lidia was exceptional for various reasons: she was open to me about her private life; but moreover, she remembered many details about her life in relation to ethnicity and identity which was also a sign of her struggles and problems with it. Her ability to recreate inner monologues is due to her contemplative personality, she contextualised herself socially in a highly articulate manner. At the same time, her story carries also some more widespread tendencies of female life-stories: she focused on social-personal relations and said less about her career and public persona.²⁵

Lidia married a person with an inter-married background, she attended a Russian school and worked with Estonians; she had a Russian-speaking strong-father figure and many Estonian relatives on her mother's side. She expresses the experiences of many of her time and from the inter-ethnic family background by the way of having experienced *more* troubles with her ethnic belonging and self-identification; she has stayed genuinely between the Russian and Estonian speaking worlds.

In the following, I will use the themes of personal names, “passport ethnicity,” and group experiences in school to explore how people experience ethnicity situationally in dynamic relationship with their rather constant, hardly changing, ethnic self-understanding.

5.3. Cultural belonging of personal names

In many cases, a name is the main thing that is known of a person in reference to some situation or everyday life detail; in such cases a name marks the totality of human

²⁵ I discuss similar tendency at the end of Chapter 1.

being. Names are also clearly related to perceiving ethnically as they create expectations about how people should be, but also to feeling ethnically as they are in dialogue with one's understanding of self. For example, a person with an “Estonian” name would be *perceived* generically “Estonian” and would most probably also understand oneself as Estonian (in addition, there are of course other markers to names for example – gender). In short: a personal name as a signifier creates an expectation for the “ethnic stuff,” the signified cultural content which the bearer of the name should embody.²⁶

If some of the expected correlations between a name and the person “behind” it do not match, then a cultural-contextual corrective commentary will mostly suffice, but sometimes such a commentary would actually reveal deeper discomfort, anxiety, or disharmony within that very context. I realised that I did not mind much when the people with a “Russian” name spoke fluent Estonian during the interviews. However, when a person with an “Estonian” name did not speak well the same language and expressed more the views that are prevalent among the Russian-speakers in Estonia – I became attentive. This was most prominent in the case of **Teet Laansoo** (b. 1986) who went to a Russian-language school in Eastern Estonia.²⁷ When we spoke about the street conflicts in that region, his explanation was that the Estonians had been the ones who picked fights on the streets – but as there are more Russians, then they would strike back later, and with greater force.²⁸ While hearing this I was alerted, I became attentive, I struggled with disappointment – I sensed Teet's bias very strongly.

²⁶ See also, for example: Ülle Pärli, “Proper Name as an Object of Semiotic Research,” *Sign Systems Studies* 39 (2011): 197-223.

²⁷ Teet, 1986, nr. 65.

²⁸ Teet, 1986, nr. 65/11: “If perhaps some drunk Estonian came, or say, a gang of drunk Estonians came to one or two Russians and wanted to take something from them or to pick a fight with them, then these Russians would try to leave calmly. But the next day...”, see Chapter 2 for greater details on Eastern Estonia.

From the stories of other people from the region, I *knew* that it could not have been as he was telling me. Why was he telling me all these “Russian” stories when his name was so “Estonian”?

Returning to the late 1970s, a similar situation of discomfort is illustrated by **Toivo Kõlar** (b. 1943) who enrolled his stepson, **Olga's** son, in a Russian school that was situated next to the one in which he had gone to 25 years before.²⁹

[Toivo:] I checked the list of pupils, damn, two-three-four Estonian names. Well, I could not figure. Then, he [step-son] started to receive friends [at home]. Once, I see, the room is full, these were four friends... one was Juhan Laid, one was Jaanus Laugas. [...] Laugas spoke Estonian, but refused to talk to me. Okay, fine, his father had left the family. [---] But this Juhan Laid could not say a word – well, this struck me. Then, I started to observe this process...³⁰ [---] The daughter of Leo Lõhmus is such an example, the wife of Leo Lõhmus spoke very bad Estonian – in her memoirs she exaggerates that they discussed the daily matters in Estonian – yeah right! She could not form a sentence. Then... it started to strangle me... you do not have to be a nationalist, this was just dooming for the nation of one million. [...] The parents of this [Juhan] Laid were, f..., this got me – there was this end of the year party or something at the school – they were both Estonians, they spoke Estonian between themselves; but the guy could not [speak]!³¹

The promise of an Estonian belonging and the Estonian cultural content given by these names is not met and Toivo is “cheated” by this lack of correct reference. For Toivo, this confusion signals a general societal situation: the continuous decline of the number of “Estonians” relative to “Russians” in late-Soviet Estonia. This social context haunts and feeds his concerns. When Juhan and Jaanus are not Estonians then *who is* – how to recognise one anymore? In the generally non-Estonian surroundings, the Estonian names exemplify a threat to or even “treason” against the possibility of being an Estonian, as such. They diminish the power to include and to embrace, it

²⁹ Toivo's own school experiences at the neighbouring school are discussed in Chapter 2.

³⁰ Toivo and Olga were active in observing (non)-teaching of Estonian language in the Russian schools in the late 1970s and Olga was publishing about it. According to Toivo, the all-union satire magazine *Crocodile* even published an article which ridiculed this activism.

³¹ Toivo, 1943, nr. 30/30.

becomes recognized that the borders of “Estonian” are porous and the “other” has crept in. Toivo is willing to draw a line between the “Russian” and the “Estonian” cultural realms but these names reject and laugh at this “boundary policing.” Jaanus Laugas's father might not have been a good one, Juhan Laid's parents might be conscientious “traitors,” and the poet Leo Lõhmus³² was using Russian at home (contrary to the memoirs of his wife) – but these adults cannot be called non-Estonians. Not only has Russianness crept in – the prior assumption of purity of Estonianness is turned upside down.

There are other similar instances. For example: ten years later, during the Singing Revolution, ethnicity often became a directly political issue in the confrontation of the National Front (*Rahvarinne*) and the International Front (*Interrinne*) movements. Whereas the first one was supported by the local Estonian communist leaders, the former was much based in the big industries that were directly supervised from Moscow; the first one was for *perestroika* and *glasnost*, the other one kept as conservative line as possible (being mostly against “nationalism,” “fascism” etc). **Andres Laas** (b. 1969) remembers:

Officially, it was said that National Front and International Front are not based on nationality, that they were like, based on convictions, but in reality... Well, there were single exceptions, of course – there were Russians in the National Front and Estonians in the International Front, but very few. At least there were Estonians by name: Lembit Annus and Arnold Sai. But this line was drawn generally by the nationality, this division, that two nations perceived the world differently, nothing to do there. Because this background system was different. And then there was the confrontation.³³

Lembit Annus and Arnold Sai have Estonian heritage, but their careers took place in a largely Russian-speaking environment and they were married to Russian women. In wider terms, these life stories demonstrate a subtle temporal drift: ideological-political

³² Due to the context, the name of this poet is also changed.

³³ Andres, 1969, nr. 44/6.

standing and ethnicity had become intertwined to the extent that had not been present before the perestroika. Here the personal names perform the function of external markers of ethnic belonging and social alliances that are overwhelmingly ethnic. We do not know how Arnold, Jaanus, Juhan, Lembit, or others who were given names that did not ethnically “fit” in the context of their everyday life-worlds felt about their given names. How was it for them to be marked by the name which referred to something to their absent property – to being Estonian while they were not.

* * *

In the following, we move to the personal, more intimate stories about the names and belonging. Most of the examples pertain to family names as they appeared in the interviews. Former examples were all about men, both today and in Soviet Estonia, men are and were expected to “carry on their name” even though their role as head of the family was then contested by the prominence of motherhood and has generally also decreased for today. Women then and now had more freedom with family names, their names mattered socially less – they were not socially expected to leave their name as a contribution to the next generations.

In this study, some women chose not to take up their husband's family name; some women reverted back to their maiden name later in marriage or after divorce; and in either case there is some flexibility about the family names of children. First, parents decide what family name to give to a child; later, children could change their family names when becoming adult. But in which circumstances will the exchange of name become a viable option?

In 1955, **Leida** (b. 1931) was married to **Ivan Arhipelagov** (b. 1928) in Leningrad. But she had become aware of the ethnic importance of a name already

before: as part of her studies in Leningrad, she had held a traineeship in a Russian pioneer camp. Leida says that “the first three days the children followed me and tried to learn my name, for three days I did not have to organise anything for them, they were only memorising my name until they got it.”³⁴ This anecdote seems to have sufficed to convince her husband that she could keep her own name as they planned to return to Estonia with her as as a teacher. Leida's overall disposition is not nationalistic – she takes great pride in her family’s left-wing history and, as a historian, refers much to the fact that “our blood is mixed anyway.” Then again, she says that she “really would not have wanted to work with a Russian name [...] – it was related to my profession – not that I look down on a Russian name or something [...]. And *no one* was opposed to it.”³⁵

Leida is relaxed and logical about it all: she was more comfortable with her Estonian name, her husband's alternative was hard to pronounce for Estonians and would be burdensome for a teacher. Unpronounceability is more at issue here than the name’s “Russianness” – but in the end these themes converge in representing otherness. Ivan's family name fails to be used as it cannot be uttered well by Estonians and in Estonian. This cultural dissonance is expressed through a biological metaphor: Estonian tongues cannot twist. However, Leida states clearly that for her own self-perception “from within” she did not mind being “Leida Arhipelagov”, but she did not like the way her name was perceived “from outside” as a teacher in an Estonian school. Being marked as an Estonian woman who has married a Russian man – with a Russian surname her identification would bear two cultural signifiers next to each other.

³⁴ Leida, 1931, nr. 18/37.

³⁵ Leida, 1931, nr. 18/37.

Searching for social comfort is out of tune with the general tone of Leida's story, which tends to rub against the grain of the dominant nationalist discourse, but it fits with her sense of playfulness and adaptability. Leida also knows the limits of the game. She could tease her husband about him taking her family name, but she knows that he never would: “And then he [Ivan] told me [Leida] that 'I agree, if you want, I can also take your name' [giggling]. But of course he would not have taken [my name]; it was just said in this manner.”³⁶

When I ask **Ilona Loks** (b. 1939) if there was any question for her and her husband **Feliks** (b. 1937) into which school to put her children, she says that even if there was some consideration, “actually, the most critical moment was that we were married and I kept my own family name. And [...] I registered the children under that name, under the Estonian family name, too. And he did not like this. I totally understand that it was not easy for him.”³⁷ Nevertheless, Ilona claims that it does not have to do with the matters of ethnicity:

Well, [my] father would have really wanted to have a son, he didn't have a son. And then I thought that to continue that family name, regardless of whether I have a Russian spouse or not. But further on, for children, I thought that in Estonian school, growing up in Estonian cultural space, it is better for them if they have that family name.³⁸

Ilona was born a second daughter. She comes from an intellectual family in Tartu and both of her parents were involved with the University of Tartu. Her husband **Feliks** (b. 1937) bears a distinctly Russian surname that is hard to pronounce for Estonians. Ilona states explicitly that she kept her family name in order to symbolically continue her father's lineage. With that act she also compensated for not being born as the son that her father wished to have and of which he had constantly reminded her. Ilona does not

³⁶ Also: Leida, 1931, nr. 18/37. Ivan, 1928, nr. 19.

³⁷ Ilona, 1939, nr. 88/21.

³⁸ Ilona, 1939, nr. 88/21.

need now even to consider if she had taken a Russian surname in other circumstances; she had promised to herself to keep her name already prior to her marriage.

However, whereas the children of **Leida** (b. 1931) and **Ivan** (b. 1927) **Arhipelagov** went to an Estonian school, they eventually took on Ivan's surname. When I ask if there was any debate about the schooling language, Leida says that... “well, about Anne there was none, Anne was anyway a girl. But about Viktor there was already a discussion, that this is a son.” **Anne** (b. 1957) “had taken” father's family name already in the second form. Leida had asked her: “What is written on your notebooks? Have you have taken a new name or what?” And Anne replied: “I thought that father is alone, but there are so many people with [your name], let me be then another one with his.” She had liked that it was difficult, “no one could pronounce it right away, she went around and boasted about her new name,” says Leida.³⁹

But with **Viktor** (b. 1962) the topic came up later, until the secondary school he used the mother's surname, when he turned 16 he had asked that “what nationality shall I put there?” and the only advice he got had been from his Estonian grandfather: to take his father's family name and nationality. Leida says that “my father told [Viktor]: “I don't know anything else, but at the times of Päts there was the law that the nationality should be taken according to the father.”⁴⁰ And Viktor took “Arhipelagov” for surname and got his graduation diploma already on his new name.

Ivan's gendered distance from the upbringing of Anne is magnified by the fact that they had lived long periods apart from each other – Leida was working in

³⁹ Leida, 1931, nr. 18/22.

⁴⁰ Leida, 1931, nr. 18/22. Reference to “the times of Päts” indicates generally the period of Estonian inter-war independence (1918-40), but it can also refer more specifically to the period of authoritarian rule of president Konstantin Päts (1934-40).

Estonia but Ivan's move to Tartu was delayed for some years. Leida's comment on her own father referring to “the times of Päts” also contains some irony as her father was a strongly left-wing person who could not have had strong sympathies for Konstantin Päts.

* * *

In the stories of the intermarried children about the late Soviet period the considerations of “passport ethnicity” (at the age of 16) and the potential change of family name (from the age of 18 onwards) figure together also in other instances. After 1991 the “passport ethnicity” became extinct and its ascriptive nature would disappear, but as I will show, the related considerations of belonging would not. **Aleksander Dimitriev (b. 1966)** threatened his father Leonid (b. 1937) to exchange his family name to Helju's (b. 1934) maiden name in his teenage years:

[Aleksander:] My father worried a lot that... Would I keep that family name or not keep that family name. That “well, whatever, I would give up that family name” – this was when I went to get my passport.

[Uku:] *At the age of sixteen?*

--- Yes.

--- *Was it clear that you perceived yourself as Estonian?*

--- Yes.

--- *He agreed to that?*

--- He had no way out. This was as it was. His worry was that his family name would disappear. That this would be the last Dimitriev. Of course, half of the Russian state is full of these Dimitrievs [laughs]. But he had this worry. He is still reminding me that “remember, you wanted to give up your family name, but it's good that you did not.”⁴¹

When Aleksander got his passport and declared himself an Estonian in 1982 he actually could not have changed his family name without his father's consent – this became possible only as he turned eighteen two years later. Aleksander went to an

⁴¹ Aleksander, 1966, nr. 37/13-14.

Estonian school and had Estonian friends. By 1982, Leonid was drinking and his marriage to Helju had effectively broken. Why was it important for Leonid that his son continued bearing *his* name? Presumably he wished to affirm his ties with his son, especially with regard to his crumbling social position. Eventually, his name was the symbolic thing that he had contributed to his family and Aleksander did not mind keeping it; he was used to it and a change would have been rather cumbersome; he lived and continues to live in Narva where a Russian surname surprises no one.

Ariana Rahumägi (b. 1972) and I discussed how her mother and family at large had experienced the Singing Revolution of 1988-91. She said that it had been a rather difficult time due to her grandfather's failing health and death in 1992. The discussion of her family situation led her to mention getting her passport in 1988.

[Ariana:] Before I was eighteen I had my father's family name, and principally, this did not have such identity-related reasons but rather familial reasons for why I changed [it]. I had [already] wished to change my family name when I was 16-years-old, to take the same family name, Rahumägi, because this was my [maternal] grandfather's family name. But then it appeared that [my] father's permission was needed to do that, and it was only possible to do independently when turning eighteen. And then I somehow forgot about it, it was not *so* important. But then one thing happened, when [my maternal] grandfather died, there was one thing at which my dad behaved very unkindly, and this was such a shock for me that I told that I just do not wish to bear the same family name with him anymore, that when we will have buried the grandfather, I would exchange [it], and then I swapped my family name.⁴²

Ariana distanced herself from her father in two steps: first she “became an Estonian” while she chose “passport ethnicity” in 1988; second, she severed her ties to Estonia with the familial connections by changing her family name in 1992. She says that these choices were not a matter of “identity,” but rather of “family.” With “identity” she seems to refer explicitly to ethnic identity, to the need to choose between the

⁴² Ariana, 1972, nr. 66/16.

Estonian and Russian cultural realms. She stresses her self-understanding and her intimate social ties as a way to distinguish between family privacy and the public ethnic conflict. She chose not to pass her father's name on. She did not accept father's contribution in the way that Aleksander had, even if her relationship to her father today seems to be warmer than Aleksander's. Eventually, Ariana carries the same name as her great-grandmother had after she married an Estonian man who was killed by the communists in the 1940s.⁴³ Aleksander went to an Estonian school, he grew up and lives in Narva, his mother is Estonian – he retained a Russian name. Ariana went to a Russian school, grew up and lives in Tallinn, her mother has 'mixed' heritage and they communicate in Russian – she took a new Estonian surname. They both stress the importance of personal familial dynamics over the societal ethnicized one, but they also see themselves at the background of the latter.

Maris Romel* (b. 1979) changed her Russian family name to her maternal one in 1997 when she graduated from high school. Her paternal family name sounded clearly Russian; her new name could be characterized as “Estonian-international” – similarly to her given name. In a way, at the age of 18 she established a harmony between her given and family name. She herself says that today she would not do it. As an artist she deals explicitly with the ethnic situation in Estonia and she would not shy away from bearing a “Russian” name. Her parents come from the ethnically mixed backgrounds and share roots in Estonian tsarist era settler communities in Siberia and her father had not much opposed the name change in 1997. Maris took the

⁴³ Both of Ariana Rahumägi's parents had also to make an ethnicity choice while receiving passports. Her maternal grandmother was Russian and grandfather was Estonian (their marriage had caused a strife that is discussed in Chapter 4). Her mother “chose 'Estonian' pretty consciously,” on the other hand Ariana says that her mother “never felt this conflict or did not pose herself such questions as to who she was, either Russian or Estonian, perhaps both.” Her paternal grandfather was Jewish (from Poland) and grandmother was Russian. Her father “chose 'Russian,' also pretty consciously, [...] he was afraid that when you write Jewish – well, how to put it, “will you be taken into the institute, or not,” or something.” (Ariana, 1972, nr. 66/16)

decision in order to distance herself from the environment that was marked as a “Russian” world for her. More specifically, she relates this to the world of art that was filled with

'academism,' backwardness, something that I absolutely did not identify with. It just felt foreign to me. [---] Well, I went to a Russian school and [...] I remember exactly how one got a wrong grade for... for drawing there, somehow by generalizing or somehow with the wider brushes, for not colouring with the correct paints... and so on... and then one got a bad grade.

And then I decided that as my mother is Romel and my father is Ivanov, then, in short, it would perhaps be easier for me to work as an artist if I have such name that does not like refer actually to any... nationality. In a word, as I graduated from school, I did not... well, tell it to the others that I will change my name, but I already had all the documents done on Romel's name.⁴⁴

In the world of art, “Russian” came to signify “backwardness” as it did not fit with the avant-garde of the Estonian Academy of Arts. Maris did not want to carry that tag, and by the age of eighteen she had become aware of the alternative. However, as this was in 1997, there is a parallel and more simple consideration: she was from a culturally mixed marriage but did not wish to be perceived as being “Russian” at the moment when she went from a Russian-speaking school to an Estonian-speaking university. Changing her name apparently did not distance her from her father, who understood her concerns.

Moving on in time we arrive to the interview moment (2009-11). **Maie Koit*** (b. 1961) told me that she started to “prepare her husband” with the idea of changing her family name back to her maiden name some time ago: “He understood it and this has not been an issue.” But why? During our talk her references to the atmosphere of the Bronze Soldier crisis after April 2009 are rather clear even though she does not mention the events directly. She discusses how the change of her name impacted her

⁴⁴ Maris, 1979, nr. 32/9. “When you are a child, you are especially responsive to all that, right... and then I saw it there, in the arts school some of the teachers were Russians right, they taught the Russian groups. And it was such an art that ... I considered it to be totally wrong.”

search for a job: “I wanted to change jobs or to look for something... and no reaction. [---] Then I started to observe if I was perhaps left out because... and if there would be an option to do something, to move on. And I must say that was right because when I changed [my name] I got invited to three interviews.”⁴⁵ Maie's daughter **Eeva Koit*** (b. 1987) changed her family name the following year after Maie, but Eeva is less articulate about the reasons for doing so. Our dialogue below slowly reveals the sequence of motivations and events; I was left with the impression that Eeva did not wish to express the idea that it had been her mother's initiative to change the name (the interview with Eeva happened before the talk with Maie).

[Eeva:] I took this one in summer. [...] I took the maternal name [...] I wanted, I don't know, I like this one a bit better. Somehow, in Estonia there have been these troubles and somehow... I think now during the economic crisis, with these Russian family names. I felt I wanted this Estonian name, and then I took it. [---] I have heard that, for example, at the interviews or something, that it is separated; for example in Tallinn it is so, that totally separately, they put the ones with Russian names aside. I don't know, there was something like this for a while.

[Uku:] *Where did you hear this?*

--- I don't know, I read it somewhere, or there was something, I don't know exactly.

--- *But you got the idea and you changed it?*

--- Yeah.

--- *Did you tell to your parents about it, too?*

--- Yeah, Mum took it, too.

--- *Mum too, now?*

--- Yeah, in the summer. [---]

--- *Alright, your dad, was he not disappointed that you took your mothers name?*

--- He was against it in the beginning but then we did it, that my Mum changed the name, err... Mum changed it earlier, actually, a bit earlier, perhaps the last year. Then we were like... My Mum was a cook and she applied everywhere, to the companies, to find a job, a new job, and when she

⁴⁵ Maie, 1961, nr. 85/27-28.

changed it – before she was not invited to interviews – but then when she changed it, to a new Estonian name, right, and then [she]sent two CVs and was invited to the interviews the next day. All the rest was the same, work experience and education and all.

--- *Did she get the job, too?*

--- Err, she did not accept these offers. The salary was smaller there.

--- *But do your Mum, and dad, have a job these days?*

--- Yes. [...] And then my dad also understood that maybe it would be easier, here, to get along in the future with this Estonian name. [---] I don't know... there's some discrimination with this name these days. I've no idea.⁴⁶

“I've no idea” – Eeva was a rather shy conversant and our talk came to a halt several times as she preferred not to express or did not have an opinion about quite a few matters that I inquired about. This hesitancy suggests a curious hegemony of oral history – while attempting to provide voice, an interview presupposes verbalised expressions that prioritize echoing contemplated social actions in the past. From the dialogue with Eeva it appears that changing her surname had been her own idea, but later I learned that it was her mother's initiative and my initial understanding of the rational motivations for the name change became blurred. However, my feeling of being misled perhaps gets us closer to understanding openness of the past than many causal explanations that create linear logics. The social ethnic situation and, especially, its effect on her life has not been clear to Eeva, but she does express vague discomfort with it all.

According to the life-stories at hand, the motivations for women to keep their maiden name in marriage or for children to switch to their mother's maiden name could be divided roughly in two. First, there are “more internal” considerations of self-understanding and familial belonging (e.g. the relations with the father or

⁴⁶ Eeva, 1987, nr. 73/4-6. Anna, for example, changed her name as well. At her mother's strong request – to make sure that the CV would not be put in the “wrong pile” (1983, nr. 17/12).

perception of oneself). In these cases the general societal considerations are not clearly articulated; however, sometimes they are played down in order to emphasise individuality and possibility for change. Second, there are “more external” considerations of a name as positive or negative symbolic capital which, at times, can materialize as cultural capital. In these cases, people rather emphasize the societal meaning assignment – how their name reflects back on them from the others. Of course the “internal” and “external” are not mutually exclusive perspectives as they both often converge at an area of actualised concerns at a moment when, a person feels, something is happening to him or herself, or something needs to be done. In addition, the social possibilities to do something about one's name are gendered. For women, the theme becomes relevant with marriage, and if they were to keep the maiden name, it raises the question of the children's surnames; women would also be more prone to change their name back to maiden name even after having carried their husband's name meanwhile.

5.4. Passport category Nr. 5: laughter and irony of being categorised

The Soviet “passport category nr. 5,” the official state category of *natsional'nost'* was mentioned shortly already previously. In most of the interviews it comes up as part of a larger discussion and questioning of self, most often in relation to a fixed moment in a life-span: to the age of sixteen and therefore the notion of *biographical time* is relevant here as that age also marks gradual passage to adulthood, a person is learning to think in terms of adults and asks about one's social place: “how am I perceived by the others?”; one tests out the social reflections of personal identity cues. *Historical time*, however, remains simultaneously relevant and present at the background: during

the 1960s and 1970s a young person would think of his or her present and immediate future within the Soviet reality; in the late 1980s during the Singing Revolution the social situation was rapidly changed and the young people who were growing in inter-ethnic marriage were often under the social pressure to choose ethnic sides more clearly at the same time as the official passport category became obsolete and fell out of official use.⁴⁷

In the 1960s-70s, the most vivid references to the “category nr. 5” are anecdotes about choosing a “passport ethnicity” that did not match with the person's perception of one's real ethnic belonging or would rather point to the impossibility to suddenly “choose” one of two parental sides; they also reveal curious intricacies and contingencies of Soviet bureaucracy. For example, **Tamara Lebedeva** (b. 1947) received her passport in 1963. She grew up and lived in a small Estonian town and spoke both Russian and Estonian languages. She used Russian at home, went to a Russian school and “felt like being Russian.”⁴⁸ This is how she describes going to pick up her passport:

I put [it down] there how it was – in my life. [...] I put down my father, and I put 'Russian' as a nationality. And I turned it in. She [officer] tells me that it's all wrong: 'you have no father.' I was pretty startled, I said that 'I have – at home.' [---] You see, they were not married with my father and, by the documents, I had no father. And as my mother is 'Estonian' – I [became] 'Estonian.' [---] My father was not divorced from his former wife [when I was born].⁴⁹

Bureaucracy won. Tamara “became an Estonian” as that had been the only option and, in the end, it did not matter much for her personally – it had just been a rather amusing incident. In the case of her half-brother who was born to her mother in 1939 “it was all principally the opposite”: he had gone to Estonian schools, sport camps and – behaved

⁴⁷ See Chapter 6 for a discussion of the dynamics of Soviet future in late socialism.

⁴⁸ Tamara, 1947, nr. 39/15.

⁴⁹ Tamara, 1947, nr. 39/14-15.

as one.⁵⁰ But as in pre-war Estonia, “nationality” was determined by the father – by the Soviet time it was already in the papers that he was “Russian.” This remained so, as well. The passport category did not play an important role in their life. **Zinaida Laas** (b. 1949) became an Estonian by passport in a different way. During our meeting we arrived to discuss the topic in a dialogue which in retrospect appears rather inquisitive.

[Uku:] *So, whom do you consider yourself to be? Estonian? Russian...? Have you had to think about yourself in this way?*

[Zinaida:] You know, Uku, I am a human being. There is Jewish blood in me, well, you can say by the eyes. I don't know, I cannot say. If a human being is decent then she is decent, normal. Morals are in order, right? But if she is born as swine, then I don't even know... whatever. [...]

--- *Who were you in the Soviet time according to your passport? What was written down in your passport?*

--- Estonia... Estonian – I was adopted by my step-father.

--- *And then you took on the father's nationality, not [your] mother's?*

--- Yes, he demanded it.

--- *But, your mother had it written down as Russian, your mother's nationality in passport was Russian?*

--- Yes.

--- *When you turned sixteen and went to pick up the passport, well at the age of sixteen one gets the passport, right. Then you put yourself down as an Estonian?*

--- Well, my step-father demanded this of me.

--- *Demanded? And so it went?*

--- Yeah.

--- *It did not feel like a bit abnormal, or well, strange, such a choice?*

--- Would a 16-year-old think?

--- *Well, yeah, maybe, some think.*

--- You see, my sister is married to Juhan, well, an Estonian. He only went three classes to school in Siberia... – Are you putting it down? – [...] And his sister also went to school in Krasnoyarsk, Siberia. They absolutely do not

⁵⁰ Tamara, 1947, nr. 39/16.

mind. In Vainukoha, they have such a beautiful farm there [now], hundred horses – [s]he is a horse fan, yeah, a farmer. And 'Euro' pays all his costs and...⁵¹

At that point we continued to talk about Zinaida's sister's farm and memories of deportation, and I did not learn more about ethnicity in her childhood family. By that third hour in the interview Zinaida had told me a lot of negative about the Estonians (“stingy, sluttish, dirty, hungry, dishonest...”) and how she had lived among them all her life. In addition, the selection of nationality according to that of the step-father would not make much sense from the primordial, blood-related perspective and I became personally confused with the flow of interview. My repetitions served to confirm that I was getting it right – and eventually her message was clear. “Passport ethnicity” leaves Zinaida seemingly indifferent; in retrospect, a moral distinction between good and bad people is more important than the official choice of “ethnic belonging” at the age of sixteen. “Would a 16-year-old think?” she asks, and somewhat playfully I insist that some would. Zina refers here to the difficulty for a mature and long-perspective reflection about one's social situation at that age. Her insistence on “thoughtlessness” is honest; most of the interviewees would not argue that they were “not thinking” at the time when certain decisions, as if, “happened to them.” People mostly tend to motivate important decisions in their life retrospectively in ways that are logical from the present perspective and that allow to assign post-fact control over the past and to build coherent self-image. Zinaida says that it did not happen like that. In addition, she refers to her upbringing: what is one brought to think at the age of sixteen? She was born and raised in a working class family.

⁵¹ Zinaida, 1949, nr. 77/32.

Choosing “Estonian” ethnicity was slightly more common than the choice of a “Russian” ethnicity for the children born in mixed marriages in the 1960-70s,⁵² and there is no reason to believe that Zinaida personally wished to choose differently from her step-father. But only three years after receiving her passport she married an Estonian man; she has remained living in Eastern Estonia but they use only Estonian language in her family. At the age of 19, as she married, did she “think” then? From today's perspective that was certainly one of the more decisive decisions in her life. It is worthwhile to stress again that interview dialogue adds retrospective significance and strips other moments of importance by leaving them out. The latter “lacking quality” is rarely voiced and lies often in omissions of the expected and deviations from the normal.

In the following, **Leo Paas** (b. 1929) shares how his daughter went to pick up her passport at the age of sixteen in about 1982, and how ethnicity was actualised and became momentarily important as his child made a choice.

[Leo:] She went to a Russian school. In the kindergarten she was in an Estonian one, and afterwards she was in the art school, again in Estonian. [...] Anyway, she gets so old that [she] goes to pick up a passport. But you see, we both... we did not influence. Neither I, nor my wife. Domestic language was Russian. But my wife is yet worried, she says: “Valja, if you now go and – you know – think carefully that – *kakuiu tebie natsional'nost'*” – what is your nationality. Valja: “Yes, I know already, I know already.” But she stresses further that “think carefully,” yet [she] does not dare to say what [to think]. I remain silent. And then my daughter comes back with a passport, and she goes right away: “Well, show me, show me!!... ohh... what kind of an Estonian are you?!” Daughter replied: “But you yourself asked me to think carefully...” My wife had gone off the track with this one...⁵³

In Paas family the ethnic belonging had not been a matter of discussion previously. However, the very necessity and inescapability of choice also forced meaning into its object and created an ethnically loaded moment in family life. Leo tells me the story

⁵² See Appendix 4 for an overview of relevant work by Jelizaveta Rihter.

⁵³ Leo, 1928, nr. 24/12.

as an older Estonian man to a younger Estonian man, and the meaning of the message transforms to the small ethnic victory that is imbued with reference to gendered family life. What did Valja “think carefully about?” In Leo's presentation, even if anecdotal, it is also about the subtle family alliances, regardless of how insignificant the choice itself, once made, the hierarchy of ethnic belongings and familial powers was assigned for the time being.

Maarja Leiner* (b. 1979)⁵⁴ speaks in a similar playful tone to Leo. She points to the complex negotiations of ethnic belonging in which the passport category was only one in a similar manner as Lidia did in the beginning of the chapter. Maarja brings together the themes of gender, personal name, passport nationality and religion – here reference to the latter is quite exceptional as religion is otherwise almost missing in discussions of familial negotiations. She was born to the family of two Soviet clerks, a retired Russian KGB officer on a new administrative job and an Estonian commerce manager. Maarja says that it had been an “exemplary Soviet family” of two “careerists” who had both been previously married. At her birth in 1979

they agreed that – I don't know how much arguments there were – but they agreed that if the [child] is a boy, he gets the father's name and the mother's religion [and nationality].⁵⁵ [---] And if a daughter is born, then it would be the opposite – the mother's name and the father's religion [and nationality]. And then they agreed that they will get another child in a time and it would be the other way around for that [next] one – regardless whether that would be a son or a daughter.⁵⁶

However, when Maarja's brother was born some years later, it appeared that he could not be given his father's family name as the siblings had (and also today have) to bear

⁵⁴ Maarja, 1979, nr. 40.

⁵⁵ Maarja, 1979, nr. 40/18. She corrects her initial statement later by pointing out that with the religion also “nationality” was accompanied.

⁵⁶ Maarja, 1979, nr. 40/9-10.

one name at registration if they are born out of the same marriage (even if at the time of Maarja's birth her parents were not yet married). Maarja presents the story a bit as a mythological tale of a bygone era at which the ancestors gathered together and “agreed on things.” Still, she directly bears the vestiges of her parents’ agreement – these had real social consequences even if not so significant. Nevertheless, whenever she is asked even today: she is Russian. This would create a situation in which “she is Russian” but a “very Estonian one.” She studied history and belonged to a female student sorority that bears the finest (nationalist) Interwar traditions. These connections have influenced her life and this is where her friends are. Being “Russian,” on the other hand, has no practical consequences to her and rather serves as a contextual distinction: “she is Russian.” “I have always considered that it was my parents' agreement. Well, this nationality... it does not show, it is a formal thing. But I have always said and written that I am Russian by ethnicity, I have not made a problem out of it.”⁵⁷ Maarja does not seem to doubt the singularity of ethnic belongings, but eventually “Russianness” is a rather empty category for her – it is rather lacks than contains. “Being Russian” for her therefore also lacks many of the ideological aspects that are often present in the Estonian public discourse and that correlate Russians with the USSR and Estonians with the independent Estonia. This is made easier by the fact that privately (even if for statistics) she is Russian, but publicly she is perceived as Estonian.

* * *

Viktoria Kisseljova (b. 1953) was told by her Grandmother “one has to pay debts

⁵⁷ Maarja, 1979, nr. 40/19. I got a foreign travel passport as I had to go to competitions. [---] It has a “Russian” nationality. Well, because there is “nationality” in the red [soviet] passport, in the regular one there is not, so, I belong continuously to Russian nationality, with the church it is a bit more complicated.” Maarja got her first passport as a minor prior to the Estonian independence and her ethnicity had been marked in there. As for religion, it appeared that due to some complicated arrangements she had eventually been baptised both in the Orthodox and Lutheran church.

back to one's people.” She herself says that “only every fourth person survived, three out of four went away or fell. Only one out of four...” – Viktoria refers to Estonians. As an interviewer I interfere and express my doubt: “*well, perhaps not so many,*” but she remains convinced: “I was so sad [about it] all the time, and [...] I wrote down in my passport that I am an Estonian. But honestly, I am this, Soviet... *Homo Sovieticus*. Also these days, I am not worried about that, because I have more human dignity. Let them tell whatever they wish. But the nation for me...”⁵⁸ She is looking for a correct formulation and I feel like offering a way out: “[*for you*] *it isn't so relevant?*” And she agrees: “Yes, it isn't so relevant.”

Would she have rather phrased it in other terms? It is hard to say. Viktoria was born in Tallinn, she chose “Estonian” ethnicity for passport, her partner is Estonian, and her son considers himself to be one, too: she has “paid her debt” and she has thereby claimed a rightful place for being in Estonia. She is free *not* to be an “Estonian,” and she prefers not to be considered part of any concrete national body; she stresses her Soviet socialisation in all its ambiguities. “Let them tell whatever they wish,” she returns once more to the anonymous social voice that seems to question her loyalty and notice the difficulties of expressing herself in Estonian. However, three fourths of Estonians did not either die or emigrate during the WWII; that number is rather around 20% – where did she take her numbers from? How does it fit with her imagination the pre-war in Estonia; it seems that for her the history and experiences of the locals have attained a mythical touch.

* * *

There are other ethnicities that are mentioned in the stories. I already touched upon some references to Ukrainian ethnicity and how it was played down as an

⁵⁸ Viktoria, 1953, nr. 7/17.

unnecessary, at times dangerous, passport category to have. There are also several small references to Jewishness that are worth mentioning. **Juri Lotman** (b. 1922) arrived to Estonia due to the persecution of Jews in Leningrad in 1950. Anti-semitism in the USSR, however, did not end with Stalinism. **Olga Kõlar's** (b. 1948) first husband in Leningrad had been Jewish and she remembers vividly how she had been declined a job at the Leningrad radio for that reason:

I was a young journalist and, I had a chance – I worked in such a big factory, where there were these... [their] own radio, own newspapers, and so on – then I had such a chance – well, through someone, or I don't remember – to get a job at the Leningrad radio. And it went so far that I was given some tasks, and I did it all, and they praised [me for] these and so on. And then they gave me a form and in this form there was like... husband's nationality. And then I, I remember it very pointedly, and this moment when I sat there, and for very long, and then I pulled myself together and wrote "Jewish" and that was it. That was an instant end to my career.⁵⁹

I do not know if Olga was not hired solely due to that fact or had there been other factors at play because, as she says, she had grown into quite critical and anti-Soviet person by that time. However, there are some other references to Jewishness. **Polina Kesamaa's** (b. 1936) father in Crimea was Jewish but she would not mention it in her story without my explicit questioning and she would not remember any Jewish traditions; on the other hand, **Ülo Kesamaa** (b. 1933) commented that he had met plenty of "highly educated Russians" in Moscow and Leningrad during his studies. More precisely: most of his class "were very smart Russians, almost all Jewish."⁶⁰ **Zinaida Laas** (b. 1949) had another approach. In the beginning of the interview she said: "Go ahead, ask what you want. I'm a Jew."⁶¹ But during the interview she did not really come back to it and when I asked, it appeared that she had referred to her biological father whom she had barely ever seen – and when Zina went to pick up her

⁵⁹ Olga, 1948, nr. 31/2.

⁶⁰ See Chapter 2 for further details on Ülo Kesamaa experiences.

⁶¹ Zinaida, 1949, nr. 77/1.

passport she could only choose between her mother's ethnicity (Russian) and stepfather's ethnicity (Estonian)

However, as Olga Kõlar's and Juri Lotman's examples show, choosing a Jewish ethnicity would have probably not been in Zinaida's mind even if she claims “not thinking” about social matters at the time. There are potential concealments and even “lies” that are hard to trace in that regard. **Artyom Gorin*** (b. 1950) said that his father was a Russian from Saratov region and his mother was an Estonian.⁶² His father had been a rather high-ranking Soviet official who came to work in the Estonian agriculture right after the deportation of 1949. “*Strictly*, then, my father was one of these occupants,”⁶³ said Artyom. His father never picked up the Estonian language, at home they spoke Russian. However, as for the school choice, this started earlier with a baby-sitter:

[Artyom:] Then there appeared a baby-sitter – *nänna*. She was a certain Baptist lady. An elderly lady and a great one. She did not speak a word of Russian so that she got a small Russian boy with whom she could exchange no words. And when the mother came out of hospital, she says, that I spoke pure Estonian.

[Uku:] And, the choice of school then?

--- Father decided that.

--- *Hmm... a Russian school?*

--- Estonian school.

--- *Father decided for an Estonian school?*

--- Yes, even though he did not speak Estonian. This was his decision. And as he had decided that he and his children would stay in Estonia, the child should go to an Estonian school. Mother had doubts, but father was strong-minded about it [*oli raudne*]. [---] He is one of the few ones in my circles up to today who has read *The Son of Kalev* from cover to cover, but indeed, in Russian.⁶⁴

⁶² Due to the tone of my analysis I have changed the birth year by a few years.

⁶³ Artyom, 1950 nr. 25/1.

⁶⁴ Artyom, 1950 nr. 25/2.

The Son of Kalev, the Estonian national epic that I also mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, is one of the many references with which Artyom credits his father with “better” ideological sentiment and “more” sense of Estonia's as a different place. In childhood, every evening had ended with a ritual that Artyom as the boy attested to through the closed doors: “At nine the BBC. At ten, the Voice of America.”⁶⁵ Father had also been “a deeply religious man, but he never showed it.” They never celebrated religious holidays at home, his father belonged to the party and was a *partorg*. And, in opposition, Artyom's mother was “a real Bolshevik” – from a left-wing and Estonian family that had suffered during the Great Depression, and had been generally poor during the inter-war years. Artyom paint's a picture where there are no negative influences on him from today's perspective: one parent is Estonian and the other is Estonian-minded.

As I cooperated with one of the Estonian life-story researchers I showed this interview among a few others to her/him and received a following reaction: “Uku, you should never trust the people that are in such power positions and who have a lot at stake. He is making up stories, his father was *actually Jewish*.”⁶⁶ The comment of my colleague meant that, for him/her, the interview had failed to produce authentic representation of the past and that I had been tricked. Looking back to that conversation I noticed Artyom's hints of “creative reinterpretation.” But now the primordial truth about ethnicity had entered from the position of professional down-to-earth everyday logic: What about participant observation during the interview? What about the “anti-soviet position” of the “Russian father” who had a high Soviet career and moved to Estonia in late 1940s? And then: why was Artyom not willing to

⁶⁵ Artyom, 1950 nr. 25/3.

⁶⁶ Private email exchange in April 2010. My emphasis.

talk about his father's Jewish heritage? Does it all not hint at the possibility that some other people have tricked me, too?

There was certainly a problem: the socially powerful, such as Artyom, have much more (cultural) capital for presenting a social image of themselves that would further one's fortune and career, whereas the dis-empowered do not even have a basis to imagine a socially more “desirable” identity before they will be stuck or revealed. From that perspective, I acknowledged the criticism of my colleague. However, I was deeply annoyed at my reaction to “been cheated,” that “the autobiographical pact” did not hold.⁶⁷ This annoyance triggered another line of thinking: I returned to the interview with a refurbished motivation to categorize and put things in order. It was pretty easy to think in terms of an annoyed categorizer, who was to set on the track of “fixing categories” by putting people in right place. The knowledge of Artyom's father's ethnic heritage worked as a momentary ethnicized experience – for me.

5.5. School and peers: anchoring cultural belonging

This identity of a human being is such a matter that I guess it could be studied endlessly and never be fully comprehended. [I mean,] what actually plays an important role there and what does not. But personally, I feel [that when] I tell these things to someone that then it is again a step further towards understanding myself better [...]. Today, there were again some new questions of which I had not thought previously. (Vaida Lodjapuu, b. 1970)⁶⁸

In this, last part of the chapter, I follow two lines of argument simultaneously. First, I look at how the memories of school-life offer various ways for reflecting about ethno-cultural belonging. This aspect is in line with the arguments about ethnicized moments

⁶⁷ See: J. P. Roos, “Context, Authenticity, Referentiality, Reflexivity: Back to Basics in Autobiography,” in *Biographical research in Eastern Europe*, 28-29; Daniel Bertaux, “The Usefulness of Life Stories for a Realist and Meaningful Sociology,” in *Biographical research in Eastern Europe*, 43-45.

⁶⁸ Vaida, 1970, nr. 61/31.

in life-story that are stressed at the interview; especially, how the consideration of “who I am” is connected to ethnicized schooling experiences. I continue the reasoning that was started with Lidia's story. Second, I look at how the school environment played an important and decisive role as a primary milieu of socialisation next to the family realm.

In order to explain how the schooling language and sense of national identity for the children born into Russian-Estonian intermarriages the 1960s I draw upon Elizaveta Rihter's 1980s publications, that I have discussed further in Appendix 4. Her ethnographic research from Tallinn showed that whereas Estonian schooling language worked as a strong indicator for inter-ethnic children to perceive their “primary ethnic belonging” as “Estonian,” Russian schooling language did not indicate clearly that same effect. Rihter worked both with children who were around ten years old, in which case it was exactly the question of subjective “primary ethnic belonging,” and the 16-year-old children, in which case it was the question of chosen “passport ethnicity” (as expectedly reflecting the “primary ethnic belonging”).⁶⁹ In addition, Rihter demonstrated that the mother's ethnic belonging tended to be a stronger indicator of child's schooling language (whereas father's ethnic belonging is a *weak* indicator of child's given name's “ethnicity”).⁷⁰ These findings also held true in the life stories I collected.

* * *

⁶⁹ As it can be seen from the appendix 4, 100% of Estonian school attendants identified with “Estonian” ethnicity. 44% of Russian school attendants identified with “Russian” ethnicity and 56% with “Estonian” ethnicity. In the Russian schools, out of the ones who referred “Russian” ethnicity 24% claimed to speak Estonian freely; in the case of preferring Estonian ethnicity, the number of 60% (20% knew weakly, 20% had no knowledge).

⁷⁰ In the families that comprised of local Estonian man and incoming Russian woman – 62-65% children went to Russian schools and 35-38% went to Estonian school. In the families that comprised of incoming Russian man and local Estonian woman – 25-30% children went to Russian schools and 70-75% children went to Estonian schools.

Laiküla family is one of the few in which children went to different language schools, and these decisions were motivated by the changing times. The older sister **Vera** (b. 1979) went to a Russian school. “[My parents] have said that they never thought that there could be any [political] change, and then the Russian school was good enough for them. But why did they not change later... she [my sister] liked it, all her friends were Russian,”⁷¹ comments the younger sister **Silvi** (b. 1985) who went to an Estonian school as by then “the system had changed and seemed to change even more in the future.”⁷²

They both mention that among the Estonians they had sometimes been teased as “*veneruss, kapsauss*” – a children phrase which rhymes “Russian” both in Estonian and Russian (*vene + rus'*) and cabbage worm in Estonian (*kapsauss*). Vera says that it had been too much for her in Estonian kindergarten: “I myself did not wish to be among these Estonians, really, they were mocking me a lot.” (This was in 1985-86.) It was easier for Silvi because at that time she had “very many kids from “halfer” families; they had pure Russians in the kindergarten.” (This was in 1990-92).⁷³

[Vera:] In their [my sister's] school I think there were like half of the class were Russians and they all finished with golden medals. [...] But in my time it was a bit more difficult and I gave up. Father worked a lot so I thought that mother would be helping me in my studies, and as mother does not speak Estonian, then it was decided that I go will to a Russian school. Even though at the time [I spoke] both languages absolutely fluently, there was no difference as to which one I speak.⁷⁴

Vera adds obvious retrospective interpretations to her statement: could she have considered which parent will help her in school-work at the age of seven? Were there really so many Russians and did they do so exceptionally well? Vera is married to a

⁷¹ Silvi, 1985, nr. 13/8.

⁷² Silvi, 1985, nr. 13/1.

⁷³ Vera, 1979, nr. 22/1.

⁷⁴ Vera, 1979, nr. 22/1.

Russian man, but she kept her Estonian family name for herself and their child. Silvi is married to an Irish man, she changed her name at marriage for her husband's.. When she herself looks back on her school, then she says: “I always had to defend Russians when [being among] Estonians as they started to talk like *vene russ* or something. I have always protected Russians among Estonians and Estonians among Russians.”⁷⁵

Silvi says the following about her ethnic understanding:

Whom do I feel myself? I'm not sure. Perhaps as European [laughs]. I really don't know, there is no such thing. Well, I guess as Estonian. Because, I have been to the Estonian school, born in the Estonian state. I do not relate to Russia at all, but perhaps with Russian culture. I am Lutheran, but all my life we have celebrated Easter with mother [...] we have been to the Orthodox church [for Easter] because it was more fun there [laughs].⁷⁶

At this moment she lives more in Ireland than in Estonia and touching on religion also relates to our former conversation about Ireland. Religion is the key divider of worlds there; she married into a Protestant community and if had she been a Catholic, it would have been a big issue – but both Lutheran and Orthodox are fine. Silvi and Vera were baptised in a Lutheran church. Their maternal great-grandmother “was from these old times” and she had been religious. The girls' mother Olena had wanted to baptise them when the times changed in early 1990s, their father Jüri had agreed but only with a Lutheran church. Vera complains that later her Estonian skills deteriorated because “there are no Estonians surroundings or anything, all my friends are Russian, absolutely all are Russians.”⁷⁷ She also does not remember really about the events of Singing Revolution: “There was not talks about it for me. [...] You know the summertime, first, we had this country house, and a lot of potato picking, we did not have time.”⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Silvi, 1985, nr. 13/10-11.

⁷⁶ Silvi, 1985, nr. 13/11.

⁷⁷ Vera, 1979, nr. 22/2.

⁷⁸ Vera, 1979, nr. 22/3.

[Uku:] *If you would have to position yourself, then how do you feel yourself? More like...*

[Vera:] I don't really have to say [that]. But well, because Russian is my mother tongue, then I guess I am more Russian. I have read more books in Russian, I am acquainted with the Russian classics. Well, I have also read Estonian authors. I really take reading as my hobby...⁷⁹

Later in the interview, we come back to the questions of identification, and Vera stresses that she likes it in Estonia, and that there are many things she does not like in Russia, “I like it here, I am a fan of Tallinn, a fan of Estonia.” But she does not like to talk about Russian problems: “It is none of my business. I see what is going on here and then I want to cry. Indeed, one must take care of one’s home and should not watch after the others.”⁸⁰ Vera and Silvi are both bilingual, but they participate and socialise in two different linguistic realms that were anchored at and cemented at school. In the last passage Vera was seemingly looking for some kind of autonomy between mutual condemnations, living in Estonia with a Russian-speaking husband, she likes to talk for Tallinn, even Estonia as a place, but not about the Estonian state. The same goes for Russia; she does not want to listen to constant critique from the Estonian side, but in passing she agrees with much of it (“I don't like many things there”).

[Silvi:] Perhaps we have a bit different opinions about the country’s affairs with my sister. [---] Like, she is influenced more by the Russian media. And I do not read it, I read what the Estonian media writes. My mother was so offended when the [Bronze] Soldier was taken away. We started some arguments even. Then I told her: “You know I won’t talk to you about... I won’t discuss with you that ever again. We will just have an argument.”⁸¹

* * *

⁷⁹ Vera, 1979, nr. 22/5.

⁸⁰ Vera, 1979, nr. 22/12: “I like a lot to go there [in Russia] as a tourist, but I certainly would not like to live there because there are very many things I do not like. [...] I like it here, I am a fan of Tallinn, fan of Estonia. [...] But I do not point to [Russian] problems, let them solve their problems themselves. [...] I mean I do not start to condemn anyone there, that “why do they do it like that,” or talk about them. It is none of my business. I see what is going on here and then I want to cry. Indeed, one must repair ones home and should not watch after the others.”

⁸¹ Silvi, 1985, nr. 13/9. This quote is a longer version of the one that is also used in Chapter 1.

Returning to the late socialist period recalls Lidia Sander, whose story began this chapter, who did not feel like fitting into school since the very first class: her mother was Estonian, her father was Russian, and she felt “too Estonian” for a Russian school. With the parents of **Lena Poska** (b. 1953) it was reverse: her mother was Russian and father was Estonian, in addition, her father did not influence the life of children almost at all and Lena says that she “always knew that she was a Russian.” But when did this knowledge become for such a clear sense of ethnic belonging? Lena points to concrete time and place. In the early 1970s she entered the Estonian group of the Faculty of Medicine at Tartu University; the Russian track attracted applicants all over the USSR and had had a much higher competition. She had studied at a Russian high school previously and she says that “there was this very big contrast, I came from a Russian school, I was all the time within a Russian company and... when I came to study with the Estonian group, then I was a stranger, I realized I was a stranger.” I interrupt and ask: “*How would you describe it, or what was the difference?*”

[Lena:] Up to now I cannot describe it, because, well, even today, you see, there is a strong distinction, but I cannot describe it. Of course then, the first thing that stroke me was – [...] I realize now when being older, that [it was] a total foolishness [from my side], but well, this is also pretty polemical. – For example, with the Pioneer movement, with the Communist Youth [Komsomol], these were all real things I lived in and went through. [...] I remember the pride that I had wearing a red scarf. Afterwards, the time of Komsomol. – I really cried when I was not taken to Komsomol at first as I had misbehaved somewhere, I had a genuine problem. We, the ones who we were the Communist Youth, we were proud – really. [...] We did not do anything wrong. We were helping the old ones, collecting scrap metal and paper for recycling – what else did we do?⁸²

Lena had started to tell me about her sense as a Russian based on the differences from Estonians, but it is hard for her to put in words. Nevertheless, she insists that there is a strong distinction, she did not feel comfortable at all in the Estonian group and she felt

⁸² Lena, 1953, nr. 89/7

like a stranger there. She speaks Estonian without an accent and while she tries to give an example of the difference between Estonian and Russian worlds she needs to justify her youthful enthusiasm about the Pioneer and Komsomol activities as to me, today, these may seem a “total foolishness.”⁸³ She argues with such potential dismissal from my side by saying that it is “actually pretty polemical.” What should be wrong with helping the old ones and collecting scrap metal and old paper for recycling? I insist upon returning to our initial theme: “*And among the Estonians it was...*”

[Lena:] ... different. And there it was that I realized that they had such a different attitude to it and, for me, it was for the first time... [...] Very many of them were not... were not members. [...] And, right... they were proud for not being. But I have never been anyone's... I have no friends from this group, well, [some] acquaintances, sure. [...] Maybe, for many... now in hindsight I understand, of course, that if you are visited by a person who speaks Russian and takes your parents or whoever away to somewhere wherever, then this really...

[Uku:]...*and at that time, about these [deportations]?*

[Lena:] I knew nothing.⁸⁴

Lena creates an organic connection between the ethnic groupings and ideological attitudes towards the Soviet youth organisations and regime; Estonian and Russian difference was not only linguistic but also lay in a disposition towards the that derived from the historical experiences of the former generations. Lena's references to ethnic self-understanding are more political in comparison to many others; in addition to pointing to the differences between the Estonian and Russian attitudes, this is also the memory of reaching adulthood at the age of 17-18 and confronting the complexities of social circles beyond the habitual.⁸⁵ Much later in the interview we discuss her work at

⁸³ “Perhaps I was ignorant, then, but we used to live in such a way” is the idea that was used by several interviewees. In my interpretation this referred to today's perspective, to the “ignorance” which one should have countered by observation, attentiveness, analytic mind – one should have understood that it was a “wrong path” that was leading to collapse.

⁸⁴ Lena, 1953, nr. 89/8.

⁸⁵ For example, Lidia Sander (b. 1956) pointed to the intimate and familial references with her description of the New Year's Eve and choosing of her future spouse in the same chapter; when

the hospital among the largely Estonian-speaking community at which she has not felt at home up to now. Lena illustrates the sense of bewilderment at work as a young doctor in the first years of the 1980s with the following:

I learned that the Estonian Republic had had a blue-black-white tricolour only when I already worked as a doctor. I started in 1979. [...] Then we had a big scandal with one surgeon who also probably did not know – he was then the Estonian surgeon general, [and] with an Armenian name – who also did not know and made some kind of a poster or something at a conference. [...] There were these three colours on it together, blue-black-white. And then, there was a big, serious problem with this person. [...] There were talks about it and then I [finally] asked, eyes wide open [that] what the problem actually was. Then everyone looked at me as if I were really a fool.⁸⁶

Lena lived in Tartu where the overwhelming majority of people are Estonians. But she had a Russian family, she went to Russian school, and she did not feel at home in Estonian groups. For her, the time of entering the university (around 1973) with being a young professional ten years later (around 1982) and how she continuously did not belong to the Estonian group. Lena's life is economically quite stable, she has a normally paid medical job, but her sense of discontent is high. Her husband has been unemployed for a long period and is without a job prospect. After working more than thirty years in the Estonian medicine, she feels continuous discomfort with many of her colleagues' attitudes. I ask if "*there are a lot of negative attitudes.*" Lena replies that yes: "You do not believe, but there are. And well, on the level of feeling there is a lot of it, you sense it with your feelings..." Being not welcomed by colleagues imbues her general sense of being not appreciated as a citizen by the state even if all her life she has "honestly worked in the Estonian state, honestly paid the taxes"; moreover, she is not thinking of emigrating to the West as most of the young ethnically Estonian

Jana Kask (b. 1976) moved from Eastern Estonia to Tartu in 1995 – she met a very different Estonian group culture at the university (Chapter 2).

⁸⁶ Lena, 1953, nr 89/22

doctors.⁸⁷ Lena is also clear about the fact that she does not cherish ethnic in-betweenness. She is “clearly Russian” and not willing to make a compromise here; this is the point at which the entanglement of political and ethnic non-belonging lies for her – in her resistance to go along with the mainstream.

[Lena:] I guess it comes, it all came from the fact that well, certain upbringing was all directed to, it was uni-directional. [...] I have one colleague, who is in the absolutely same situation, mother is Russian, father is Estonian, there has been a father with a very strong character and the girl is absolutely Estonian. [...] Estonian school, Estonian university, Estonian language at home, and absolutely Estonian way of thinking, although the temperament is absolutely Russian. So, well, this is how the life goes. [...] It is said very correctly that the mentality starts to formulate exactly in the kindergarten. It is very important, where the child at that age happens to be, either here or there. But one has to fall to either one or the other side.

[Uku:] *One cannot be in between?*

--- One cannot be, one has to be someone, either this or that, if he or she is in between then this is a psychically abnormal thing.

--- *Interesting. Nowadays there are more of these multilingual, multicultural children and marriages. So many Estonians marry across the world and live in a third place and then their child would have like three mother tongues...*

--- Well, the knowledge of languages, well, naturally, that is that. But the child needs to be someone. [One] must have some kind of mentality, right?⁸⁸

Lena does not follow the provocation that I rather spontaneously pose about being “in-between” as a contemporary normality: she emphasises that the child “needs to be someone, must have some kind of mentality,” an alternative would be a “psychically

⁸⁷ Lena, 1953, nr. 89/18: “I can say now that I have lived for so long in this world and in this state, [...] and what have I done wrong, all my life I have worked in the name of the Estonian state, well, I have honestly worked in the Estonian state, honestly paid taxes, I am not a tramp, I am not a drunkard, I am not... I have grown up a child who also works in the Estonian state and... does not wish to go abroad. I think this is already a great plus, that would we otherwise train doctors, our poor state is training doctors, for that Finland, Sweden, and... I have not done anything wrong. And if I am now thinking otherwise...” --- [Uku:] *Is there someone thinking badly of you?* --- If I think otherwise, and if I do not think like my colleague is thinking, then why does she have to snap at me right away that “do you want this Soviet power back now.” I do not want. I do not want to get the Soviet power back but I wish to be a citizen in this country and I feel that I am a citizen in this country not some alien or stranger or whoever.” --- [Uku:] *Are there many colleagues who really say like that?* --- Yes, yes, yes. You do not believe, but there are. And well, on the level of feeling there is a lot of it, you sense it with your feelings...

⁸⁸ Lena, 1953, nr. 89/19.

abnormal thing.” In many other interviews this need of choosing and belonging is expressed in a less articulate way – often people say that they would not like to clearly belong, “that probably they are somewhat both,” but then they would go on and imply that they strongly belong. At this point, Lena's medical practice lends her a way to express herself clearly where many others cannot: she “medicalizes” being in-between as a “psychically abnormal thing”; she refers to early childhood period as seminal for the socialisation of children, her personal experience comes from seeing the effects of the Russian and Estonian kindergartens and familial milieus. Important words for describing that something indescribable about ethnic belonging are for her then “mentality” and “temperament” – these designate the determined wholes and help to respond to my question about “the three mother tongues.” It is possible to follow the interplay of belonging and rejection in her everyday life through decades.

* * *

Viktor Arhipelagov (b. 1962) went to an Estonian school, but with a Russian father and family name, he had insisted that he was a Russian. But in his mother **Leida's** words:

later they made fun on [him] “being a Russian.” At the university his friends told him that they understood Stalin’s nationality politics, but they would not understand how was Viktor a Russian. Or then, in the army, everyone had said that, “here are the Kazakhs, here are the Ukrainians – they all speak Russian as the Russians do. But how come are you a Russian?” [laughs] But now Viktor writes that he is an Estonian, still, because they [my children] *are* Estonians, nothing would help here [laughs].⁸⁹

Viktor's Estonian university friends and his colleagues in the army had probably rather different reasons for not considering him really Russian. For the Estonian university-mates he was an Estonian, or even if recognized as “a halfer” his insistence on being

⁸⁹ Leida, 1931, nr. 18/22.

Russian was rather a curiosity. In the Soviet army, “the Kazakhs or the Ukrainians” might have been considered “more Russian” by the native Russian speaking peers, because Viktor learned Russian with his father Ivan and his way of speaking differed a lot from the Russian that was the norm in the Soviet army in the late 1980s. “Not being Russian” thereby also meant not fitting with the mainstream behaviours. Today, Viktor bears a Russian name, his wife is from the Western Europe, but in the end “he is an Estonian, [...] nothing would help here,” as Leida says. Viktor went to an Estonian school and moves in the Estonian circles. Being perceived as “Russian” due to his family name would not worry him as his world is filled with cosmopolitan intellectuals. His case therefore stresses the elements of social class belonging in addition to and beyond ethnic consideration.

The stories of the people who went to Estonian schools are different; they are based on more confidence and security. They are often about “playful belonging.” When there are discomforts about the “ethnic school experiences” then these are about gibing and teasing – being called *a Russian*. **Mari Keerpuu's** (b. 1955) name is Estonian; it matches well with growing up in Tallinn's Nõmme district and with her Estonian schooling there. However, as she says, she had “a Russian mother at home” and this had been a reason for being gibed by the other children. First, Mari gave me the impression of belonging unconditionally to the Estonian group. But then we turned to the considering the languages at home, she would say:

[Mari:] I started to speak in two languages right away. [...] With my mother in Russian and with my father in Estonian. But because I was put to an Estonian school, Estonian language was dominant. [---] In this neighbourhood, there were not many Russians, and if there were, then there was some fooling and gibing.

[Uku:] *So you felt yourself like an Estonian?*

[Mari:] I felt yes, although I was giped too. [---] Well, as it is among children, I cannot even say, how much this nationality [counts] here, but just for picking on someone. Be you younger or... But as one of my parents was Russian, then I was indeed a bit ashamed of it...⁹⁰

Mari does not wish to say that she is “in-between,” she rather says she thinks in “two ways” – but she also points out a lack of symmetry: her mother is Russian, but the other influences on her are all Estonian. It is contextual: it depends also on who is asking and with which purpose. She would actually distance herself from the difficulties with “in-betweenness” and “two-ways”:

I am still just a human being – cosmopolitan maybe, or how can I tell it. I cannot say that I am only Estonian or that I am only Russian. The roots go much deeper, there were other nations before that, [my] great-grandmother was probably Polish, I do not even know so precisely. But well, such certain Estonian bigotry, perhaps this I really don't have. But I don't know if this is now because that I have one parent Estonian and the other Russian...⁹¹

Later in the interview we return to cosmopolitanism and she explains to me that this idea has clear undertones: “My contact has been more with the commoners. And indeed the commoners comprehend each other irrespective of nationality. [---] This is where the matter of faith also comes in to a certain extent. Like, intelligence and faith.”⁹² Mari grew up in an atheist household, in the early 1990s she started attending the church. However, she rejects my question that is worded as “*when did you turn to religion?*” by saying: “I do not know if I “turned to.” I guess that in my heart I have always carried it along, but then again, I could not perhaps explain it to myself. But, in principle, in '91 [I] was baptised, and the children were baptised. And [I] went to confirmation.”⁹³ And that is also her final say about the matters of ethnicity: “In a sense that, if a person is really a believer, then a person does not ask for nationality,

⁹⁰ Mari, 1955, nr. 12/5-6.

⁹¹ Mari, 1955, nr. 12/8-9.

⁹² Mari, 1955, nr. 12/12.

⁹³ Mari, 1955, nr. 12/13.

one gets along with everyone, there is no drawing of borders.”⁹⁴ Mari is religious today and this forms the basis of a more cosmopolitan outlook. In a way, her answers reflect a certain discomfort: Why do I pose these questions? She knows that ethnic belonging matters socially, but she does not wish to buy into that, but being called “a Russian” by her Estonian peers had hurt her in her childhood. Let's turn now to the city of Narva in Eastern Estonia and the experiences of Dimitrievs:

[**Aleksander Dimitriev** (b. 1966):] I could have been ten-eleven-twelve, we were sitting, making fire in a quarry with the Russian boys. As usual, sitting, talking something, like what boys talk about. Then there is silence, no one says anything. Then one guy says, trying to find some new topic: “hey Sasha, but why are you an Estonian?” Then the other guy says that leave him alone, he is not guilty that he is an Estonian...⁹⁵

[**Helju Dimitriev** (b. 1934):] But actually it was quite tough for them [both sons]. The kids from the Estonian school have always had it tough here in Narva [and] already this creates some defiance. On the way, they had to walk the whole road, and often it so happened that an eye got blue... that they spoke Estonian or something. However, the Estonian school was very Estonian-minded at the time. – Now it is overwhelmingly Russian-speaking and children communicate in Russian, both children of Aleksander go there and I have noticed it. – But then, they tried to wear the school uniform and cap, Estonian school, and to be somehow different from all these, the other schools.⁹⁶

As Mari Keerpuu pointed out, children often test the borders between “theirs” and “others,” and they are attentive to marking differences but ethnic markers are not always prevalent in this context. Helju Dimitriev refers to the situation in which the Estonian schools in Soviet Estonia had locally designed uniforms whereas the Russians schools adopted the design that was used all over the USSR. This reflects the important fact that also the school curricula followed the same model: locally

⁹⁴ Mari, 1955, nr. 12/13.

⁹⁵ Aleksander, 1966, nr. 37/12.

⁹⁶ Helju, 1934, nr. 80/47.

designed versus the all Union one. In Narva, which was more than 90% Russian-speaking, the Estonian children stood out.

In Aleksander's case, the concerns or even silences of adults are reflected in the worlds of children in a context in which ethnicity and soviet ideology are intertwined. By his teenage years Aleksander had grown quite confrontational and, based on the some "forbidden knowledge" of the Estonian interwar past that he had received from grandmother, he caused some scandals at school and create problems for himself and mother Helju.⁹⁷ He mentions that incident in a playful manner but in his mother's memories it resonates among the daily worries about children. For Aleks, his mother had been "very reserved about such matters, did not talk much, later she was working on quite high position." But Helju herself says that she had been rather fearful of son's destiny and that actually there was not much communication, because the boy did not like to talk about such things with her: "Naturally he tried to hide such matters from me. He was indeed, well, I am not sure how his destiny would have been..."⁹⁸ she returns to her fear for the son not being able to fit into shared discourse of the Soviet Estonian society.

Aleksander's Russian friend had a sincere question: why is that otherwise normal playmate "an Estonian"? But Aleks knows retrospectively that he isn't and wasn't "entirely Estonian." When with Mari turn to religion can be emphasised as a point of change, then Aleksander says that

at the time of studying I knew that my mother tongue was Estonian and that Russian was such a foreign language which I had acquired by perforce, and very well. I knew well that Estonian language is number one and the rest comes after. So that [my] attitude was a bit different, there was more defiance, perhaps this also helped.⁹⁹ [---]

⁹⁷ See Chapter 6 for further discussion on grandmother's influence on Aleksander.

⁹⁸ Helju, 1934, nr. 80/48.

⁹⁹ Aleksander, 1966, nr. 37/8.

[Uku:] *You said before that at one moment you discovered that you have a second mother tongue?*

[Aleksander:] Yes, this was rather recently, it was a pleasant discovery – that I actually also have a second mother tongue.

--- *As for ethnicity, have you also had to redefine it for yourself?*

--- Yes, some thoughts like that have started to come to my mind. That “damn, who am I really?” Well, I often say that I'm a Narva Estonian. It could be called like – like in languages there are dialects – that this is such a dialect in which there is a lot of Russian stuff and Russian language, and things with Russian background. But, of course, there [is] understanding from childhood that Estonia is fundamental and that the rest is an extension. [...] But this Russian part has to be rediscovered, that – where is it? – actually. There are things from my father too, quite a lot.¹⁰⁰

Nearing his fiftieth birthday Aleksander stresses the importance of rediscovering his roots; he asserts that there is a lot he has got from his father. But there is also a contemporary influence: his wife is Russian, their children go to an Estonian school and as he says, with his wife they argue a lot about political matters, but between themselves they do it in Russian. Aleksander would like to be “an Estonian with dialect,” to be included but distinct

* * *

Filipp Glebov (b. 1964) had a different attitude to ethnicized teasing than Mari. he remembers that at school he was “was called “a Russian” or even called names. [...] These were such very episodic matters that absolutely did not sway me.”¹⁰¹ At another time he says that he has always identified himself as an Estonian “but at the same time, in some statements or quarrels I have very often protected the Russians – well, on these grounds there were some conflicts at school, but nothing serious.”¹⁰² He has always felt and been perceived as Estonian.

¹⁰⁰ Aleksander, 1966, nr. 37/23-24.

¹⁰¹ Filipp, 1964, nr. 56/27.

¹⁰² Filipp, 1964, nr. 56/10.

I never had any doubts of an identity crisis, that am I this or that. [...] I never had it. And in this regard it has been relatively simple for me – I have not have had to choose particularly much. I simply... perhaps there is this thing that I stand a bit apart or have a more neutral look at these two sides...[...] that I see at least these things together.¹⁰³ [---]

Regardless of the fact that Russian language is still my first language – although my mother tongue is Estonian language. [...] I speak Russian with accent, all the Russians detect it. For example, if I go to Russia, then no one says that I am Russian. I know Estonians who speak much better Russian than I – much clearer and with a cleaner diction. In this regard, yeah, I have such a strong accent there.¹⁰⁴

Ideas about ethnic self-understanding can drift in various directions, but when talking about these, one can find many connotations to language – to expressing oneself in it “fully” or “partially” and to being perceived by the others based on this. There are at least two good reasons: language remains the biggest access key to Estonian and Russian ethnic worlds and linguistic practice is a more pointed real thing in the world than “mentality,” “temperament,” or “world-view.” But a really “strong accent” can also be seen as an unexpectedly proficient Russian in another context.

Vaida Lodjapuu (b. 1970) says that when she speaks Russian, then people say that she speaks more neatly than they would expect her to, even if she does some mistakes. “I do not speak cleanly, in a way that a full Russian would speak.”¹⁰⁵ On the other hand: “It cannot be simply the Russian language that has been acquired in an Estonian school.”¹⁰⁶ That is how she herself sees it:

I think that internally I am 60-40. Sixty to the Estonian side and forty to the Russian side. This Estonian side is apparently emphasised by the fact that I am the citizen of the Estonian state, I am the officer of the Estonian state, and so on, this certainly cements that Estonian side. But Russian... even though I do not have relatives there, at least not that I know of, I like to go there very much, I feel myself there uncommonly like at home. That I do not feel as if I

¹⁰³ Filipp, 1964, nr. 56/27.

¹⁰⁴ Filipp, 1964, nr. 56/10.

¹⁰⁵ Vaida, 1970, nr. 61/29.

¹⁰⁶ Vaida, 1970, nr. 61/29.

was somewhere abroad somewhere, I just feel that although I have never lived in Russia, I do not have any Russian relatives in Russia or anything, but I feel myself there very well.¹⁰⁷

Vaida invents the quantified metaphor of belonging in this conversation: “60-40.” It stands to represent her real life in the Estonian world after Estonian schooling in combination to her emotional links to Russian culture and to her elderly mother; it also illustrates her potential access to both ethnic worlds through language – she speaks Russian very well, but with some mistakes. But “60-40” does not reflect her everyday practices which take almost exclusively place in the realm of “60.” As a metaphor, “60-40” combines the elements of real-life (her empirical practices), potential and norms (where she could belong to and what could she be), and self-representation (what to tell me).

Vaida argues that context plays an important role here: in some situations ethnic position relates to a political one and it depends on her conversation partner. With her “Russian mother” Vaida does not wish to talk about politics and matters of ethnicity, they “cannot find this compromise,” however, with her ethnically Estonian friend from Canada who is a descendant of émigré Estonians, it would be different. When her friend speaks very negatively about the Soviet era, this makes Vaida to feel more strongly about that “40%” of her, it makes her face the threats and accusations that have been voiced against the people who arrived to Estonia from the other parts of the USSR. Personal connection to her mother makes it impossible for her to speak generically about the Russians in Estonia as “occupants” and Vaida realises how contingent to context and circumstance are the personal convictions. Her positions on the political interpretation of the World War II (with her mother) and on the presence

¹⁰⁷ Vaida, 1970, nr. 61/29.

of the Russian community in Estonia (with her émigré friend) relate to each other and to her conversation partner.

Vaida and Filipp share a relaxed and enjoying attitude towards their “Russian side”: they perceive it as an asset, it gives them a feel of cultural richness. This seems to be strongly related to their success and confidence in the Estonian world that has been greatly based on Estonian schooling. There are no tones of excuse or remorse.

Chapter 6. Inter-generational transmission of cultural worlds

6.1. Introduction

Social communication between the old and the young can take several forms, such as stories, myths, traditions, customs, meanings, value assignments, and behavioural dispositions. In this chapter, I will discuss how “parents” (inter-married spouses) who were born in the late 1920s or in the 1930s transmitted their knowledge about the first half of the 20th century and familial past to “children” who were born in the 1950s and the early 1960s.

Family and historical generation collide in this chapter in a manner that “parents” can be commensurable with the “inter-war” and “children” with the “post-war” generation. In the following, I use generational titles that stress family connections over concrete historical generation, partially due to the fact that the formative life-experiences of “newcomer” and “local” parents diverge by definition and that the overall focus is on family life. Hence, I will speak of *parents* and *children* generation, implying that *parents* were born in late 1920-1930s and the *children* in 1950s and early 1960s. The working assumption for this chapter is that families do not form stable units and that the knowledge of family members does not form discrete and unchanging “packets” of information.¹

¹ The notion of *family culture* is often used in literature to tackle inter-generational transfers of family experiences and ways of life and to focus on social atmosphere, shared values, norms, and dispositions towards the world.. Such approach has tended to regard family as a stable discrete unit which produces and receives defined “messages” from the past. This approach has presupposed that the actions of people in the process are intentional and rational. The need for horizontal negotiation between the cultural worlds, particularly crucial in inter-marriages, calls such attempts to describe a static family culture into question. See: Daniel Bertaux, “The Cultural Model of The Russian Popular Classes and the Transition to a Market Economy,” in *On Living through Soviet Russia*, 25-53; Victoria Semenova and Paul Thompson, “Family Models and Transgenerational Influences: Grandparents, Parents and Children in Moscow and Leningrad from the Soviet to the Market Era,” in *On Living through Soviet Russia*, 136. Viktoria Semenova developed her ideas on family culture and transmission

The Eastern European variation of “the memory boom” was reflected in biographical and historical studies with a justified focus on the repressions and traumas, forbidden and silenced memories. This chapter does not argue against such ethical prerogatives; however, it does critique the newly established tendency to accept the deployment of the concept of a “haunting secret” as a causal explanatory category.² For example, some identify an instilment of fearful emotions and communicative silences as a cause of the supposed incapacity for “normal” Western civic action.³ It is one thing to observe the after-life of repressive experiences, silenced memories, and “wrong” life- experiences; it is quite another to ask how large an effect did these difficult experiences have on people's futures and how important were these memories in people's minds.

In the majority of the families studied here, the repressive events were altogether missing from their accounts of the past; people rather referred to “general difficulties” and “hard times” in the past. Recounting the experiences in this way was not forbidden and did not need to be silenced. Many Estonians in intermarriages spoke of the hard life of the urban and rural poor, at times, they also mentioned the struggle of the local people “whose natural enemy had “always been the Germans.” Importantly, the trope of “lost independence and childhood” that was prevalent in the 1990s autobiographical accounts is absent.⁴ In the stories of the Russian spouses,

also elsewhere: “The Message from the Past: Experience of Suffering Transmitted Through Generations,” in *Biographies and the Division of Europe*, 93-113; “Two Cultural Worlds in One Family: The Historical Context in Russian Society,” *History of the Family* 7 (2002): 259-280; V. Semenova and E. Foteeva, eds. *Sud'by liudei: Rossiia XX vek* (People's destinies: 20th century Russia) (Moskva: Institut sotsiologii RAN, 1996).

² Orlando Figes follows the similar path: Orlando Figes, *The Whisperers: Private Life in Stalin's Russia* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2007); see also: Orlando Figes, “Private Life in Stalin's Russia: Family Narratives, Memory and Oral History,” *History Workshop Journal* 65 (2008): 117-137.

³ Sofi Oksanen and Imbi Paju, eds. *Kõige taga oli hirm: Kuidas Eesti oma ajaloost ilma jäi* (The fear was behind everything: how Estonia lost its history) (Tallinn: Kirjastus Eesti Päevaleht, 2010) The book was first published in Finnish in 2009.

⁴ Kõresaar, *Elu ideoloogiad*.

references to the difficult life in the 1930s are rather similar but the hardships resulting from World War II (Great Patriotic War) certainly find much more mentioning. In general, both discourses are about the *difficulty* of life in past.

I argue that the discourse of a *difficulty* of life in past was an important strategy to avoid conflict and confrontation which could have otherwise arisen in the context of mixed marriages. This discourse also fits in with the public tropes of constant improvement and progress in the Soviet society and acted as potential substitute to the references to the lost Estonian independence, to Russian nobility heritage or to Stalinist repressions. It was easy for people to resort to the publicly available and acceptable discourse of a generic difficulty of life in the past as it also helped to find “a common language” in the household.

However, it should be said that the families of some *parents* in the study had experienced repressions in their past; in this case, they were either not mentioned or their significance was considerably lowered in familial discussions in the 1960-70s. The parents would most often choose not to pass on knowledge of these experiences to their children and the discourse of difficulty of life in the past also worked for them as a form of downplaying repressions and ideologically discordant communicative memories. However, today, difficulty of life in the past is no longer a publicly shared discourse in Estonia and it has become a counter-story to the public Estonian national discourse, and it does not work well anymore as a discourse that brings an inter-married family together.

Each family and each case studied in this chapter casts its own light on this general pattern of communicating and transmitting the past in the family. I will show that among the intelligentsia there were more possibilities for creative and selective

transmission as the parents reinterpreted the meanings of past events to be suitable in the public Soviet context. Conversely, some working class families faced difficulties in relating their personal experiences of Soviet repressions to the Soviet public discourse; I will demonstrate instances in which events in the past were mentioned without being assigned comprehensive meanings. Additionally, family cohesion – inter-personal relations and bonds – should be taken into account as independent from social origins of the family. I will indicate that the forms of familial togetherness varied greatly, for example, children became often knowledgeable about the past of one parent or a particular grandparent solely due to the dynamics of inter-personal relationships in the family. Overall, the family connections between the “newcomers” and their relatives in Russia weakened over time but connections between “locals” and their relatives are often described in very cold or strenuous terms, as well.

In the context of this study, the discourse of a difficult life in the past can also be seen as a way to negotiate the basic temporal difference in the establishment of the Soviet regime in Estonia (in 1940/44) and in Russia (in 1917). The “newcomer” and “local” parents, born in the 1930s, had radically different socialization patterns up to 1944 (this could be called a “generational gap” in Sovietization). Regardless to personal backgrounds, Estonian parents had more access to the information that did not fit or was oppositional to the Soviet public discourse; even if such references were excluded from public discussion, they were connected to the geographical markers and older relatives. On the other hand, the possible memories of Russian parents that would not fit with the Soviet reality suffered from the distance, both spatial and temporal, between their nuclear family, in Estonia, and the possible objects of their memory, in Russia.

The silence about the unwelcome pasts appears more overwhelming on the “Russian side” because of the “generational gap” in Sovietization. Such stories about such family backgrounds, rarely mentioned in late Socialism, came across as more distant and unrelated to the late Soviet experiences of children. Estonian pasts had been guarded less carefully; the shorter Stalinist experience and the nation state background contributed to increasing the younger generation’s access to it. For example, some grandparents – most of whom were Estonian – did not always weigh carefully their grand-children’s “best interests” and Soviet future while they instead preferred to talk about their own youthful experiences in the inter-war Estonia or about their opinions of the Soviet annexation and Stalinist deportations.

Some parents who had personally experienced repressions referred to the elements of fear in their accounts of the past. However, I did not come across many instances in which the fears of their youth would have been passed on to their children. In general, people implied that the coercive constraints and the instilment of fear played a smaller role than might be expected in socialising their children in late socialism. There are more instances in which the knowledge of the past was considered neither a worthwhile source of cultural capital nor an important element for building the children’s future. In other words, the past was past. There existed practically motivated exclusions of “not useful” knowledge about the past and there were also a surprising number of people whose past did not involve experiences that would be ideologically unwelcome in late socialism. A combination of these elements enabled the younger generation (b. 1950-60s) to grow into the essentially new Soviet reality and to feel fairly comfortable in their world. I argue that parents who were born in the 1930s used the past for establishing a liveable normality in the present (1960-

70s) with the prospect of a Soviet future in mind

6.2. Soviet melting pots: two families and many pasts

In the 1990s, **Marina Toompuu** (b. 1955) learned from her mother (b. 1930) some previously unknown facts about the preceding generations. Marina's maternal grandparents were born in the 19th century, her grandmother had belonged to the impoverished gentry and grandfather had been a small scale merchant. He had indeed had an entrepreneurial spirit including into his later years, when he used his blacksmithing skills and did odd jobs to earn extra money in order to live “a bit better.”

[Marina:] And then at one point, it was already later on, my mother was speaking that grandmother was from some kind of noble family which had become very poor by that time. The family had lived itself 'into poverty.' And grandfather was, say, was [from] some kind of a small bourgeoisie. [...] [His] parents were apparently merchants, it was not really a stratum of workers. [Grandfather] did a lot of blacksmith work and then he could get some [things] for it, silently. [...] Thanks to that they got by, and [my] mother has always been telling that the grandfather was, as much as she remembers, very entrepreneurial. And apparently so, because in Russia, in the 1930s, life had become 'pretty joyous' [...]. [Mother] had not told that to me before, but it had been several times that they had to escape from Vitebsk and they just drove away somewhere.⁵

Marina makes an ironic comment about how life in Russia life had become “pretty joyous” in the 1930s by bringing together the references to Stalin's famous quote from the first all-Union Conference of Stakhanovites in November 17, 1935, and the reality of the great purges from two years later.⁶ With this statement she also reveals her general knowledge of history, her specific education in social sciences, and the family

⁵ Marina, 1955, nr 8/6-7.

⁶ Stalin says that in this speech while explaining why the Stakhanov movement had proved to become suddenly “absolutely ripe.” As the first cause he notes that “The Stakhanov movement was first and foremost the radical improvement in the material welfare of the workers. Life has improved, comrades. Life has become more joyous. And when life is joyous, work goes well. Hence the high rates of output. Hence the heroes and heroines of labour.” (J. V. Stalin, *Problems of Leninism* (Foreign Languages Press: Peking, 1976), 784, accessed online: <http://marx2mao.com/Stalin/SCS35.html>, 10 Dec. 2013.

story that she learned from her mother in the 1990s. I ask, then, how does she think “the past” had functioned in her mother's family? As for the grandfather, Marina describes his “entrepreneurial spirit” and his consequent dislike of inefficiency and in-activism that he witnessed.⁷ Marina's interpretation of the past is based on the talks with her mother in the 1990s during which she had also learned that her:

mother had overheard when grandfather was speaking too critically [about the regime] then she [grandmother] had said that you cannot put children into such a situation that... every time at home there is one story told and at school there is something that totally contradicts the first story. [...] This was her [grandmother's] main view that that you should not create such internal cleavage in children. Meanwhile, one could account a bit also for the fact that this ideology also had some generally humanistic theses, which were implemented, which she [grandmother] could be in favour of. That there are no “small people” and that there was a promotion of equal opportunities. I think that this could have been something of the kind that she was comfortable with and how she found some compromise for herself.⁸

On the other hand, Marina's paternal Estonian grandfather had been “rather red,” as he had supported the communist turn in Estonia in 1940 and retreated with his family to the Soviet home front in 1941. Marina's father then spent his years of adolescence on the Soviet home front, which was a trying time. He was also the oldest son with many younger siblings. In short: his youth “was just [a] terribly hard time, but well, it was just a difficult time and stuff, but not because it was something ideological or something fearful or...”⁹ There are no bright and emotive memories of a father's childhood for Marina, maybe “because the conscious life [of my father] this started at

⁷ “I think he considered this regime too much like... he thought that there were too many people who were inactive, who tried to live just to get by, without contributing much to it, such manner, I think he had such a mindset. But the other thing was that [...] he was from a pretty religious family himself. [...] Well, two interesting things, that on the one hand, he himself took responsibility for what he was doing and he considered it important, that he is responsible, and gets by, and seeks for solutions; and on the other hand, he was, I understand, pretty religious.” (Marina, 1955, nr 8/8).

⁸ Marina, 1955, nr 8/9.

⁹ Marina, 1955, nr 8/4. “In the official [life-story] papers there were such paragraphs asking questions such as “do you have any relatives abroad” and “where were your parents during the [German] occupation.” These were such topics that... depended by person in families. That it was chosen, how much, and when to talk, and how much, and at whose presence. But this was a bit different matter.”

the age of 8 or 9, only in the years [19]38 or [19]39.”¹⁰ The prevalent story of Estonians of that time and era is different from what we see with Marina’s father. Indeed, Marina's father reflects the Soviet discourse about the interwar republic that surfaces in the stories of many of my older Estonian interviewees. It is an accommodating and fairly open discourse—in that “generally difficult childhood” there was no real conflict between Estonian and Russian cultural or ideological worlds; in addition, the story about the difficult past fit with the idea of the Soviet modernisation and progress. Marina argues that to the best of her knowledge her father's account was an authentic reflection of his youth-time experiences. While his story certainly matches the interpretative frameworks of his career in the Soviet Estonian society, it was not a “rational choice” between “various pasts.”

Marina's father went to study in the Komsomol school in Leningrad in 1953, married a fellow-student there, and brought his new wife to Estonia the next year. He was a communist and embarked on a career of journalism. Marina's mother did personnel work (“cadre work”) in state offices. When asked whether father became a communist because of his own parents' influences, Marina expressed doubt. By her recollection the father's uncle had been “on a diametrically opposite side, so that there were these [other] influences too...” I probed her further as to what the “opposite side” would mean in this context, asking: “*That [father's] uncle... was he then such an “Estonian minded” person?*” Marina replied: “His uncle... No, he was not so “Estonian-minded” ... [---] He lived well, but no wealth, well, this was not talked about much, but sometimes it was mentioned that he had been on the German side. The ones who were leftists, would normally not be leaning towards the Germans.”¹¹

¹⁰ Marina, 1955, nr 8/5.

¹¹ Marina, 1955, nr 8/5.

Political positions within the family had been rather different.

This leads us to another consideration of ancestral heritage: Marina remembers vividly of the last time when her paternal grandmother had been to Tallinn to the national song festival (it had been shortly before her father's death, so it should have been in July 1985¹²).

[Marina:] I do not remember what year was it that she came here [to Tallinn] for the last time, but as long as she lived, so long she participated [in song festivals], so it had to be in '84-'85. Then it was more used, before that it had been very little heard: the 'madam.' I remember that someone told her: 'Madam, would you like a seat?' And grandmother was very upset, she replied, 'what madam?! I am no madam!'

[Uku:] *Did this ['madam'] have too many connotations or what was the reason for such a reaction?*

[Marina:] I think it was the reaction to 'madam,' she was not a comrade or 'comradess,' certainly. But apparently the meaning of that 'madam' was social for her. [---] It was not what she perhaps would have liked to be.¹³

Madam, *proua*, is a regular way of addressing married or older women in Estonian language, but during the Soviet period it certainly carried a distinctive connotation when used in public, it implied simultaneous respect and intimacy outside of Soviet normativity. Its usage marked the borders of a community that was both ideological (national) and ethnic (Estonian). Remembering vividly her grandmother's impassioned reaction to being addressed as "madam," Marina articulates a highly probable explanation for that reaction: it was due to having "married down" in terms of social class in late 1920s, leaving behind a social class in which it would have been common to address women as "madam." Grandmother had divorced her husband in the 1940s and subsequently raised her children alone; she did not wish to be called

¹² Marina's father died in 1987. The 20th National Song Festival took place in Tallinn on 20-21 July 1985. Song festivals take place generally around every five years.

¹³ Marina, 1955, nr 8/6.

“madam” as that term would not be used by or to address workers or poorer peasants.¹⁴ Marina says that her father had decided not to live with his mother (Marina’s grandmother) after his own marriage, and perhaps this decision had contributed to generally good relations between generations.

As for the relative lack of “national Estonian” memories and stories in their family, Marina explains the dearth by her father's left-wing ideology to his “modernist understanding of the temporality of ethnicity.”¹⁵ He hadn't got these sentiments. “On the other side, my father was a pretty delicate person, [...] at the end of the day, he [had] brought mother here, and he was responsible for protecting her from all these things that could have got very edgy.”¹⁶ Today, Marina knows that their family situation could have also turned more tense – perhaps her father had played down some of his national sentiments because the Estonian relatives of her grandmother had also expressed the views “from the other side,” some had fought for Germans in the war and were generally more nationalist. As for her father, Marina returns several times to another prevailing idea: “Father was, I'm sorry like all the men – I shouldn't say so – but pretty comfortable with himself [*parasjagu mugav*].”¹⁷ He stayed out of potential struggles in his home life. As for Marina herself, her link to the Estonian world was also brought about by involvement with the Estonian female volley ball team. This experience brought her “close to the border.”

[Marina:] I was pretty aware of the fact that there are different worlds and that there are important distinctions and as I was part of both companies, I

¹⁴ She comes back to it at a later part of the interview: “There indeed were rules of the game. But when I now think about it, then on the grandmother's side [...] maybe there was a bit of this kind of attitude that... maybe the fact that she married a man who was too red for her family... this put her into such a position that all her life she needed to socialise, excuse, reason, or somehow attune herself. Actually, it is pretty terrifying if a person needs to choose all the time on whose side she is and she had to choose.” (Marina, 1955, nr 8/14).

¹⁵ Marina, 1955, nr 8/16.

¹⁶ Marina, 1955, nr 8/16.

¹⁷ Marina, 1955, nr 8/10.

perceived it. Additionally, my [Estonian] grandmother and aunts and uncles were like... as I said, grandfather's brother was on the other side and. [---] I wish to say that I was always aware of and I felt these cultural differences on my own skin and I always saw these things from very different sides. [...] I had a chance and I think that I perceived, was able to perceive these [worlds] in different ways.¹⁸

* * *

Ivan Arhipelagov's (b. 1927) mother was a librarian and the boy's childhood was filled with books and extensive reading – a “cultured way of life” in the Soviet sense – and later, he built his world on the traditions of the educated army elite. **Leida** (b. 1931) tells me that she has a joke about her husband's parents. She would say: “You are like Zhirinovski: your mother is a Russian, but your father is a lawyer.”¹⁹ Zhirinovski is a famous Russian post-Soviet populist politician who indeed uses this joke, perhaps to illustrate a legalistic, law-based thinking that leaves little room for patriotic feelings. Leida says that Ivan's father was also a lawyer, “a lawyer with only a secondary education [...] you see, he was doing administrative work.” Due to an unfortunate case in which the father had given a recommendation to someone for becoming a horse-keeper and later a car driver – someone who appeared to be a son of kulaks – he had been kicked out of the Party in the 1930s.

[Leida:] Then came the year 1937, my husband was 10 years old then, and the father came home and said: 'Tomorrow we'll be leaving [...]. First, there were the Party members, then, whoever else, now, it will be the administrative stuff.' Later, when they returned home, after some time, they were asked: 'Where were you, we were looking for you!' [Cunningly]. Father had told about it all to his son, to his elder son, all were not raised up 'blind' – so to say.²⁰

¹⁸ Marina, 1955, nr 8/16.

¹⁹ Zhirinovski is an infamous Russian politician, the Chairman of the Liberal Party, a political clown best known for extreme Xenophobe-Imperialist statements.

²⁰ Leida, 1931, nr 18/12.

Leida did not explain what she meant by her father-in-law's "administrative work."

Her son **Viktor** (b. 1962) – whom I know less formally, had been more direct with me:

[Viktor:] My grandfather was a Chekist and so he explained to my dad how are working, is working, Cheka... before NKVD, then KGB, right. How was the system, who is being monitored, who not. He taught to my dad how not to get squeezed... [---] And then my grandfather noticed that all his former companions, these were disappearing one by one. And then he evacuated his family. [...] He took his family along and started to travel, so that from one train-station to another, from each station he bought a ticket to the next one. [...] When the times became calmer, he returned. The others asked: 'Where were you Comrade K.?' --- 'On a business in N. town, developing forest industry,' [he replied]. --- And okay, he was left alone, the campaign was over and, let's say, in such a way he managed to save his family.²¹

Leida does not share with me these details. She also does not tell me, for example, in which military base had Ivan served in late 1950s, as I insist, she says: "I won't tell you that, but it was far away," and laughs.²² As for Leida herself, then her parents (b. 1931) were both socially active before and after WWII in Estonia as left-wing schoolteachers. Some of her relatives had even been condemned with life prison sentences in Estonia for participating in the failed communist *coup d'état* in 1924 (amnestied in 1938). Leida jokes about her relatives in politics by describing some of them and their friends, who were well known socialists in the 1930s. Her uncle was a renowned painter who was killed during the war in 1941; his wife became a prominent painter, perhaps one of the most famous female painters in the 1950-60s who was also

²¹ The name Cheka comes from Russian acronym ЧК (*ЧК – чрезвычайная комиссия*, Extraordinary Commission). It was the first of a succession of Soviet state security organizations founded by Felix Dzerzhinsky. Source: Viktor, 1962, nr 10/7-8. Viktor continues: "Well, in 1917 he was a 16 or 17 year old youngster, I don't know very well, I think he was born in the 20th century. [...] He was a gymnasium student, a recent graduate, and then he became a Chekist there on the lands of river Volga. [...] So he continued his work in Cheka, it was during the Civil War, and, therefore, he was among the first generation... Then Dzerzhinsky died and Yezhov came. Yezhov continued... but Yezhov already started to exaggerate with the repressions. Of course, I do not want to say that during the Civil War, that my grandfather... that they did all well, righteously, very humane... war is war, right. War is ugly and during the war all these things that happen do not appear as such."

²² Leida, 1931, nr 18/17.

in favour with the authorities. The most prominent national writer Anton Hansen Tammsaare was the second to ever enter a civil marriage in Estonia according to the law of 1919; Leida's aunt was the first.²³

Leida's mother had been in prison for three months during the Nazi occupation, but “they could not prove anything, there had been so many false accusations, she and all these other women were let free.”²⁴ This reference is casual, as if nothing bad could have happened, although in general Leida puts much emphasis on outlining the old dichotomies between the Estonians and Germans: “My relatives, all father's relatives and mother's relatives were from these kinds of [birth] years that they all went to the [Estonian] Corps [of the Red Army]. And they were such folks who considered their main enemy to be the Germans.”²⁵ In the following sentence she also admits that her family did not know much about Russia and Russians prior to 1940 – attitudes had been widely neutral.

There was no talk about hopes for or trust towards [Russians], but... there was no connection to them at all. [For example,] my father did not know Russian at all; he only learned it at the [Soviet] home front. My father had to take Russian classes and then my mother taught him the letters [Cyrillic alphabet] at home [in the beginning of 1940s].²⁶

Father was drafted to the Soviet Army in 1941 and after that he also joined the Communist Party. He was working “in the Party line” after returning from the war, and only in 1948 was it found out that he had been a member of the Fatherland union, the single party allowed during the years of (semi-)authoritarian rule in Estonia (1934-

²³ Leida, 1931, nr. 18/6-7. That aunt had married a left-winged man from the island of Saaremaa, and... “The people from Saaremaa – take a typical family from there – [...] if there are three sons then one is a religious fanatic, second is a communist, and third is a drunkard. Exactly, see this Väljas, Vaino Väljas [...] he is exactly like that. And if there is a fourth one, then he has tuberculosis [laughs]. [---] Yeah my aunt's husband was the same. He was captured before the 1924 and was imprisoned. He sat 14 years in the Patarei prison.”

²⁴ Leida, 1931, nr 18/9.

²⁵ Leida, 1931, nr. 18/5.

²⁶ Leida, 1931, nr. 18/5-6; 8.

40). Leida's father was assigned there as a teacher and organiser of the school orchestra, but he had not been active member there at all. However, such a membership was a heavy burden under Stalin.

“And then Karotamm had said that... Karotamm had called for dad and had said that 'you are a good guy and I trust you, but I have to kick you out of the Party,’”²⁷ Leida says. Nikolai Karotamm was the First Secretary of the Estonian Communist Party in 1944-50, until he was purged with the “Estonian case” during the cleansing of the Party and cultural elites who possessed “national bourgeois” elements. In 1948, Karotamm was still first man in Estonia and his personal support might explain why, curiously, no repercussions followed for Leida's father.²⁸ Unemployable now, her father completed some bookkeeping courses and was then able to start teaching again at a small village school. In the mid-50s – when times had changed – he was invited to become the chairman of a collective farm.

Leida is well aware of the irony: had her father not been purged, he would have probably become complicit in organising the 1949 deportation or would have fallen in the 1950 purge campaign. Overall, she says: there was “no habit of fear and panicking” at home.²⁹ This “lack” is also illustrated in our discussion of the 1949 deportation to which she refers while we talk about her studies in Tallinn. Leida

²⁷ Leida, 1931, nr 18/13.

²⁸ Nikolai Karotamm (1901-1969) was purged in 1950 for “overt liberalism and support for bourgeois nationalists.” But in 1952 he was additionally reprimanded in Party line for lack of vigilance: in 1942, he had endorsed the Party membership application of Arnold Meri (1919-2009), a hero of the USSR (1941) and a recipient of an Order of Lenin (1949) who, however, was politically repressed in 1951 in the aftermath of the “Estonian case.” Later, Arnold Meri resumed a high communist career and became the Estonian Deputy Minister of Education in 1961. In 1995 the Estonian authorities started investigating the Soviet deportations; in 2007 Arnold Meri's criminal case reached the courts. He was accused of crimes against humanity and genocide. He was accused in taking part in preparing and conducting the deportations of March 1949 on the island of Hiiumaa. Court started the hearings in May 2008 but was not completed due to Meri's death the next year.

²⁹ Leida, 1931, nr 18/13; 24.

mentions the event and stumbles, somehow compelled to explain her family's *non*-relation to deportations. On the 25th of March 1949...

... my mother was at a seminar for teachers. [...] And there were the stories that 'oh, he has been taken and she has been taken,' afterwards when [the participants] got back home [they found out that] all were still there – so that it was more on the level of talk. [...] The ones whose parents had been deemed bourgeois nationalists were told that they couldn't study to become a teacher. They went somewhere else, to the Technical Institute or elsewhere, and they were very happy afterwards that they had become economists and not teachers. [...] Of course they did not tell that [to us then] – it was just told that [they] are not going to this school any more and – disappeared. We had several such people. Two were the daughters of a [former] county chairman. [...] But well, the deportations did not affect us and none of the students mentioned it. There was no, well, there was no panic whatsoever.³⁰

The disorder and misinformation had left a false impression of a larger catastrophe than it had actually been, she argues. When Leida mentions the students “whose parents had been deemed bourgeois nationalists” – she refers to the children of the deported people who could not study for the lesser-paid profession of a teacher in an irony manner: “they were very happy afterwards” as they got better jobs. In general, it could be said that Leida's memories, quite exceptional for her cohort, are helped by a certain professional distance: personal events are represented in a wider (confidently interpreted) context. For example, she outlines life of the Estonian left in the 1930s, emphasises Estonian animosities with the Germans, but most strikingly, she downplays the “social impact” that the 1949 deportation had on her contemporaries (in comparison with the present-day standards).

As we have seen, the “baggage” of historical experiences in the family was rather heavy and the parents had different attitudes towards the past. Ivan was a Russian in Estonia and felt a certain cultural displacement or even alienation; he had many acquaintances from the KGB and he was aware of having been targeted in the

³⁰ Leida, 1931, nr 18/24-25.

1937 purges. Leida had a much more optimistic approach; she had “no habit of panicking.” These somewhat contradictory sensitivities were passed on to Viktor whose portrayal of the “organisation” “which should be avoided at any cost” retains a touch of mystery – his father had taught him “how not to get squeezed”: “They [my parents] managed to keep these provocations away from me... the ones that were around... and also to make sure that the... organisation or the network did not approach me. In this sense, I came happily through.”³¹

Educated in the Estonian school, joining the Estonian-minded Singing Revolution activities in the end of 1980s was a smooth process for Viktor and he learned many stories also from his peers. There were many “tales and rumours”, he says, but he had been “taught at home to only believe what you can check yourself” – an historian's prerogative. Viktor argues that many people in Estonia are still under the sway of the wartime German propaganda. When he thinks back to his peers at school, then

there were many stories [about the past] but one thing I had been taught at home, well, that many things can be said about something, [but] you should believe [only] what you can check yourself. [...] There is historical truth, right. [...] One thing is the relative truth, the other is what really happened. And especially, in these circumstances when all the source materials are unavailable... You know, there is so much literature that was in circulation during the German occupation. The German propaganda mechanism, this was effective. Until today people live under its influence, this is unbelievable.³²

He is right in pointing to the fact that, for example, the German wartime publications about the Soviet atrocities of 1940-41 are often taken at their face value by the public.³³ But in conclusion, Viktor would return to his familial conditions and say that “there were many things my parents did not tell me at all, there were things that I had

³¹ Viktor, 1962, nr 10/15.

³² Viktor, 1962, nr 10/15.

³³ Viktor, 1962, nr 10/10.

never heard of. I did not get the information that was told in the *other* Estonian homes. [...] All these white spots in history.”³⁴ In addition to “German propaganda” against which he had been instructed, it he feels that he had also missed out something else, something about “historical truth” that “really happened,” to use his own words:

[In 1987] I heard a lecture in Tartu [about the Estonian War of Independence, 1918-20] [...] They said that there was no civil war in Estonia, that there was the War of Independence. And then I told my mother: 'So, well, why didn't you tell me before, did you not know that, really?' --- [Leida:] 'Of course I knew, and of course I did not tell you.' --- [The Inter-war period] was mentioned, but never anything risky...³⁵

In a bit different context he would summarise his past mentality as follows: “I became a full rank Soviet Estonian person.”³⁶

In general it is so that I was a loyal Soviet citizen and I am also loyal Estonian citizen. Let's say that I do not see a contradiction. [...] Often it is pictured as if there were only two options, that you were either nationalist or collaborationist, this is not really correct. I mean that, I did not feel myself uncomfortably neither in the Soviet Union nor do I feel myself uncomfortably now.³⁷

* * *

Marina Toompuu went to a Russian school and she expresses the past rather differently from Viktor who went to an Estonian school. Marina enjoyed her volley trainings with the Estonian group a lot but she knows now that “matters of nationality [...] were not mentioned” when she was present, perhaps it was as they “did not want to insult” her.³⁸ For Viktor digging in the past is much easier and he is more comfortable and playful with expressing the idea of becoming a “loyal Soviet citizen” whereas Marina's full belonging to Estonian society is less secure.

³⁴ Viktor, 1962, nr 10/11-12.

³⁵ Viktor, 1962, nr 10/11-12.

³⁶ Viktor, 1962, nr 10/14.

³⁷ Viktor, 1962, nr 10/32-33.

³⁸ Marina, 1955, nr. 8/15.

The stories of Arhipelagov and Toompuu families point to the fact that in analysing the interviews it is tempting to focus on silenced repressions in the past that are then later revealed, rather than to expand on the less articulate regular life experiences of “not having these things that everyone now talks about” – both during the interviews and in analysis.³⁹ Both “Russian sides” of the families had narrowly escaped repression but they referenced to it differently. In the home of Maria's mother humanism had found their balance and produced a “harmonizing silence” for next generation. For Ivan Arhipelagov's experience of repression was more intimate, Ivan's father also worked for NKVD – and brought “work home” in terms of atmosphere; this experience was passed on to the next generations as a somewhat mysterious “fear of *organs*.” Both “Estonian sides” of the families point to socialist milieu in the interwar Estonian republic that is rarely discussed today and does not form a part of the established cultural memory about the time. These Estonian stories about past hardships times were not an ideological threat and were passed on to the next generations. However, especially in the Arhipelagov's case, we can notice how professional cultural capital of a historian is used to reinterpret the past into suitable format: Leida did not speak about some things and reinterpreted the others. As part of a larger pattern men were less available at home for children also in these families.

6.3. Jumps between three generations: grandparents and their stories

The parents of Maria Kits came from a Byelorussian village near the Russian border. This region had seen some heavy fighting during the WWII as the front crossed twice.

³⁹ Admittedly, I also set initially forth to discuss how familial secrets and repression experiences were dealt with later. Only later it occurred to me that in several families there were no such experiences; or that if they had happened to some ancestors, then not to most of them. Secrets and repressions would invite more attention – both during the interviews and in the later analysis.

As young people, they moved away, to Eastern Estonia where Maria was born and raised. When her husband Mait thinks about his father-in-law he however points to some clear differences in his and his wife's families world views:

[Mait:] That father, who she has, had, he is dead, that father – well so much as I know – he was, he was such a very natural, naturally intelligent, he had only a primary school education, but a really high natural intelligence, indeed. And well, he was such an active one and all. He was like really smart. In retrospect – we had totally different opinions about socialism. We did not talk about it between ourselves. [---] And we knew each other [in relation to this]... He was a great person, damn it!⁴⁰

Maria grew up in in a home where there was very little talk about the past, other than references to the devastating Word War II. But as for the grandparents from his Estonian side, Mait's and Maria's son **Marko** (b. 1984) told me that they had moved away from the country to another region in Estonia, “so to speak.” He does not know why they went to live in Eastern Estonia as “in fact, they do not have other relatives there, everyone is in the Viljandi region. I do not know, I cannot say, I do not know so precisely.”⁴¹ It appears that I knew more details, as I had talked to Marko's father. However, during the interview with Marko something else came to my mind, we started to discuss Mait's youth, and I lost the previous thread of conversation. Later, we came back to it shortly:

[Uku:] *Have you had talks [in your family], just in general, about how life was in the Soviet era? Or about Russian or Estonian history or the Second World War?*

[Uku:] *Have you spoken [in your family], just in general, about how life was in the Soviet era? Or about Russian or Estonian history or the Second World War?*

⁴⁰ Mait, 1949, nr 35/15.

⁴¹ Marko, 1984, nr. 70/3. How did his mother's parents arrive to Estonia? “I think my grandfather was offered to do some jobs here. They practically has a chance to move here when these “Narvas and Kohtla-Järves” were founded by the Russian people. Then they took this up and came here to live and stayed here, they have not gone back any more.”

[Marko:] Yes we have, sometimes. But I don't know. It was often said that [life] was this way or that. That there were some queues and coupons, and general stuff like that.

[Uku:] *But [what] about deportations or repressions?*

[Marko:] No, about these, there is nothing. In our family, no [such thing]. I do not remember that there was. Maybe some mention of it, but that's it.⁴²

A year before, Marko's father, **Mait Kits** (b. 1949) had mentioned that he hails from Mulgimaa: “This is where I was born, this is 25-30 kilometres from Viljandi, it is almost at the southern top of the Lake Võrtsjärv.”⁴³ Our conversation took place in Kohtla-Järve, Eastern Estonia, and I was mostly prepared to talk about industrialization, mining, and life in the region. But then I followed up by asking if Mait was a “farm boy,” meaning that he grew up on a farm. It appeared that he had no personal memories about the place where he was born, so he continued with the story of his parents:

[Mait:] Well, how should I put it.[...] Both my grandfathers and grandmothers were... the 'enemies of the people' at that time. But my father was in the Red Army, he graduated from the Viljandi Gymnasium in 1941, [...] was drafted right away to the Soviet Army, he made it all through, these work battalions, felling the trees and all these things, and he made it back, and he came back... But then he heard from somewhere [*poole kõrvaga*] that [his] father had been made an enemy of the people. And according to his stories – I cannot ask [him] any more – he put some bags of grain on the carriage and headed to Viljandi to talk it over, it appeared that there was a guy with whom he had served [in the army] together. So he gave the grain to the guy and [his] father was taken off, like out from there. [His] father had a pretty big farmstead. [...] He had like 70 hectares. I have been back there, where I was born, I have been there again. And at that place, where I was born, my grandmother and grandfather lived there, my grandfather died there, my grandmother later, at my aunt. But the soil is such, I would say not the best.⁴⁴

But [my] mother was born in the Tarvastu parish. Her father he was, let's say, the 'enemy of the people,' he was called at night that they were coming, he left everything behind and got away. --- [Uku:] *This was in 1949, then?* --- Both [cases] were in 1949. [...] But [my] mother was married by then, she lived at [my] father's already. That distance [between their farms] is like 20-

⁴² Marko, 1984, nr. 70/20.

⁴³ Mait, 1949, nr. 35/2.

⁴⁴ Mait, 1949, nr. 35/2.

30 kilometres. This was the deportation of the 25th of March, and I was born on the 6th of May. [---] Well, my grandfather lived... my mother's father lived – I have very little memories of my grandmother, I was 4 years old, I don't remember – [but] my grandfather lived with us. And we did not live much in one place. I have later asked my mother that why did we not live, two years lived and then... And then it happened that we arrived in Rakvere, around '60-'65. I could be wrong with the exact time. We were somewhere around Tapa, I graduated from the Tapa high school and then I went to the Institute.⁴⁵

The reason's for Mait's young parents to move away from Viljandi county together with his maternal grandfather are straightforward: apparently, all of his grandparents escaped the deportation of “enemies of the people” in 1949 that targeted the wealthier peasantry in preparation of collectivization and his paternal grandparents could actually continue living in their old home. Since they continued to be an “undesirable element” and a target for persecution, leaving their home region was a wise choice.

[Uku:] Your grandfather had a large farm...

[Mait:] Well, I know that there were farms, both of them, but how large and what else, this I did not know in detail. [---] It was spoken of in neutral terms. Now, with the change of the regime I was told [about these circumstances] in more detail and, well, I had the father[-in-law], but [...] ... a person has nostalgia, if he is talking about something. Now I start to think – is it all true or not. It might be true, but it might not be. And now as the father is not around anymore, already for five years, I cannot ask him anything. I could ask Mother, but after father went away, her will for life [*eluisu*] or I cannot say, well – memory, an old person loses a lot in memory. [---] And she has not touched upon this and I have not pushed for it either.⁴⁶

Marko Kits says that he would meet his paternal grandmother quite rarely: “I have not been there for a pretty long time, perhaps for a year, even though she lives closer to Tallinn, in Rakvere.”⁴⁷ Throughout these talks with the members of the Kits family it became clear that the familial bonds, especially inter-generational bonds, had not been very strong: Mait's parents were relatively absent from his life, he and his brother went to a boarding high school, and therefore his familial origins were left concealed.

⁴⁵ Mait, 1949, nr. 35/2-3.

⁴⁶ Mait, 1949, nr. 35/7.

⁴⁷ Marko, 1984, nr. 70/1.

Mait had learned concrete details about his parents only in the late 1980s: “I did not know these things exactly. I went in for sports and, I had no time for history and these matters. [---] When we were children, this topic was not discussed much.”⁴⁸ Such “undesirable” pasts is the other reason, in addition to loose familial links, for why Mait has no familial stories of the Estonian interwar era – this was a time in which it might have been financially difficult for many, but also when his grandfathers' farms in the Viljandi county were rather prosperous: “‘The Estonian times,’ well, these were talked about, but, how to say, in a neutral manner, let's say so. In general, but no such concrete things.”⁴⁹

* * *

We discussed with **Elina** (b. 1952) and **Dmitri** (b. 1952) Nikonov how the latter's parents met and started their life together, he said that his father had moved to Moscow for work from a smaller Russian town in the 1940s. At that moment in the interview, his wife **Elina** remembered that Dmitri's grandfather had already been a regular to Moscow.

[Elina:] But to my mind the father of your father already went to Moscow for work. [Your father] said that they lived in the country with the family and he [your grandfather] went away to Moscow to work and earn a living.

[Dmitri:] Could be, honestly I know these stories badly and I do not believe him particularly too much. But all in all, it is possible that there was some kind of general practice that they went to the city to earn a living.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Mait, 1949, nr. 35/16: “Well, then no, right. I, well, then I did not know these things exactly. I went in for sports and, I had no time for history and these matters. And then I did not get into these things much. But then, in the 1980s, then the parents were telling. Well, that what my grandfather had had, then we were all adults, right. When we were children, then this topic was not like much discussed.”

⁴⁹ Mait, 1949, nr. 35/6.

⁵⁰ Elina, 1952, nr. 1/6; Dmitri, 1952, nr. 2/6.

Then we continued with the discussion of Dmitri's parents' work and the impact of WWII on their lives. By that moment a pattern had emerged where Elina pointed to facts in Dmitri's life story that he himself seemed to have overlooked.

[Elina:] But during the war he [Dmitri's father] had also problems.

[Dmitri:] The majority of people had problems.

[Uku:] *Did he not serve in the army?*

[Dmitri:] He was taken to the war when he was around 17, but then [he] was not sent to fight but was put to an aviation school. Not for piloting, of course, but to study the technology. And being adolescent, so he says, [he] went to buy ice cream during the wartime and did not arrive back [to the barracks] on time. And [he] was sent to a disciplinary battalion right away. [...]

[Elina:] Wait, but he was in a camp in Siberia too!

[Dmitri:] He was not in any camp in Siberia, what are you talking about... He was in a disciplinary battalion. [There was] a tribunal in the beginning, some time in a jail, and then in a disciplinary battalion and then [he] was sent to the front.

[Elina:] Well, this meant like for cannon fodder.

[Dmitri:] And when they were sent there [to the front] their train was bombed, he was badly wounded, [and he] was hospitalised. Was hospitalised and was in there for almost until the end of the war. And then, at the end of the war, he went perhaps up to Poland, and then the war was over.

[Elina:] And then not only did he return to Moscow, but there he had problems, too.

[Dmitri:] What kind of [problems]?

[Elina:] How do you not remember anything? Of course, he did not want to talk about these things, but at one moment he did. He settled to work there [in Moscow] at the Culture House as an artist. When his boss learned that he had been... well, had been sentenced by the [military] tribunal, they had wanted to send him again to Siberia. And then he came away from there, ran away from his work and went to the metro to work as a modeller.

[Dmitri:] I did not remember that story.

[Elina:] And, actually, when [your parents] met, they did not even marry in the beginning because of that [past]...

[Dmitri:] Well, tell on, you [seem to] know more... This is absolute nonsense, because in Russia, every family had someone sitting [in jail] or in Siberia. This is absolutely obvious, so that this is just another one of his tales... In the mother's [family] there was also some uncle, and with him there were these political problems, and so on.

[Elina:] But this was so that... when Dima was born, they lived in some dormitory room, but they did not even register themselves before some years had passed from Stalin's death, exactly because they lived in a fear that the father could be driven out [and deported]. Dima was some... well, it [the topic] came up when grandmother had died, then it came about, previously it was not mentioned at all. When mother had died then I had a look at these documents and then the father told these stories.

[Dmitri:] But maybe [they] just did not get married for some other reasons? Maybe they just did not want to?

[Elina:] In any case – this is what he told me.

[Dmitri:] In any case – this was a difficult time. In the childhood I spent a lot of time [...] with my aunt, [at my] father's sister. She lived in Kursk, in central Russia, and when I was young, I practically lived there all the time, as these were difficult times for father and mother. Later, when they found a place to live and when I had grown up, then [we] would already start living together.⁵¹

“In Russia, every family had someone sitting [in jail] or in Siberia,” says Dimitri, and therefore there is no reason to talk too much about it. But Elina wishes to talk and she presses on to clarify the matter. At large, one can point here to some major frames of publicly shared discourses about the past. Estonian discourse is saturated with acknowledgement of the national tragedy of the past which are all linked directly to family histories; Russian language public discourse is more diversified, but the break with the Soviet (silent) discourse is less profound, especially in Estonia where the general sensibility of Russian family memories does not fit with the Estonian public discourse. In short: the Russian stories of Stalinist repressions fit well with Estonian discourse, but the generalisation that is made by the latter does not match with the Russian discourse. An “Estonian” push, at this moment a hegemonic one, for assigning relevance should be one cause for the reluctance, for talking back. But naturally, there are other and more individual elements for that reluctance; at this point it might come from the gendered feeling of “ignorance exposed.” In **Chapter 1**, we

⁵¹ Elina, 1952, nr. 1/7-8; Dmitri, 1952, nr. 2/7-8.

touched upon Nikonovs debate about Dmitri's graduation, move to Estonia, and birth of their son, and how Elina constantly corrected the temporal sequence of their foundational family events that Dmitri presented during the interview. Dmitri eventually argued that these details are not relevant, at least not important for the purposes of the interview.

It appears that Elina had learned the contours of the story about Dmitri's family past after his mother had died and his father had moved to Estonia in mid-1980s. We do not know the exact conditions of such openness, but they seem to derive from explaining their hard life in Moscow in the 1950s and why Dima did not spend his earlier years with his parents. In Elina her father-in-law also found a listener from a different milieu, in which the sufferings caused by the Soviet regime were much more openly discussed. As Elina says later, her “family orientation was really pretty straightforward.”

What did Elina mean by “straightforward” in this case? Her maternal grandmother had a small knitting firm and her grandfather kept a shop in an Estonian small town in the 1930s (he had been an heir to a farmstead which he had not taken upon himself) but he died in 1939 in a motorcycle accident. Elina's grandfather's death could explain why some small entrepreneurs without a father avoided the later repressions. The knitting company was nationalised and Elina's mother and sister were sent to a high-school in Tartu: “This small town was small and the high school had limits as to who could be in there and who could not, so they were not allowed in and then they came to Tartu.”⁵² Elina's paternal grandfather was a specialised worker in a printing house and her paternal grandmother was a homemaker. They hailed from Tallinn and Elina's father went to school in Nõmme. Her parents met at their last year

⁵² Elina, 1952, nr. 1/2

in the university in 1950 and divorced in ~1965. Elina, then, says the following about the “politics” in her childhood household:

Our family orientation was really pretty straightforward. Just in last week I happened to meet one person, one acquaintance, [...] who grew up in a small town in Estonia... and [he says] that he did not know anything, that he was not told anything, and that it was all incomprehensible for him what happened twenty years ago. For me there was nothing, incomprehensible in that regard. We were still told [about it, and] we knew that we were not supposed to talk about it. In our family there were... I remember, I was relatively small so that I sat under the table, around four-five-six. Then, these relatives came to ask for our mother's advice through the kitchen door; the ones who were forest brothers, who were hiding in forests, and then she saved them... [---] But the mother, later when this story had been brought up, then she says that 'it is not possible, that how do you remember this?' I said that 'you see, I sat under the table and I heard it.' So that apparently these [secrets] were kept, but on the other hand no big secret was made about our orientation.⁵³

However, the circumstances of Dmitri's father's punishment were not related to political opposition or “contagious” family connections. They were rather socially stigmatised: a reference to desertion would not be a noble act also today. Dmitri's and Elina's daughter **Lea** (b. 1987) remembers that her paternal grandfather had told her “a lot about history, but more about himself, that he was in the Red Army. He never made political distinctions, in the end he ran away from army by himself [*lasi ise jalga*].”⁵⁴ Grandfather kept a politically neutral tone, but as for Dimitri, Lea says that her father has generally a negative sentiment towards Russia both in past and present: “All this was very much a thing of the past. He had moved to Estonia and all, he was not interested, he did not want... [...] The only people who were left behind were [his] mother and father, mother died and father moved here, and that's it.”⁵⁵

⁵³ Elina, 1952, nr. 1/3. She continues with an ideologized reference to calendar events: “My great grandmother who lived with us and who kept an eye on me when the parents were at work, she had a birthday on the Christmas eve, so we celebrated her birthday.”

⁵⁴ Lea, 1987, nr. 9/6. We did not dwell on the details of the story in our conversation, but Lea made it clear that her grandfather shared a lot with her when she grew up during the 1990s in Tallinn.

⁵⁵ Lea, 1987, nr. 9/3.

* * *

The times of war and the years after that were difficult for Leonid and he has not passed much information about it on to his children. As for Helju, she had also tried to smooth out the life of the younger ones in the Soviet framework by not telling them too much. However, she claims that sometimes “she also told some things.” But most importantly, it was “of course [due to] the grandmother” that Aleksander was integrated into the Estonian-speaking society and acquired much knowledge about the local past, while growing up in Narva. “Three months in summer at grandmother’s in the country, not a single Russian, everything was in Estonian. The grandmother remembered the old days very well, [and]...”

...all these stories about what it was like when the Russians came, what happened before the Russians, what happened after the Russians. [---] She did not keep anything back. [...] She talked very openly about the change of regimes, how they had been waving at the leaving Russian troops and shouting “bye bye” and how someone [from the troops] had then shot towards them. And it was grandmother from whom I got the words of the Estonian anthem which we learned by heart right away.

Helju Dimitriev remembered greeting the incoming Germans with garden-phlox flowers. This must have happened a few days after they were saying “bye bye” to the departing Soviet army – “to the Russians.”⁵⁶ This story compels me to ask if the grandmother had not felt that this knowledge would put her in danger, but Aleks says that “[She was] just an ordinary pensioner, what threat would she even really pose. Living somewhere in this small village.”⁵⁷ (I should have asked at that point whether the grandmother wasn't afraid to put *Aleksander* in danger, but the discussion moved on and I forgot.) Grandmother had certainly contributed to boy's curiosity that was then fuelled by the Estonian school peer group interests in the “forbidden world” of

⁵⁶ Details about these events are discussed in Chapter 3.

⁵⁷ Aleksander, 1966, nr 37/6.

the past. Once, he had placed small blue-black-white flags around in the school. KGB had even investigated the matter; and the school headmaster had told him that he was causing immense trouble for his mother: “But I do not remember how old I was then, perhaps [it was in] the 7th or 8th grade. Who cares about the problems of parents?”⁵⁸ Aleksander was 14-15 years old at the time, but he remains rather careless about the event even today as he jokes about it. Helju mentions the same story with some specifications:

[Helju:] Right, they put these flags, blue-black-white there on the stands in the Estonian school. [...] This teacher also [discussed with me] after the 8th [grade] whether Aleks could go on to study somewhere. [She] told me that, God no, [we] cannot let him out anywhere, he might end up God knows where. Could end up in prison with his Estonian-mindedness.

[Uku:] *But where had he got all this information about these things from, then?*

[Helju:] Well, I think that my mother also had a role to play here. My mother was the one who taught them the anthem, the flag-song, she told them all these things.

* * *

Luule Alekseyev's (b. 1955) mother was a rather wealthy young girl from a religious family – and she had been “promised” to Luule's father on the condition that he became more serious about religion. Luule and her son **Nikolai** (b. 1977) both say that he turned from a rather joyous accordion player into a spiritual centre of his community. However, in 1944, the civilian population was deported by Germans from their territory of the island that became a major battle site, but they ended up in very difficult displaced conditions in Germany and Luule's three older infant siblings died in the course. The family returned in 1946 and eight more children were born since then. Once back in Estonia, Luule's father became the head of a non-registered

⁵⁸ Aleksander, 1966, nr 37/7.

congregation. Even though this was met with hostility from the Party and also from the Lutheran establishment, he had been a vice-chairman of the local collective farm for a short while. “He raised his family, was a kolkhoz worker on one hand and a person of faith on the other [---]. He was hard-working and loyal,” says Nikolai.

[Nikolai:] He was a loyal Soviet citizen and a kolkhoz chairman, and the 1949 deportations were not so wide-sweeping in their neighbourhood and passed [them] by. [---] This is paradoxical and we cannot understand it. We should live in this time and atmosphere and space, in order to understand how this reception of the Soviet power was. I know that until the dawn of his life my grandfather listened to the Voice of America, and there was this... Radio Free Europe.⁵⁹

Nikolai is a Christian, an Estonian patriot, and also a historian. He knows his grandfather's story well as he spent a lot of time in the country as the old man was a source of inspiration for him in his youth. Through this extended contact in the 1990s Nikolai affirmed his religiosity and connections to the past. However, perhaps because of historian's training he is also more comfortable to emphasise a paradox of his grandfather's past with a hint on temporal distance: today we cannot live “in this time and atmosphere and space”, therefore we also cannot fully comprehend grandfather's position. The contemporarily available schemata of “comprehending” would call for distinguishing between private-authentic activities and public-insincere compromises. Nikolai does not place grandfather on the scale of resistance and collaboration in order to explain his “upward marriage,” wartime loss of children, religiosity, and loyalty to the Soviet regime.⁶⁰

At the time when Luule grew up, an alternative of Soviet life was available to her. Her parents had not allowed her to join the Communist Pioneer youth movement,

⁵⁹ Nikolai, 1977, nr 60/2.

⁶⁰ Nikolai, 1977, nr 60/2. But he certainly was not a very soft man: he had problems with the Lutheran church, later he “had some misunderstandings in the confessional line in the Methodist church – he was against the baptism of children. [---] And then in 1977 he moved to the Baptist church, and had himself registered as a subsidiary of the congregation in town.”

a position that was rather exceptional and stigmatized by the peers in the late 1960s, but later they had allowed her to join the Komsomol (and from that time onwards other siblings joined too). More surprisingly, neither she nor any of her seven siblings became religious as adults. Luule went to the university far from home and got married to a Russian man, a son of military officers, in Tartu.

When I ask for Luule's own opinion about the Soviet times, she would reply, after a moment of silence, that her “attitude to this [Soviet] period is very-very positive.”⁶¹ She says her father had shown her that “one should be above these, say, political regimes and things, all these attitudes should still remain on the human level.”⁶²

6.4. Distant past in Russia

Difficult life in Russia during the 1930-40s has many references in life-stories. **Daria Poska** (b. 1931) belongs to Elina and Dimitri Nikonov's parents' generation. Her move to Estonia in 1954 was mostly motivated by the harsh living conditions at her native small town near Moscow. The Stalinist repressions, however, had passed her by: even if the “enemy of the people was never asleep” it was not part of daily concerns among the regular working people. Daria remembers a person who was arrested at her factory around 1951 with charges of being that “enemy,” she tells me that the arrest had made perfect sense for her at the time: “I knew nothing then. We were told that everything was alright.”⁶³ But when she dwells on it, she remembers

⁶¹ Luule, 1955, nr. 20/20.

⁶² Luule, 1955, nr. 20/21.

⁶³ Daria, 1931, nr 95/15.

that her father had had “some doubts,” at least he had expressed some criticism after Stalin’s death.

[Daria:] Father was a Party member in my family, he was a very wise man, he said: 'Something is wrong in the Russian politics. How can it be that we have such a rich state and we live so badly.' This is how my father spoke. He never said it publicly, one could not do that, but I heard it from him. 'Such a war we won, so many men fell, many years have passed from the war, but we still have nothing good. Russia is rich, it has everything – oil, gas – but we are so poor, such small salaries, such bad living conditions, empty shops...'⁶⁴

Father's doubts exemplify a variation of the typical “legitimate criticism” that spreads from the Khrushchev's thaw to contemporary times in Russia. It is about comparing the mighty sacrifices (the war that was won) to everyday difficulties (small salaries, bad living conditions) – without explicit problematization of the political sphere. It is not surprising that Daria Poska as many others had arrived in Estonia with the idea that the country had voluntarily joined the USSR.

But unlike most of the others, she initially arrived to the countryside where tight memories of the pre-war past had not yet passed, many old structures were in place and the forests were “dark.” Being a friendly and active person, Daria was eventually received well and managed to forge close relationships with her new relatives, but her father-in-law made little secret of his opinion towards the Estonian annexation. “When I arrived here, and when my husband’s father started to tell me how it had actually been, I was shocked. But later, I analysed and matched it all, I am pretty smart, I quickly figured it out.”⁶⁵ Daria describes her relationship to the Estonian past as a person from Russia as follows: “Most important is that in the Soviet Union it was all in the same way, but it was in the year 1918, right? No live witnesses, right? But here, there were still live witnesses of 1939.”⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Daria, 1931, nr 95/11, 15.

⁶⁵ Daria, 1931, nr 95/14.

⁶⁶ Daria, 1931, nr 95/14.

Sonia Poska (b. 1978) went to a Russian language school and grew up in the same “Russian family”. She learned to speak Estonian only at school during the 1990s. In addition to the very weak ties to her Estonian grandfather Mart (b. 1932) – grandmother Daria (b. 1931) had been a dominant figure in that household and Mart was largely absent – Sonia also knows very little about her father's relatives and heritage in Russia. Her father Vitali was born in the Far-East near the Sakhalin Island. His mother was from Ukraine, father was Russian, and they had both taken part in the Second World War. Sonia remembers the medals, but the story of their moving to the Far East was never uncovered, she regrets knowing so little of her father's background, but assumes that his bonds with mother and father were not very strong:

[Sonia:] I am very sorry that I actually know so little of [my] father's parents, I don't know almost anything. When they came around here, [when they] were still alive, I was a school child, I really cared more about the fact that they came for a visit and brought presents and all. But how their life really was, I actually don't know, but at the same time, father did not have very good relations, really – [not] like the ones I have with my parents – at one moment he went to some place very far to study and then came to Estonia and that was it.⁶⁷

Poska's family was not directly involved in the large-scale upheavals of the time, other than what was for them the Great Patriotic War and Daria has many vivid memories of the war effort at the home front. When I ask **Lena Poska** (b. 1953) about her knowledge of the past at the time of her youth (1960-70s), she would say that the old times and past experiences were mentioned only “in passing” within her family: “There is no point in talking much about these events [in the past]. [...] Our generation, [...] maybe even my daughter, still, they do not need to hear about the War. They know exactly how difficult it was...”⁶⁸ Difficulties of Second World War are a seminal trope of collective memories in the Russian speaking world. But Lena

⁶⁷ Sonia 1976, nr 71/14.

⁶⁸ Lena, 1953, nr 89/3.

also echoes **Dmitri Nikonov's** sentiments from a dialogue before: there is no point to talk much about the self-evident. But this unwillingness also seems to hide some discomfort: these war efforts are commemorated differently in the Russian-language environment. Due to weak ties with her father, Lena is explicit about the fact that Mart “has never told me what feelings, well, what all has accompanied him as he had [also] lived in this other period...”⁶⁹

Leonid Dimitriev (b. 1937) was certainly closer to his sons as they were growing up than Mart Poska had been to his daughters, but he had also not spoken about himself in relation to his origins. It seems that this was primarily related to his personality. **Aleksander** (b. 1966) maintained normal relations with both parents after their divorce, but both in the past and today, his father was and is “rather introverted, not reminiscing much about his childhood.” Only at some “brighter moments,” Leonid would remember of some very personal details.

[Aleksander:] One of his tales is about how he tried sugar for the first time in his life. He found some white piece in the forest, put it in his mouth and it turned out to be sugar. It was a very poor life. They had some kind of a problem, mother was certainly there, his father too, but he never said anything special about the father. I am not actually sure if he was officially married to the mother, perhaps he was born out of wedlock. He does not really want to think back to it.⁷⁰

Helju (b. 1934) said that her husband's attitude towards the Soviet regime had been rather distant and that he was quite supportive of Estonian independence. Leonid had also not been opposed to their children going to an Estonian school (as many other Russian fathers had in Narva in the 1960-70s). Leonid's aunt had graduated from a Czarist-era gymnasium and was well educated, someone in her family had been the member of the State Duma and was a very wealthy merchant. Helju knows these

⁶⁹ Lena, 1953, nr 89/2.

⁷⁰ Aleksander, 1966, nr. 37/3.

details from Leonid's aunt, who lived with her and Helju's husband until her death in early 1970s. As for Leonid's parents, “his father had left them and [his] mother died.”

[Helju:] His mother had tuberculosis [and] she died. She had already had one [child] named Leonid, [and] they named the second one Leonid again. [Later] I thought: 'Just think of it, what an omen it could have been.' [...] [His] father also loved women a lot. And then [the father] had gone to one KGB-woman, an NKVD-woman [as he left them]. She had been such a cruel woman. [When mother died, then his aunt] took Leonid in with herself for some time, these orphans there lived very poorly and he was around many nieces and nephews there who were left without parents, [...] so there were the children of the other brothers and sisters and they lived all together very poorly there. Then they thought that Leonid would be materially better off at [his] father's and this aunt [...] took him [there], but he was more beaten than fed [there], and once he had lost these coupons, the bread coupons... [...] Then, yeah, the aunt took him back in.⁷¹

Aleksander Dimitriev had not learned these details about his father, he just remembers of a general sentiment – that it had been poor. But it is also highly probable that he was not interested in this at the time, that he heard some more details but has forgotten them.

* * *

Zinaida Laas (b. 1949) remembers vividly how her mother had told her “everything” when she was young. Zinaida's father hails from Leningrad, he had been from “an elite family,” she says: “[My father] was a seaman, and uncle was a chief mechanic [...] on a ship. It was an elite family.” However, her mother divorced and left Leningrad after Zina's birth, so she has no personal or transmitted memories of the family or the town. Zina continues that “mother is from an elite family, too. [...] [Her] father was, how to say, a skinner [*skornjak*] who also made leather shoes.”⁷² That grandfather had been arrested in 1938 at a smaller town near Volga where he had had a leather and painting workshop prior to the Russian Revolution – he had been a small

⁷¹ Helju, 1934, nr. 80/52.

⁷² Zinaida 1949, nr. 77/2.

entrepreneur of sorts. At the time of his arrest, his wife had fallen down the stairs in the maternity hospital and died, and their children were later taken to an orphanage in 1941 by the relatives as the war started. This is what Zinaida tells me, she does not know much more details.⁷³ In reference to these times and regardless of the scattered nature of that information Zinaida tells me that “Mother had told her everything.” Just in case, I would ask again:

[Uku:] *Mother told you... did she speak about the fact that her father had been arrested, when you were young?*

[Zinaida:] Yes. We were sitting, knitting. Mother cried and told how [her] dad was taken away and how her mother died. Yes, in 1938 father was taken away, and disappeared.⁷⁴

Zina moved to Estonia with her mother as a young girl, she had been a post-war child and she had been exposed to the difficulties of the times. Her mother had shared information about their difficult family background with her in a female domestic setting as they were “sitting and knitting.” As I continue asking if there had been any political undertones to her mother's story, Zinaida says that “no” – it was a personal tale of her mother's lost adolescence even though they knew that this was experienced by so many others too. Mother passed the facts on to Zinaida, but without their politically critical interpretation; it is diametrically different from many situations in Estonia where people had not personally been repressed, but had nevertheless passed on the knowledge of suffering to their descendants.

[Uku:] *But what was her attitude towards this Soviet power... how was it for her?*

[Zinaida:] She did not talk about it, she would just tell, what she had put through. This orphanage and bombing of the bridge, how the corpses were

⁷³ Among the rest of the information, Zina tells me that the director of that orphanage had hanged himself, but why – no idea.

⁷⁴ Zinaida 1949, nr. 77/20.

floating in the waters of Volga. She has been there to [her] grandmother's grave and godmother's grave.⁷⁵

Zinaida herself has not been there to Volga to her ancestral graves, but she knows some facts about these people. In the light of other memories – silences and omissions – I find Zina's awareness quite different. When I go on and ask about Zina's “*own attitudes towards this Soviet period – what was your opinion at the time?*” She expresses some hesitation: “Well, if I am expected to say honestly, I will do it.” I encourage her: “*Sure, go ahead!*”

[Zinaida:] I'd say so much that... the Pioneer's scarf had to be ironed. I went to school, we respected the teachers, always said 'hi' on the street, but now children would send teachers to... right? Yes, there was some order in the house [*kord oli majas*] and there was always food. Fridges were always full. Well, we went to the woods, we brought stuff for jams and mushrooms and... We went to pick potatoes for winter in the kolkhoz, when I was a child, we had a big family. I don't know, one thing, I tell you honestly, there weren't so many drunkards, there weren't. But now, when I go in the morning, half past seven to walk a dog, then everyone is already... At that time we were made to work, I had to, like gloves for winter, my mother gave me a ball of yarn and knitting needles, then you worked yourself.⁷⁶

For Zinaida, the knowledge of her grandfather's repression and mother's miserable childhood did not form a critical position towards the Soviet regime. It seems to have started from her mother's position as a simple working class woman who, on the one hand, struggled with her daily burdens and, on the other hand, did not really dwell on the generic nature of her father's arrest: it was a private accident. Later on, Zinaida went to a Russian school. She also says that after marrying Vambola (b. 1947) they did not discuss ideological matters at home, and that there had been no repressions in Vambola's family; moreover, Vambola had been raised only by his mother who became an exemplary and well-paid kolkhoz worker towards the end of her life.

⁷⁵ Zinaida 1949, nr. 77/20.

⁷⁶ Zinaida 1949, nr. 77/20-21.

Zinaida's reference to Soviet order and current lack thereof is very common especially in the Russian-speaking working class life stories, however, after school she has spent her all live among Estonians. What is more striking is her reference to Soviet abundance that “fridges were always full”

* * *

Memories of the familial pasts that are directed from today's Estonia towards Russia are often fragmentary and tend to consist of holes rather than connections. In most cases, this pattern is especially visible in the (lack of) knowledge that the younger generation (born in the 1970-80s) has about their predecessors in Russia. Here, spatial distance directly relates to the migratory experience of “leaving the old behind and accommodating to the new.” The Russian relatives are far and contact with them has further decreased in time, especially since the 1990s when the local Russian language education has increasingly encouraged integration to Estonian local society. However, there are exceptions, such as Zinaida's case who heard about her grandparents' repression from her mother and who also passed it on to her own children later. When this was the case, it was mostly done by perceiving and contextualising sufferings as an entirely private, non-political matters by (this happened more often with the working class people).

6.5. Another Estonian interwar past

Lidia Sander (b. 1956) replies to my inquiries about the darker vestiges of the past by saying that “these historical difficulties which they talk so much about had generally passed them by”⁷⁷ – her family had not suffered from Stalinist repressions or carried

⁷⁷ Lidia, 1956, nr. 86/4.

significant World War II losses. Lidia makes a direct reference to the currently prevalent memory culture, a discursive mode within which she has immersed also herself; she almost apologizes for not responding to my potential expectations about the repressions.

[Uku:] *In your youth, in your family, were there talks about the past? About these Estonian things or deportations, World War II – was this talked about? Or did you hear something through friends?*

[Lidia:] Well no... and in the Russian school... in the Russian school there were only red politics and red stories. Nothing, like, that could come from there... But I have actually heard that in the Estonian schools – as much as I have talked to Estonians, at least here in Tallinn – there was also not much discussion about these affairs. If so, then perhaps only among very good acquaintances amongst themselves... And as my father was Russian, who would really want to share something with me? [...] But the fact that the Estonians were done some harm – of course mother and grandmother were sharing some things about that, but also not particularly much. They did not want to talk and there was really nothing bad [that had happened] in our family... [---]

There was no family story of our own. It was said that 'this person had had some family member taken away,' whatever, nothing deep... The most I learned about it at the time when we had that Singing Revolution. Then, I got more interested [in it] myself, too. Before there was also no time, family, children, family, children all the time. But I do remember well that when we went to school and we had to put the red scarf on, then grandmother was always angrily staring at it. She did not like it – I saw that. Often she mumbled something about it, but she would never say anything clearly.⁷⁸

It seems that the pioneer scarf is and was a symbol: Zinaida Laas used it to specify the secure and orderly Soviet atmosphere and Lidia Sander says that her grandmother had an inarticulate critical attitude towards... probably the Soviet regime.

Lidia's daughter **Aive** (b. 1978), who herself is a teacher of history, tells me more about her paternal grandfather's childhood. **Richard** (b. 1933) was from Tallinn and later also settled there with **Aleksandra** (b. 1929) after being released from the

⁷⁸ Lidia, 1956, nr. 86/31.

army. I learn from **Aive** that his part of her ancestry leads to a complicated family situation in the interwar Estonia:

[Aive:] That Estonian family... well, [Richard's] mother was very young and his father was a shoemaker. [Richard's] mother was so young that when his older brother was born then she was fifteen, very young. [...] There were three kids altogether. [...] It was pretty complicated, and actually it was so much so that the older brother and the younger brother were given away to the orphanage, and [my] grandfather [alone] stayed with them, but for some reason... Well, it was the last drop for [Richard's] uncle, he had come home and discovered that the boy had been tied to the table leg... Well, it was an old custom for Estonians, so that the child would not mess around, the parents were gone and... It was not so rare but... My uncle then decided that it was not okay and took the boy away. And raised him by himself. Well, such a family. [---] [Richard was] separated from them, yeah, and then both [of his] parents were... – Was it some gunpowder factory that blew up in Nõmme? [---] It was due to carelessness, the Männiku [gunpowder store] explosion. – And both of them, well, not both, one [of them] was blown up and the other died pretty soon after that in the hospital for some reason. [...] So out of this situation appeared a surprisingly normal family – when my grandfather and grandmother got married.⁷⁹

This is exactly such a story that is easier to tell from some distance. Aive frames it partly professionally, as a historian: it is an example of a different type of childhood that I might not often hear about. It is a family story of poor and difficult origins and broken family models that is normally told in a private context – without references to the political and external world.

Jüri Laiküla (b.1949) does also not mention the mass deportations of Estonians in 1949, in his year of birth, without being explicitly asked about it. His family was not repressed, as he puts it: “Well, my Grandfather was smart enough for that, he did not start to stand against it [collectivization], and he had good relations

⁷⁹ Aive, 1978, nr 74/5-6. The explosion at the Männiku gunpowder stocks and factory happened on the 15th of June 1936. The final number of people who died was 63. This has been considered the biggest civilian tragedy in the Interwar Estonian Republic. See for example: Elmar Tambek, *Tõus ja mõõn* (Tallinn: EPL Kirjastus, 2010), 128. Aive continues the story by saying that “His older brother grew up in the orphanage, [and the] younger one was adopted and he was given a new family name, but they met when they were grown-ups. The older brother looked them up. So that I have actually met with them both and the younger brother was pretty close [to us]. I know his children very well.”

with people. [---] They did not have this national mess, well, the old man swallowed it all and took it with reason, there was no point to go against...”⁸⁰ Their farm had voluntarily been collectivized at the time of Jüri's birth. At another time, Jüri says that it had all been

an awful workaholism [*töörabamine*], my mother used to say that we actually survived thanks to the kolkhoz, it was less work there. No one would struggle so hard in a kolkhoz anymore. All who kept the farms [prior to the war] had died very young. It was an awful a lot of work, a physical job. Not like today with the mechanisms and sorts, then there was only a horse, and we managed with a horse... I was perhaps only twelve or thirteen, mother brought the horse and I opened and closed the furrows [*ajasin vagusid lahti-kinni*].⁸¹

Jüri's tale about the hard time on the farm span temporally from the Inter-war (which was “awful workaholism”) to collectivization (when his grandfather had been “smart enough” not to resist it) to his own youth experience of hard country labour. But this last period had already been easy, as his mother used to say, in comparison to the difficulties of keeping an independent farm earlier. That's it about the distant past, then. Neither Jüri nor his daughters would tell me more. **Silvi** (b. 1985) mentions that she thinks “it sort of passed them somehow. [...] They were doing their farm thing.”⁸² Jüri's example is perhaps one of the most typical ones. He refers to *difficult life* that he had heard about in the Estonian past, but he says that it had generally not been a topic in their family. They did not discuss such matters with his wife either.

* * *

However, there were also the stories that shared and were built on the more typical tropes of the Inter-war generation memories. **Ülo Kesamaa** (b. 1933) grew up in the left-wing school teacher's family in a small town in Estonia. He remembers that their relatives in the country lived more lavishly than they had. In addition, his maternal

⁸⁰ Jüri, 1949, nr 20/3.

⁸¹ Jüri, 1949, nr 20/3.

⁸² Silvi, 1985, nr. 13/6.

uncle was a lawyer and owned a rental house in Tallinn. Ülo's mother's childhood language had actually been German – her father had worked as a county secretary [*vallakirjutaja*] and was socially striving upward, he had insisted on speaking German at home. But by the 1930s, this custom would be interpreted as negative in the society – “*seda peeti kadakasakshuseks*” – it was considered to be pretentious social striving.⁸³ Ülo's mother did not use German with her children. Ülo's parents were also sceptical of the clergy, they considered the Church a hypocritical institution, but his mother was nevertheless spiritual and had “consciously chosen” *Christian Science* as the family's home religion; children were not baptised.⁸⁴

Their family had moved to a small town in 1933-34 as Ülo's father was fired from his former job on the “fully fabricated charges of Communism.” Ülo does not tell me more details about his father's political activities or views, but his father had qualified to be a school headmaster in the late 1940s at the time when many other “wealthier” branches of their family in the country were repressed (but curiously his Tallinn house-owner uncle was not as he had lost all his property in a fire just before the Soviet annexation).

Ülo shares the wider tropes of Estonian storytelling about the WWII and Stalinism in Estonia today, especially among his generation. He remembers his father's troubles as a school headmaster: many children had strong nationalist sentiments, even some Soviet statues were blown up, and his father was taken to many interrogations at night. Eventually, he was fired from the position for making a wooden cross and taking part in a church funeral of his student, but this had happened

⁸³ Ülo, 1933, nr. 93/7.

⁸⁴ “This was already swimming against the stream [...] we were a bit like in the doghouse [*põlu all*], as we did not recognize the Church, but mother had her own church, the Boston church, whose member she was” (Ülo, 1933, nr. 93/8).

only after Stalin's death, in 1954. Ülo says that he himself had been imprisoned for a short while in 1946-47, for he had put up election posters and then proceeded to paint across the posters' faces. It was cold, and the paint froze to form a white cover...

...and then of course the next night they came after me and took me to the KGB cellars – and then it became more complicated, they started to look for whatever [made their story fit]. [They said] that I am the head of some youth organisation, [they] made up several stories and... I think I was there for three or four days without food and drink. [---] They wanted to accuse me of agitating my schoolmates to anti-state activities. They found a whole bunch of [song sheet] notes at my home which all had names written on them – who should sing with which tone and all. And then, yeah, they took me naked to this cellar and said that now we will start to beat you... but the beating did not really take place.

[Uku:] *But even as such a small child? It was not really possible to accuse you... [naively].*

[Ülo:] Then it was all possible. Everything was done.⁸⁵

“It was all possible then” is the somewhat dramatic ending of the story that adds some heroic flavour to it. The case could certainly have ended worse for him, but he was released and, with ironic tone, the song sheet notes were not used to fabricate a plot against him. However, the idea that “it was all possible and everything was done” will be used by him in another context in the later parts of his life-story: “it was all possible” for him when he built up his successful Soviet, even international, career in ship building. In the interviews, Ülo looks for an accommodating discourse from today's perspective in a similar manner to the other spouses of the older generation (e.g. Daria Poska and Leida Arhipelagov), but differently from Leida, he anchors his story to the main tropes of his Estonian generation – “it was all possible then”. However, behind that story is his father who was actively left-wing in the 1930s and worked as a school headmaster throughout Stalinism.

⁸⁵Ülo, 1933, nr. 93/10.

6.6. “Future in the past”: transmission of past and imagination of future

The parents who were born in the inter-war period (b. 1930s) chose, with different levels of reflexivity, either to reinterpret or pay less attention to the past when talking to their children. I suggest that this was done with a focus on the perspective of the Soviet future. *Soviet life-world horizon* also helps to understand why the coercive constraints and the instilment of fear played a lesser role in the past-related dynamics than might be expected in downplaying the stories about the past.

Galja (b. 1933) was born to a mixed marriage in Russia near the Estonian border, her father was from an Estonian village there. She moved to Estonia after the war, went to higher education courses, started a Komsomol career and then worked at a university. However, the tone of disadvantage and lack of opportunities in comparison with many local Estonians echoes as the background of our conversation, she was not only born in Russia, but she also came from a poor village. “Had I had any other background – had I at least been guaranteed with normal food provision – of course I would have gone to the university. I even handed in the papers, but well, at that age, without independence. I gave up.”⁸⁶ This was already in post-war Estonia. Later Galja was involved with sociological research and she taught the courses on social sciences since 1960s; in the late 1980-90s, she was politically active among the Singing Revolution leadership; then she returned to academia, where she has remained until now. When explaining her views in her youth she mentions it repeatedly: “I had no corrective background that the locals would have”.⁸⁷ As she directly dealt with the matters of ideology and world-views, I dare to press her rather bluntly. (I refer to the

⁸⁶ Galja, 1933, nr. 87/18.

⁸⁷ Galja, 1933, nr. 87/2.

years 1950-51 when she finished high-school as we had talked about that earlier and she refers to her work in Komsomol in mid-1950s):

[Uku:] *You have given me some hints, but really, as for ideology – your relationship to ideology. [---] Did you tend to believe in the written word? I mean starting from 1950-51 or so [as a young adult]?*

[Galja:] Oh well, I do remember when the Khrushchev speech for the 20th congress was read out. I still remember that – it was in the red covers, in such a large bound format. [...] But nothing really different followed. – [...] Except for founding the youth clubs [and] that the committees would be open for longer hours so that the young people could come... such changes [ironically]. – But somehow, step by step and slowly. I cannot tell you if there was a belief or not, or that was [just] constructed.

Such a closed space where we did not think out of. We thought of the future – that it would become better and life would turn brighter. Right, within such frames, within that corridor. [Any] alternatives? Well, I did not have any. I shall not say that I dreamt of the Estonian Republic right since I was a child, indeed. Many talk like that – that they knew it would have to come. Right, because in my family... and [also] in the publicly known attitudes of my generation there was no longing for the White Ship of anything – it was expected that it will be better. [...] That the [already present] reality will [become] much better. [...] But we were indeed deeply convinced that [there was] such a linear progress, [...] that we were still not doing well enough.⁸⁸

Galja is in the exceptional position because with almost every reference she is an “Estonian minded” person and she says that she just did not have “that corrective background.” She was married to an Estonian man. Her husband's family had impoverished at their father's death in 1936 and in 1945 her husband had been arrested shortly for the anti-Soviet activities of his peers. He was certainly Galja's connection to the Estonian world that prevented the difficulties similar to the ones Lena Poska had at workplace. Later, Galja rode on the highest wave of the Singing Revolution and became more sceptical only with the instilment of the nationalist-liberal government among whose promises was also to “wipe the floor” (from the “former people” but with an ambiguous reference to Russians) in 1992. As for the life in the USSR, she

⁸⁸ Galja, 1933, nr. 87/19.

refers to “publicly known attitudes” of her generation beyond the family as she discusses potential influences on her world-view. She is slightly ironical about the people who now claim that they “dreamt of the Estonian Republic right since childhood” – referring to private attitudes that some might have had, but also to reinvention of Soviet dissidences. At another moment, Galja says the following about teaching social sciences:

These directives about what needs to be included in the curricula – [references to] some new congress or plenum materials – [...] they were put among the papers at the windowsill and if no one used them for three months then they were thrown out. [...] But we had one Volodya, he has passed away, his function was to write a paper for all of us about how to integrate respective materials into curricula... But now when I think about it – you know, at least, in these circles that I was moving in – I have a feeling that there [was] some kind of tacit agreement. There are things that are better not to jab, not to touch, because there are other ways around them. Well, now when NM is writing that at the [Tartu] University there was such an intellectual core, right, around which one could then more seriously [gather]... I did not have that [...], I did not have that hinterland [*tagala*]. I was really a no-one. [I] had grown out of some stupid *nomenklatura*... Who would have wanted to deal with [me]?... Had there been... But there wasn't... So I was left with such a... – well, I am now, retrospectively, trying to formulate it, – that ambience, that mental [atmosphere], these mental empty rides [*vaimsed tühikäigud*]. Indeed. There was such a frame, but to define it as a fear? No, it was not...⁸⁹

There might have been another world out there, it seems to Galja that among the Tartu intellectuals there was, she retains that possibility with a mixture of irony. Her own relationship to ideology seems to have been similar to the one many have with bureaucracy – a certain assigned person (they had Volodya) took care of most of it (and he seems to have enjoyed it) but she did what was needed – “there are things that are better [...] not to touch, because there are other ways around them.” And rather spontaneously she then refers to the fact that that there was no fear behind it.

⁸⁹ Galja, 1933, nr. 87/19.

The majority of interviews are not like this for obvious reasons: this was an interview with a highly articulate intellectual and sharp person regardless of her age. When I ask if she was happy, Galja says that perhaps she “could not fully realize” herself, but then again, “considering where I came from and what I had – I was [content].”⁹⁰ Galja is exceptional to her generation in the way she talks about herself in the Soviet period, but she claims that based on the normal everyday communication she fit well with her friends and colleagues; in addition, her life-story shows how smoothly she went along with the changes in the late 1980s.

* * *

When I asked **Lidia Sander** (b. 1956) if it had felt harrowing or fearful to live in the USSR, she was clear that she felt “absolutely no fear” and she also felt no need to show her discontent “as these punks or rebels” had done.

I had absolutely no fear, of course, maybe I was a bit silly when I was young – there was so much else [going on] there. [...] Well there is some point to this saying that when we were young, 'the sky was bluer and the grass greener' and all. A young person is eager to experience something good and new, and [is] waiting for this in life. And... these people who came out, so to say, as punks or rebels – I do not know what makes a person like that.”⁹¹

When she refers to the world of her youth, she also distinguishes herself from the 1980s youth cultures. It was for a bit younger people and had been really alien to her at the time; but now she knows that they, especially some punk bands that were popular starting from the 1980 youth demonstrations are often taken as “pre-Singing Revolution” revolutionaries.

I was waiting for... something good for myself. This 'red politics' was like that and it was not good – but I do [did] not go *within* it, I go [went] *at its side*. And this red terror during the first Soviet years... when I was born and grew up then there was no more of it, in Estonia there was not. In order to be arrested for [doing] politics, you had to try hard. But I would not do it, I

⁹⁰ Galja, 1933, nr. 87/22.

⁹¹ Lidia, 1956, nr. 86 /42.

would not pay attention. [...] Of course it can be said that it was backwardness, foolishness, cowardly... – all these things could be listed here.⁹²

An apologetic tone cannot be missed in Lidia's search for explanation to her own period of youth. She did not pay attention to the “red politics” – and also to the rebellious youth culture which was exploring the limits of that “good and new” – and it is now somehow difficult to make sense of it. Perhaps she had been “backward, foolish, or cowardly” by embracing the Soviet realities in this rather unchallenging way or “should have had fear”?

I did not believe that this [Soviet order] would end. Such an idea never crossed my mind – and it was not only me who thought so. For example, now, at church we have this Johanna – she is this... she is Leo's daughter – she would tell me: 'When we walked by the tower of the Estonian Parliament and there was a red flag hoisted – [then my] father mentioned that Estonian rule will be restored [one day].' She, Johanna, said: 'I laughed about it, I did not believe it.' As for me, I did not laugh at anyone, because this idea did not even cross my mind. It was all so secure, so fixed... I did not see how could it be possible – I simply did not see. And – I was not a Russian – I felt my kind of Estonianess, but... I could not imagine that this Estonian state would return. This felt totally impossible.⁹³

Lena Poska had even more positive sentiments towards the Soviet life. She would say that “Now people have much more sense of fear than then. Work, what to do, how do I find work, do I find it, so on and so forth. We had a very secure life. It was as it was... sure.”⁹⁴ She refers to the economic and social stability – and indirectly to her own family condition as she is married to a former Soviet army officer from the Far East who has been unemployed since 2009, she thinks that he has little chances to find reasonable employment (a situation made more difficult by the fact that he does not know Estonian language). However, Lena also recognizes that some aspects of the

⁹² Lidia, 1956, nr. 86 /42.

⁹³ Lidia, 1956, nr 86 /38-39

⁹⁴ Lena, 1953, nr. 89/8-9.

Soviet life were ridiculous: for example that a shop assistant would have often been in a more advantageous position in the society than a doctor like her. When asked to reconstruct her social situation in the 1970s, she echoes the temporal distance and a certain impossibility of explaining all this to me today: “Oh how should you... you may speak to a hundred people, but you would still not understand. You certainly would not understand it, because you are so much younger.”⁹⁵

There is something uneasy for Lena and Lidia in these questions about their young adulthood that they have not expressed or thought of much, that it is rather imposed by me and my questions. These questions set them for a search of words and a narrative. Lidia lives today in an Estonian world, and she also attends church regularly. She excuses more for her Soviet-era attitudes, she finds more justifications for herself, she continues to live domestically in a Russian world that more tightly related to the Soviet narratives.⁹⁶ But they both genuinely attempt to re-imagine oneself into past, even if recognising that, as a listener, I “would not really understand...”

[Lena:] at that time, we lived as we did and we couldn't know to want [for more]. I knew that... if I talk to an older person I should stand up, the guys knew that there are certain rules, [...] that teacher is your role model and you cannot say bad things to her. So we lived according to some rules, which were of such kind... there just were these rules.⁹⁷

“I was content with all that there was. [...] I did not have such... wishes [for more].
[---] I had enough of everything, there was little money, everyone had little of it, well,
[...] who was a worker, had more, but engineers, they were... [less paid],”⁹⁸ said

⁹⁵ Lena, 1953, nr. 89/9.

⁹⁶ I should qualify that by saying that all my interviewees have a job and their children are doing generally pretty well in life as well; they would agree that their generic standard of life has not fallen since the end of Socialism, rather the opposite. Insistence on the lack of fears in the USSR therefore seems not to be an obvious critique of their present material conditions or nostalgic dwelling in youth-memories.

⁹⁷ Lena, 1953, nr. 89/9.

⁹⁸ Tamara, 1947, nr 39/21; 24

Tamara Lebedeva (b. 1947). She was born in Pärnu in 1947 to a Russian father and an Estonian mother who had both lived in Estonia before WWII. Tamara went to the university in Leningrad and returned later to her home town for an engineering job. She had met people who were more critically minded in Leningrad, but personally she did not feel the need to rebel. With a reference to the present freedoms, she would say: “But today, I do not have this chance to go and do what I like as well. First, I think about if I am allowed to do it. I have no more freedom. [...] Maybe it is some kind of complex...”⁹⁹ Then she talks how she remembers herself in the 1970s:

[Tamara:] I think that I lived in peace then, nothing, no single thing bothered me, no-one bothered me... I had a job, a salary, yes a small one, I understand now that it could have been better. But then it was all normal. Maybe I could not... But again, these ordinary folks, they can live and, thank God, would live, and would not start to change anything, and there is no need to. [...] But some others again, they see, they want changes – or something like that. [...] There were always people who wanted to change something, especially in Leningrad. [---] And maybe, had I gone somewhere abroad and studied and seen, then I could have had some... But I never went anywhere, so I posed no questions.¹⁰⁰

Stability and the lack of alternatives – a way of normal life. Life trajectories of my interviewees generally suggest that people had options for choosing and designing one’s own paths in life, but this happened in a certain context of living; and most of them did not see alternatives for that context. As for the possible sources of other contexts, social scepticism had remained the ethos of a small elite group and, in general, the family heritage of my informants did not entail elements of passive rejection, not to mention active resistance. For example, consider how Tamara found resources for building up her own dispositions that would fit into the Soviet Estonian social fabric in the memories of her repressed father.

⁹⁹ Tamara, 1947, nr 39/23.

¹⁰⁰ Tamara, 1947, nr 39/21, 24.

In line with the fact that men tend to represent more professional-public and women more domestic-private stories, the interviews with men also emphasise the aspects of professional and self-realisation with regard to imagining one's future within the Soviet system. More striking are the accounts of **Viljo Paulus** (b. 1946) and **Andrei Gurjev** (b. 1947) who worked at the Komsomol (the Communist Youth Organisation) and then continued their careers in the Party system. Viljo now works for a small business and Andrei is a wealthy business owner. Following is the example of a dialogue that I had with Viljo. In a quite exceptional manner, Viljo resists any “nods and gestures” towards the current truth-regime. It contains my attempts to provoke a discussion, but the outcome is also a reversal of the interview roles:

[Uku:] *So you had no idea of going against this system?*

[Viljo:] Well, capitalism is not better.

--- *Maybe it is more a question of freedom or liberalism and liberties? [...] It seems that people were somewhat more restricted in the Soviet Union...*

--- In what sense? How?

--- *Maybe, starting from the [obligatory] living space registration, [...] the bureaucratic machinery, until the fact that it was not possible to travel abroad as one wanted?*

--- Then one could travel as far as the Pacific Ocean without a visa, now we travel without a visa for what, already five years?

--- *Perhaps ten.*

--- Or ten, and the one who travelled before travels now too, and the one who did not travel then does not travel now either. Only there was an option that if you were active, you could get some support and still travel.¹⁰¹

Viljo remains on the system-level and does not really open up his personal world. As for Andrei, he gets along well in life and is by now a wealthy entrepreneur. After 1992 he “put his Party ticket on the table” and entered the business world. When I ask him about his world-view today, he would reply that he is “purely liberal,” a follower of

¹⁰¹ Viljo, 1946, nr. 28/7-8.

the libertarian-speaking Estonian Prime minister (“I am Ansipian”). As Andrei puts it: “Unfortunately, you need to live cruelly in this cruel world. [...] The big fat wolves with sharp teeth have to run ahead, kill the prey, and then the small dogs can follow and may distribute these pieces between the sick and the slow.”¹⁰² But five minutes earlier he had told me that he “grew up in such a “red” family, lived a “red” life, and well, now [...] transformed this “red” life neatly into a “white” life.”¹⁰³

Viljo and Andrei are today the same people as in the past, but in a way, they are “different” because the external circumstances are so different. I wondered how Andrei’s “transformation from “red” to “white”” had actually happened to him so smoothly.

[Uku:] *But how did this come about?... Do you feel that your worldview came before [your actions]? How important is the fact that you have done so well [in life] for your current opinions about the world?*

[Andrei:] Like, do I determine the environment or does the environment determine me?... It comes together dialectically, both these processes run inside me. Of course, I became a liberal step by step while being an entrepreneur. [---] Yes, this has been so that... piece by piece I have built this liberal world view...¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Andrei, 1947, nr. 41/16.

¹⁰³ Andrei, 1947, nr. 41/14.

¹⁰⁴ Andrei, 1947, nr. 41/16.

Conclusions

The proportion of Russian-speaking population in Soviet Estonia increased from 5% in 1945 to 35% in 1989. This created a situation in which society was divided by the parallel Estonian and Russian language school system and segregation of many workplaces into two linguistically marked social spaces. However, these spaces were inhabited by diverse socio-economic groups of people, moreover, in different physical locations and at different times their dynamics differed. This study combined many of such dimensions for discussing cultural divisions and plurality in the late Soviet Estonia.

I looked at cultural identification processes of individuals based on the study of oral histories of people whose families stand nominally “in-between” the Russian and Estonian cultural worlds. Primarily, I focused on spouses (“parents” generation) who were born in 1930-50s and on their children who were born in 1950-70s. I used the notion of cultural world for describing the Soviet Estonian society while consciously attempting to avoid the ethnic determinism prevalent in the contemporary social discourse. I hope that this approach has allowed the reader to follow the diverse paths of individual socialisation and personal identification within, across and beyond these cultural worlds.

In the first chapter, I introduced eleven inter-married couples through the stories of their encounters and beginnings of their marriage. These introductions opened some lines of diversity that were further explored in the thesis, for example, in relation to different birth cohorts, living places, social backgrounds, and gendered patterns in family life. The families who were introduced in the first chapter appeared

also in the later parts of the thesis and, hopefully, formed more holistic portraits of their life-worlds towards the end of the dissertation; these were additionally visualised with family trees which I drew based on the information from the oral history interviews.

In the next two chapters I applied a more general approach to the Russian-Estonian cultural divide. In the second chapter, I introduced further families to the narrative while simultaneously looking at how regional variation influenced cultural identification of people. I discussed how people in Tallinn perceived the “newcomers” and how Tallinn was perceived by the “newcomers,” I noted the beginnings of a pattern in which the perception of others and of oneself appeared more ethnicized for “local Estonians” and more multiple and diverse for “newcomer Russians.” Next, I moved to a discussion of cultural identifications in the overwhelmingly Estonian city of Tartu and, then, in the mostly Russian-speaking region of Eastern Estonia. I showed that Estonian and Russian cultural worlds were diverse in both regions. For example, working class and intellectual Russian-speakers shared only a few commonalities in Tartu and had even less contact with the people in Eastern Estonia; Estonians shared more identifications, but social class and generational differences appeared among them, as well. At the end of the chapter I touched, additionally, upon the experiences of cultural confrontation in the public places of Eastern Estonia by showing how the cultural conflict between adults escalated into a violent social confrontation between adolescents towards the end of the 1980s.

In the third chapter, I looked at the two tense and difficult periods in the 20th century Estonian history: the period of Stalinism (1940/44-1953) and the Singing Revolution (1988-92). I showed that the Estonian and Russian cultural worlds stood

most apart from each other during these periods when the images of the “Other” were strongly ethnicized and politized. I indicated that these times were experienced asymmetrically: people in the Estonian world experienced profound cultural changes during Stalinism and people in the Russian world were shattered by the Singing Revolution and its aftermath. Therefore, both periods were accompanied by an intensified sense of external threat from the “Other” cultural group in the society. However, I also noted that, vice versa, many Russian-speakers shared the difficulties of Stalinism and that the same was the case with many Estonians at the collapse of the USSR.

With the last three chapters, I moved closer to the family life-worlds and identifications of individuals. In the fourth chapter, I discussed intermarriages as microcosms for observing the negotiation of meanings and dispositions between the cultural worlds. First, I looked at the relatives' reactions to inter-marriages, showing that Estonian mothers-in-law were often against inter-marriage, and they voiced it, especially in the case of their sons. This reaction demonstrates the worries of the older generation to pass on the values of Estonian world to the young and personal negative experiences with Stalinist Sovietization – these found their ethnicized outcome in attempts at guarding family borders from intrusion. On the other hand, the families on the “Russian side” were more accommodating to Estonian spouses. This further attests to the generally higher prestige of the Estonian world in relation with the Russian world (within the confines of the ESSR). Second, I discussed the everyday life in inter-marriages during late socialism and the Singing Revolution. I showed that different identifications of spouses with the two cultural worlds were not experienced as divisive for the family life, controversial and conflictual topics were normally not

actualised within inter-marriages. For example, gendered family roles appeared more important in the discussion of family dynamics; fathers were quite absent from family life and from taking care of children. However, I also showed that cultural othering was used in inter-marriages at the moments of marital strife for aggravating the inter-personal arguments. In addition, the time of Singing Revolution testifies to the quite conservative dynamics of family relations: most spouses had difficulties with discussing the evolving political process at home even if this topic had become central to the public discourse. However, there were also occasions in which spouses identified strongly with the rising ethnicized discourses at the end of the 1980s – sometimes this led to irresolvable arguments and a few marriages ended with a divorces (however, it did not happen when the inter-personal relations had been formerly warm and cordial).

In the fifth chapter, I discussed some specific topoi of cultural identification that arose from the life-story interviews. I looked at how personal names acted as markers of cultural belonging both “from outside” by the others and “from inside” by the carriers of these names. I discussed how the Soviet “passport ethnicity,” as an assigned external category, was normally a latent and unimportant nominator that, however, did influence people's understanding of their own cultural belonging. Lastly, I looked at some in-group experiences of children from intermarriages with belonging and estrangement in relation to schooling and other youth-time experiences. I showed how cultural identifications in Estonian schools were strongly tied to Estonian ethnicity and how, in contrast, children from inter-marriages who went to Russian schools often felt genuinely “in-between” in their relationships with Russian and Estonian cultural worlds.

In the last chapter, I took a closer look at the contingencies of the past in relation to cultural belonging in late socialism from a perspective of inter-generational transmission of cultural worlds in the family. In this quite extensive chapter, I moved between individual perspectives, comparative case studies, and wider generational themes. I focused on the question of how parents (b. late 1920s – 1930s) communicated their knowledge about the first half of the 20th century and familial past to their children (b. 1950s – early 1960s). In majority of the families in the study people referred to “general difficulties” and “hard times” in family history, on a discursive level, such narratives could be characterised as stories about the “difficulty of life in the past.” This discourse corresponded to many lived experiences of the former generations and also to the Soviet frames of talking about the past; it would overcome the conflictual information about the past that was culturally available in the Russian and Estonian worlds. I argue that as for the younger generation (b. 1950-60s) of children, such knowledge of the past enabled them to be socialised essentially into the present-day Soviet reality and to feel fairly comfortable in it. Parents often used the past to establish a liveable normality in the present (1960-70s) with the prospect of a Soviet future in mind. However, in cases where there had been Stalinist repressions in the family, these were normally not discussed with children. But this was less because of fears and more because such information was not deemed useful for the future; the memories of repressive past were on their way of losing cultural significance also in the Estonian world even if such past were temporally and spatially closer to present than in the case of the Russian world in Estonia.

Based on these findings in the chapters, I made two general arguments in the dissertation that are discussed at length in its introduction: one about the socio-cultural

divisions in late Soviet Estonia and the other about the negotiation of social identification of people who lived in inter-ethnic family. These two arguments led me to revisit the debate about the soviet ethnicities and subjectivities in late socialism.

With the first argument, I looked at how the relationship between the Estonian and Russian cultural worlds – succinctly distinguished by language – unrolled in Soviet Estonia. I argued that both worlds maintained a balance and parity by offering attractive and diverse patterns of individual identification. Throughout the chapters I showed how the Russian world offered more diverse and ambiguous patterns of identification to individuals, for example, it was imbued with contradictory meanings of local inferiority and imperial arrogance, its references went beyond Russian ethnic culture towards the other cultures in the USSR. Russian world also carried the discourse of Soviet power and Soviet civic identity. The patterns for individual identification were narrower in the Estonian world – they were more tightly related to the Estonian ethnic culture, but among the working class and the people born after the war, there was a tendency to be quite accommodative to the identifications of the civic aspects of the Soviet state.

Second, I looked at cultural belonging and identification of individuals in inter-marriages. I argued that the Estonian-Russian cultural divisions were scarcely discussed and debated within inter-marriages. This observation led me to diverse interpretations which indicated that the cultural conflict in the society was actualised in multiple ways by concrete people, context and circumstances. On the one hand, the conflicts arising from the cultural division were silenced and their relevance for family life was reduced. This happened when the family members potentially identified with the incommensurable ethnic, historical or political patterns, and lacked discursive tools

with which to process them. On the other hand, silence about the cultural conflicts also indicated the absence of such conflicts in inter-marriage. The incommensurable aspects of Estonian-Russian cultural divide were not relevant for self-identification at most of the time. I bridged these divergent interpretations by arguing additionally that everyday relationship to the conflictual cultural identifications appeared almost “performative” in inter-marriages: repeating the narratives of fixed ethnic belonging, people liberated themselves from the accompanying constative identifications. The intermarriage milieu could be seen as “deterritorialised” from the meanings of conflictual social discourses.

* * *

Both of these arguments identify an emergent cultural plurality in personal patterns of social identification in late Soviet Estonia. This plurality was largely thanks to the co-existence of different historical generations, and Estonian and Russian cultural worlds. In very general terms, older locals were strongly nationally-minded, older Russian newcomers were potentially inhabiting aspects of Soviet subjectivity and additional ethnicized patterns; the younger locals and newcomers possessed national identifications and also identified with Soviet future and wider the Soviet world (Estonian locals tended more towards nationalism and Russia newcomers towards Soviet identification patters). These identifications were largely situational and depended on contextual cues.

When looking at the late Soviet Estonia through the frames of Yurchak's “performative shift” it is important to emphasise that people had access to different layers of identification, such as public ideological discourse and ethnicized cultural immersion. Family played an important role in transmitting and negotiating old

meanings with the new circumstances. It seems that the “other milieus” of discursive identification were present for people through family connections regardless of whether they related to authoritative discourse in performative or constative ways. Ethnic identifications were indeed often not constative. For example, in the case of intermarriages, some people would “perform” ethnicity in a discursive manner while not investing in constative ethno-cultural meanings in everyday life.

Now, as for the further developments in the field of inter-ethnic relations in late socialism future works could look more into working class identification. Indeed, I would like to note that Estonian and Russian cultural worlds need not be the only way to describe the plural patterns of social identification; even though their rootedness in linguistic and background differences remains probably the most significant marker of social distinctions. However, class structure could also be employed for describing cultural formations in Soviet Estonia. A large and interesting project would be to delve deeper into the experiences of school and education, as a second primary venue of socialisation, next to the family.

The oral history interviews I have collected thus far would allow for further study of youth identification. Simultaneously, while writing this thesis I felt often compelled to visit additional members of the family under study or conduct second interviews with some people with whom I have already met.

This thesis was based almost exclusively on oral history materials; first of all, I have not found almost any archival materials about ethnic relations in Soviet Estonia. Later, however, I realised that cultural materials fit well with the taken “cultural identification” approach, hence such sources like Dovlatov's could be used further.

While staying with oral history sources, more debates on memory and remembering could be added to the discussion. However, at this point I decided to use a more “transparent” narrator language and to weave intertwining life-worlds into the thesis chapters in a manner that would expand and individualise people as vivid “characters.”

Bibliography

This is the list of secondary sources used in the thesis. For the list of oral history interviews, please consult Appendix 1.

- Aarelaid-Tart, Aili and Anu Kannike. "The End of Singing Nationalism as Cultural Trauma." *Acta Historica Tallinnensia* 8 (2004): 77-98.
- Aarelaid-Tart, Aili. "Estonian-Inclined Communists as Marginals." In *Biographical Research in Eastern Europe*, ed. by Robin Humphrey, Robert Miller, and Eleana Zdravomyslova, 71-99. Hampshire: Ashgate, 2003.
- Aarelaid-Tart, Aili. "Theory of Cultural Trauma and Its Application to Explain Estonians' Soviet-time Mentality." In *Inheriting the 1990s. The Baltic Countries*, ed. by Baiba Metuzale-Kangere, 38-64. Uppsala: Uppsala University Press, 2010.
- Aarelaid-Tart, Aili. *Cultural Trauma and Life Stories*. Vaajakoski: Kikimora Publications, 2006.
- Aarelaid-Tart, Aili. *Ikka kultuurile mõeldes* (Still thinking about the culture). Tallinn: Virgela, 1998.
- Aarelaid-Tart, Aili, ed. *Nullindate kultuur II: põlvkondlikud pihtimused* (Zeroes culture II: generational testimonies). Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus, 2012.
- Abrams, Lynn. *Oral History Theory*. London and New York: Routledge, 2010.
- Agarin, Timofei. "Demographic and Cultural Policies of the Soviet Union in Lithuania from 1944-1956. A Post-Colonial Perspective." In *The Sovietization of the Baltic States, 1940-1956*, ed. by Olaf Mertelsmann, 111-126. Tartu: Kleio, 2003.
- Alenius, Kari. "The Birth of Cultural Autonomy in Estonia: How, Why, and for Whom?" *Journal of Baltic Studies* 38 (Dec., 2007): 445-462.
- Alexander, Jeffrey, Ron Eyerman, Bernard Giesen, Neil J. Smelser, and Piotr Sztompka. *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004.
- Annuk, Eve. "Totalitarismi ja / või kolonialismi pained: miks ja kuidas uurida nõukogude aega?" (The Pressure of Totalitarianism and / or Colonialism: Why and How to Study the Soviet Time?). In *Võim ja kultuur*, ed. by Arvo Krikmann and Sirje Olesk, 13-40. Tartu: Eesti Kirjandusmuuseum, 2003.

- Apitzsch, Ursula. "Ethnicity as Participation and Belonging." In *Ethnicity, Belonging and Biography*, ed. by Gabriele Rosenthal and Artur Bogner, 83-96. Berlin: LIT, 2009.
- Arutyunyan, Iurii and Iurii Bromley, eds. *Social'no-kul'turnyj oblik sovetskih natsii* (Socio-cultural aspect of Soviet nations). Moscow: Nauka, 1986.
- Assmann, Jan and John Czaplicka. "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity." *New German Critique* (Spring-Summer, 1995): 125-133.
- Barth, Fredrik. "Introduction." In *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, ed. by Fredrik Barth, 9-38. Boston: Little, Brown, 1969.
- Bassin, Mark and Catriona Kelly. "Introduction: National Subjects." In *Soviet and Post-Soviet Identities*, ed. by Mark Bassin and Catriona Kelly, 3-16. Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- Beecher, David Ilmar. "Ivory Tower of Babel: Tartu University and the Languages of Two Empires, a Nation-State, and the Soviet Union." PhD Diss., University of California, Berkeley, forthcoming.
- Bennich-Björkman, Li and Aili Aarelaid-Tart. *Baltic Biographies at Historical Crossroads*. New York: Routledge, 2012.
- Berardo, Felix. "Family Privacy: Issues and Concepts." *Journal of Family Issues* 19 (1998), 4-19.
- Bertaux, Daniel, Anna Rotkirch, and Paul Thompson, eds. *On Living Through Soviet Russia*. London: Routledge, 2004.
- Bertaux, Daniel. "The Cultural Model of The Russian Popular Classes and the Transition to a Market Economy." In *On Living through Soviet Russia*, ed. by Daniel Bertaux, Anna Rotkirch, and Paul Thompson, 25-53. London: Routledge, 2004.
- Bertaux, Daniel. "The Usefulness of Life Stories for a Realist and Meaningful Sociology." In *Biographical research in Eastern Europe: Altered Lives and Broken Biographies*, ed. by Robin Humphrey, Robert Miller, and Elena Zdravomyslova, 39-52. Hampshire: Ashgate, 2003.
- Bilinsky, Yaroslav. "The Concept of the Soviet People and its Implications for Soviet Nationality Policy." *Annals of the Ukrainian Academy of Arts and Sciences in the United States* 14 (1978-80): 187-133.
- Blitstein, Peter. "Cultural Diversity and the Interwar Conjuncture: Soviet Nationality Policy in Its Comparative Context." Forum: The Multiethnic Soviet Union in Comparative Perspective. *Slavic Review* 65 (Summer 2006): 273-293.
- Blum, Alain. "Socialist Families." In *The History of the European Family*, Vol 3, ed. by David Kertzer and Marzio Barbagli, 198-237. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003.

- Blumfeldt, Aita, et al, eds. *Perekonnaprobleemid* (Family problems). Tartu: Tartu Riiklik Ülikool, 1972.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. *Outline of A Theory of Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, 1977.
- Breckner, Roswitha, Devorah Kalekin-Fishman, and Ingrid Miethe, eds. *Biographies and the Division of Europe: Experience, Action, and Change on the "Eastern Side."* Leske: Budrich, Opladen, 2000.
- Bromely, Iurii, ed. *Soviet Ethnology and Anthropology Today*. The Hague: Mouton, 1974.
- Bromley, Iurii, et al., eds. *Sovremennye etnicheskie protsessy v SSSR* (Contemporary Ethnic Processes in the USSR). Moscow: Nauka, 1977.
- Brubaker, Rogers and Frederick Cooper. "Beyond "Identity."” *Theory and Society* 29 (2000): 1-47.
- Brubaker, Rogers, Mara Loveman, and Peter Stamatov. "Ethnicity as Cognition.” *Theory and Society* 33 (2004): 31-64.
- Brubaker, Rogers, Margit Feischmidt, Jon Fox, Liana Grancea. *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006.
- Brudny, Yitzhak. *Reinventing Russia: Russian Nationalism and the Soviet State, 1953-1991*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998.
- Carlbäck, Helene, Yulia Gradskova, and Zhanna Kravchenko, eds. *And They Lived Happily Ever After: Norms and Everyday Practices of Family and Parenthood in Russia and Central Europe*. Budapest: Central European University Press, 2012.
- Chakrabarty, Dipesh. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000, 2008.
- Chatterjee, Choi and Karen Petrone. "Models of Selfhood and Subjectivity: The Soviet Case in Historical Perspective.” *Slavic Review* 67 (2008): 967-986.
- Chernyak, E. and V. Zaharkin. *Sem'ia rabochego* (Worker's family). Moskva: Mysl', 1987.
- Chatterjee, Choi, and Karen Petrone. "Models of Selfhood and Subjectivity: The Soviet Case in Historical Perspective.” *Slavic Review* 67 (2008): 967-986.
- Conquest, Robert. *The Last Empire*. London: Ampersand Books, 1962.
- David-Fox, Michael, Peter Holquist, and Marshall Poe. "Introduction.” In *The Resistance Debate in Russian and Soviet History*, 5-11. Kritika Historical Studies, no. 1. Bloomington: Slavica Publishers, 2003.

- Demuth, Andreas. "Politics, Migration and Minorities in Independent and Soviet Estonia, 1918-1998." PhD Diss., University of Osnabrück, 2000.
- Dovlatov, Sergei. "Jubilee Boy." *The New Yorker* (9 June 1980): 39-47
- Dovlatov, Sergei. *The Compromise*. New York: A.A. Knopf, 1983.
- Dunaway, David, and Willa Baum, ed. *Oral History: An Interdisciplinary Anthology*, 2d ed. American Association for State and Local History, 1984. Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 1996.
- Edgar, Adrienne Lynn. "Marriage, Modernity, and the 'Friendship of Nations': Interethnic Intimacy in Post-war Central Asia in Comparative Perspective," *Central Asian Survey* 26 (2007): 583-584.
- Etkind, Alexander. "Soviet Subjectivity: Torture for the Sake of Salvation?" *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 6 (2005): 171-186.
- Fein, Lisa. "Symbolic Boundaries and National Borders: The Construction of an Estonian Russian Identity." *Nationalities Papers* 33 (2005): 333-344.
- Fenton, Steve. *Ethnicity*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003.
- Figes, Orlando. "Private Life in Stalin's Russia: Family Narratives, Memory and Oral History." *History Workshop Journal* 65 (2008): 117-137.
- Figes, Orlando. *The Whisperers: Private Life in Stalin's Russia*. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2007.
- Fisher, Andrew. *The Soviet Marriage Market: Mate-selection in Russia and the USSR*. New York: Praeger, 1980.
- Fürst, Juliane. *Stalin's Last Generation: Soviet Post-War Youth and the Emergence of Mature Socialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Gantskaia, O. A. and L. N. Terentyeva. "Etnograficheskie issledovaniia natsionalnyh protsessov v Pribaltike" (Ethnographical studies of national processes in the Baltic States). *Sovetskaia etnografia*, No. 5 (1965): 3-19.
- Garcelon, Marc. "The Shadow of Leviathan: Public and Private in Communist and Post-Communist Society." In *Public and Private in Thought and Practice: Perspectives on Grand Dichotomy*, ed. by Jeff Alan Weintraub and Krishan Kumar, 303-332. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997.
- Geertz, Clifford. *Primordial Loyalties and Standing Entities: Anthropological Reflections on the Politics of Identity*. Budapest: Collegium Budapest, 1994.
- Geertz, Clifford. *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. New York: Basic Books, 1973.
- Gellner, Ernest. "The Soviet and the Savage." *Current Anthropology* 16 (1975): 595-617.

- Gellner, Ernest. *Soviet and Western Anthropology*. London: Duckworth, 1980.
- Gorenburg, Dmitry. "Rethinking Interethnic Marriage in the Soviet Union." *Post-Soviet Affairs* 22 (2006): 145-165.
- Gorenburg, Dmitry. "Soviet Nationalities Policy and Assimilation." In *Rebounding Identities: The Politics of Identity in Russia and Ukraine*, ed. by Dominique Arel and Blair Ruble. Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006.
- Gorsuch, Anne. "Estonia as the Soviet "Abroad."" In *All This is Your World: Soviet Tourism at Home and Abroad after Stalin*, 49-78. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Govako, B. *Studencheskaya sem'ia* (Family of students). Moskva: Mysl', 1988.
- Habermas, Jürgen. *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Vol. 1-2. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989-1991.
- Hajnal, John. "European Marriage Patterns in Perspective." In *Population in History* ed. by D. Glass and D. Eversley, 101-143. London: Arnold, 1965.
- Halfin, Igal. "Looking into the Oppositionists' Souls: Inquisition Communist Style," *The Russian Review* 60 (2001): 316-339.
- Halfin, Igal. *Terror in My Soul: Communist Autobiographies on Trial*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003.
- Hallik, Klara. *Koos pole lihtne aga eraldi ei saa* (Together it is not easy but it is impossible to be apart). Tallinn: Tallinn University, 2010.
- Hellbeck, Jochen. "Working, Struggling, Becoming: Stalin-Era Autobiographical Texts." *The Russian Review* 60 (2001): 340-359.
- Hellbeck, Jochen. *Revolution on My mind: Writing a Diary Under Stalin*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006.
- Hidden, John and David Smith. "Looking beyond the Nation State: A Baltic Vision for National Minorities between the Wars." *Journal of Contemporary History* 41 (2006): 387-399.
- Hidden, John, Vahur Made, and David Smith, eds. *The Baltic Question During the Cold War*. London: Routledge, 2008.
- Hinrikus, Rutt and Volita Paklar, eds. *Mu kodu on Eestis: Eestimaa rahvaste elulood* (My home is in Estonian: life-stories of Estonian peoples). Tartu: Eesti Kirjandusmuuseum and Tänapäev, 2009.
- Hinrikus, Rutt ed. *Sõjas kasvanud poisid: Eesti meeste mälestused sõjast ja Saksa okupatsioonist* (Boys who grew up in the war: memories of Estonian boys about the war and German occupation). Tallinn: Tänapäev, 2011.

- Hinrikus, Rutt, and Ene Kõresaar. "A Brief Overview of Life History Collection and Research in Estonia." In *She Who Remembers, Survives: Interpreting Estonian Women' Post-Soviet Life Stories*, ed. by Tiina Kirss, Ene Kõresaar, and Marju Lauristin, 19-34. Tartu: Tartu University Press, 2004.
- Hinrikus, Rutt, ed. *Sõja ajal kasvanud tüdrukud: Eesti naiste mälestused Saksa okupatsioonist* (War-time girls: the memories of Estonian girls about the German occupation). Tallinn: Tänapäev, 2006.
- Hirsch, Francine. *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005.
- Holmogorov, Aleksandr. *Internatsional'nye cherty sovetskih natsii (na materiale konkretno-sotsiologicheskikh issledovanii v Pribaltike)*. Moskva: Mysl', 1970.
- Holmogorov, Aleksandr. *Nõukogude rahvuste arenguhood (Baltikumis läbiviidud sotsioloogiliste uurimuste materjalide põhjal)* (Development features of soviet nationalities (Based on the materials from the sociological studies in the Baltic States)). Tallinn: Eesti Raamat, 1973.
- Hosking, Geoffrey. *Rulers and Victims: the Russians in the Soviet Union*. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006.
- Housden, Martyn and David Smith, eds. *Forgotten Pages in Baltic History. Themes of Diversity and Inclusiveness*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2011.
- Humphrey, Robin, Robert Miller, and Elena Zdravomyslova. "Introduction: Biographical Research and Historical Watersheds." In *Biographical research in Eastern Europe: Altered Lives and Broken Biographies*. Hampshire: Ashgate, 2003.
- Humphrey, Robin, Robert Miller, and Elena Zdravomyslova, ed. *Biographical research in Eastern Europe: Altered Lives and Broken Biographies*. Hampshire: Ashgate, 2003.
- Hvostov, Andrei. *Sillamäe passioon* (Sillamäe passion). Tallinn: Petrone Print, 2011.
- Jaago, Tiiu, Anu Printsman, and Hannes Palang. "Kohtla-Järve: One Place, Different Stories." In *Place and Location: Studies in Environmental Aesthetics and Semiotics*, ed. by Eva Näripea, Virve Sarapik and Jaak Tomberg, 285-303. Tallinn-Tartu: Estonian Academy of Arts, 2008.
- Jaago, Tiiu. "Cultural Borders in an Autobiographical Narrative." *Folklore* 52 (2012): 15-38.
- Jaanvärk, Epp and Klara Hallik. "Ülevaade aastail 1960-1982 rahvussuhete alal avaldatud töödest" (An overview of the works published on ethnic relations in 1960-82). *Eesti NSV Teaduste Akadeemia Toimetised: Ühiskonnateadused* 33, Nr. 3 (1984): 203-215.
- Jaeger, Hans. "Generations in History: Reflections on a Controversial Concept." *History and Theory* 24 (1985): 273-292.

- Järve, Priit. *Vene Noored Eestis: sotsioloogiline Mosaiik (Russian youth in Estonia: sociological mosaic)*. Tallinn: Avita, 1997.
- Jenkins, Richard. *Rethinking ethnicity*. Los Angeles; London: Sage, 1997.
- Jõesalu, Kirsti and Ene Kõresaar. “Continuity or Discontinuity: On the Dynamics of Remembering “Mature Socialism” in Estonian Post-Soviet Remembrance Culture.” *Journal of Baltic Studies* 44 (2013): 177-203.
- Jõesalu, Kirsti and Ene Kõresaar. “Working Through Mature Socialism: Private and Public in the Life Story of an Estonian Industry Manager.” In *Baltic Biographies at Historical Crossroads*, ed. by Aili Aareleid-Tart and Li Bennich-Björkman, 68-85. London; New York: Routledge, 2012.
- Jõesalu, Kirsti. “The Meaning of “Late socialism”: Analyzing Estonians’ Post-communist Memory Culture.” *Asia Europe Journal* 8 (2010).
- Johnston, Hank and David Snow. “Subcultures and Emergence of the Estonian Nationalist Opposition 1945-1990.” *Sociological Perspectives* 41 (1998): 473-497.
- Jürgenstein, Lea and Liina Rootalu. *Peterburi eestlaste lood (Stories of St-Petersburg Estonians)*. Tallinn: AS Ajakirjade Kirjastus, 2011.
- Kahk, Juhan and Iurii V. Arutjunjan. *Sotsioloogilisi suletõmbeid Nõukogude Eesti kohta (Sociological Pen Strokes about Soviet Estonia)*. Tallinn: Eesti Raamat, 1980.
- Kahk, Juhan. *Cherty shodstva – sotsiologicheskie ocherki (Similar features – sociological essays)*. Tallinn: Eesti Raamat, 1974.
- Kallas, Kristina. *The Formation of Interethnic Relations in Soviet Estonia: Host – Immigrant Relationships*. MA Diss., Central European University, 2002.
- Karjahärm, Toomas and Väino Sirk. *Kohanemine ja vastupanu: Eesti haritlaskond 1940-1991 (Adaptation and resistance: Estonian educated elite 1940-1991)*. Tartu: Argo, 2007.
- Karklins, Rasma. *Ethnic Relations in the USSR: The Perspective From Below*. Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1986.
- Karner, Christian. *Ethnicity and Everyday Life*. London and New York: Routledge, 2007.
- Kattago, Siobhan. “Commemorating Liberation and Occupation: War Memorials Along the Road to Narva.” *Journal of Baltic Studies* 39 (2008): 431 – 449.
- Katus, Kalev and Luule Sakkeus. *Foreign-Born Population in Estonia*. Tallinn: Estonian Interuniversity Population Research Centre, 1992.

- Katus, Kalev, Allan Puur, and Luule Sakkeus. "National minorities in Estonia." In *The Baltic countries under occupation*, ed. by Anu-Mai Kõll, 167-212. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2003.
- Katus, Kalev. *Eesti demograafiline areng läbi sajandite* (Estonian demographic development through centuries). Tallinn: Estonian Interuniversity Population Research Centre, 1989.
- Kelertas, Violeta, ed. *Baltic postcolonialism*. Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi, 2006.
- Kerblay, Basile. "Socialist Families." In *A History of the Family*, Vol. 2, ed. by Andre Berguiere, Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, Martine Segalen, Françoise Zonabend, 442-475. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996.
- Kertzer, David and Marzio Barbagli, eds. *The History of the European Family*, Vol. 3. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003.
- Kertzer, David. "Generations as a Sociological Problem." *Annual Review of Sociology* 9 (1983): 125-149.
- Kesküla, Eeva. "Mining Postsocialism: Work, Class and Ethnicity in an Estonian Mine." PhD diss., Goldsmiths, University of London, 2012.
- Kharkhordin, Oleg. "Reveal and Dissimulate: A Genealogy of Private Life in Soviet Russia." In *Public and Private in Thought and Practice: Perspectives on Grand Dichotomy*, ed. by Jeff Alan Weintraub and Krishan Kumar, 333-363. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997.
- Kiin, Sirje, Rein Ruutsoo, and Andres Tarand. *40 kirja lugu* (Story of the letter of 40). Tallinn: Olion, 1990.
- Kirss, Tiina and Jüri Kivimäe. "Estonian Life Stories and Histories." In *Estonian Life Stories*, ed. and transl. by Tiina Kirss, compiled by Rutt Hinrikus, 1-31. Budapest, New York: Central European University Press, 2009.
- Kirss, Tiina, Ene Kõresaar, and Marju Lauristin, eds. *She Who Remembers Survives: Interpreting Estonian Women's Post-Soviet Life Stories*. Tartu: Tartu University Press, 2004.
- Klumbyte, Neringa and Gulnaz Sharafutdinova, eds. *Soviet Society in the Era of Late Socialism, 1964-1985*. Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2013.
- Kõresaar, Ene ed. *Soldiers of Memory: World War II and Its Aftermath in Estonian Post-Soviet Life Stories*. New York, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2011.
- Kõresaar, Ene, Epp Lauk, and Kristin Kuutma. *The Burden of Remembering: Recollections and Representations of the Twentieth Century*. Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2009.
- Kõresaar, Ene. *Elu ideoloogiad. Kollektiivne mälu ja autobiograafiline minevikutõlgendus eestlaste elulugudes* (Life ideologies. Collective memory

and autobiographical assessment of the past in the memoirs of Estonians). Tartu: Eesti Rahva Muuseum, 2005.

Kõresaar, Ene. "Memory and History in Estonian Post-Soviet Life Stories: Private and Public, Individual and Collective from the Perspective of Biographical Syncretism." PhD Diss., Tartu University, 2004.

Kulichenko, Mikhailo et al, eds. *Osnovnye napravleniia izuchenii natsional'nyh otnoshenii v SSSR (The main directions of the study of ethnic relations in the USSR)*. Moscow: Nauka, 1979.

Laitin, David. *Identity in Formation: The Russian-speaking Populations in the Near Abroad*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998.

Lamont, Michele and Virág Molnár. "The Study of Boundaries in the Social Sciences." *Annual Review of Sociology* 28 (2002): 167-195.

Langellier, Kristin and Eric Peterson. *Storytelling in Daily Life: Performing Narrative*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004.

Larin, Stephen. "Conceptual Debates in Ethnicity, Nationalism, and Migration." In *The International Studies Encyclopaedia*, ed. by Robert Denemark, 438-457. Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.

Lauristin, Marju and Mati Heidmets. *The Challenge of the Russian Minority: Emerging Multicultural Democracy in Estonia*. Tartu: Tartu University Press, 2002.

Lember, Uku. "Domesticating the Soviet Regime: Autobiographic Experiences of the "Post-War" Generation in Estonia." MA diss., Central European University, Budapest, 2007.

Lieven, Anatol. *The Baltic Revolution: Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, and the Path to Independence*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993.

Lotman, Juri. "Mittememuaarid" (Non-memoirs). In *Jalutuskäigud Lotmaniga (Walks with Lotman)*, ed. by Mihhail Lotman. Tallinn: TLU Press, 2010.

Mälksoo, Lauri. *Illegal Annexation and State Continuity: The Case of the Incorporation of the Baltic States by the USSR: Study of the Tension Between Normativity and Power in International Law*. Leiden, Boston: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2003.

Mälksoo, Maria. "Liminality and Contested Europeanness: Conflicting Memory Politics in the Baltic Space." In *Identity and Foreign Policy: Baltic-Russian Relations and European Integration*, ed. by Eiki Berg and Piret Ehin, 65-83. Farnham: Ashgate, 2009.

Mannheim, Karl. "The Problem of Generations." In *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, 276-320. New York: Oxford University Press, 1952.

- Martin, Terry. *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001.
- Melegh, Attila. *On The East-West Slope: Globalization, Nationalism, Racism and Discourses on Central and Eastern Europe*. Budapest: Central European University Press, 2006.
- Mertelsmann, Olaf, ed. *The Sovietisation of the Baltic States, 1940-1956*. Tartu: Kleio, 2003.
- Mertelsmann, Olaf. "How the Russians Turned into the Image of the "National Enemy" of the Estonian." *Pro Ethnologia* 19 (2005): 43-58.
- Mertelsmann, Olaf. "Ida-Virumaale sisserändamise põhjused pärast Teist maailmasõda" (The Reasons for Immigration in the Ida-Virumaa Region after the Second World War). *Ajalooline Ajakiri* (Historical Journal) 1 (2007): 51-74.
- Mertelsmann, Olaf. "Social and Oral History in Estonia." *East Central Europe* 34-35 (2007-2008): 63-80.
- Misiunas, Romuald, and Rein Taagepera. *The Baltic States: Years of Dependence, 1940-1990*. London: C. Hurst, 1993.
- Moore, David. "Is the Post- in Postcolonial the Post- in Post-Soviet? Toward a Global Postcolonial Critique." *PMLA* 116 (2001): 111-129.
- Nimmerfeldt, Gerli. "Identificational Integration: Conceptualisation and Operationalisation on the Example of Second Generation Russians in Estonia." PhD Diss., Tallinn University, 2011.
- Oksanen, Sofi and Imbi Paju, eds. *Kõige taga oli hirm: Kuidas Eesti oma ajaloost ilma jäi* (The fear was behind everything: how Estonia lost its history). Tallinn: Kirjastus Eesti Päevaleht, 2010.
- Oushakine, Sergei. "Terryfying Mimicry of Samizdat." *Public Culture* 13 (2001): 191-214.
- Pääbo, Heiko. "Potential of Collective Memory Based International Identity Conflicts in Post-Imperial Space. Comparison of Russian Master Narrative with Estonian, Ukrainian and Georgian Master Narratives." PhD diss., Tartu University, 2011.
- Pajur, Agu, Tõnu Tannberg and Sulev Vahtre, eds. *Eesti ajalugu: Vabadussõjast taasiseseisvumiseni* (History of Estonia: from the Independence war to the regaining of the independence). Tartu: Ilmamaa, 2005.
- Pärli, Ülle. "Proper Name as an Object of Semiotic Research." *Sign Systems Studies* 39 (2011): 197-223.
- Pettai, Eva Clarita. *Memory and Pluralism in the Baltic States*. Routledge, 2011.

- Pfoser, Alena. "Between Russia and Estonia: Narratives of Place in a New Borderland." *Nationalities Papers* (2013): 1-17.
- Pilcher, Jane. "Mannheim's Sociology of Generations: An Undervalued Legacy." *The British Journal of Sociology* 45, No. 3 (Sept 1994): 481-495.
- Portelli, Alessandro. "Oral History as Genre." In *The Battle of Valle Giulia: Oral History and the Art of Dialogue*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997.
- Printsmann, Anu. "Moral Geography and Life Stories: Estonian "Siberia" in Kohtla-Järve." In *Oral History: Migration and Local Identities*, ed. by Ieva Garda Rozenberga and Mara Zirnite, 232-250. Riga: University of Latvia, 2008.
- Racevskis, Karlis. "Toward a Postcolonial Perspective on the Baltic States." *Journal of Baltic Studies* 33 (2002): 37-56.
- Rahi-Tamm, Aigi. "Human Loss." In *The White Book: Losses Inflicted on the Estonian Nation by Occupation Regimes 1940-1991*, ed. by Vello Salo et al., transl. by Mari Ets et al. Tallinn: Estonian Encyclopaedia Publishers, 2005.
- Raitviir, Tiina. *Rahvuste Tallinn: Statistilis-sotsioloogiline ülevaade* (Tallinn of nationalities: statistical-sociological overview). Tallinn: Eesti Avatud Ühiskonna Instituut, 2009.
- Raun, Toivo. *Estonia and the Estonians*. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1987.
- Reulecke, Jürgen. "Generation/Generationality, Generativity, and Memory." In *Cultural Memory Studies. An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. by Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning, 119-125. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008.
- Rihter, Elizaveta. "Esche odin rezerv..." (One more reserve...). *Russkii iazyk v Estonskoi Shkole*, No. 4 (1985): 48-51.
- Rihter, Elizaveta. "Kliuch k umu i serdtsu" (A key to mind and heart). *Russkii iazyk v Estonskoi Shkole*, No. 4 (1981): 33-38.
- Rihter, Elizaveta. "Lichnye imena b bietnicheskih sem'iah: K voprosu ob etnicheskoi i iazykovoi integratsii" (Personal names in the bi-ethnic families: to the question of ethnic and linguistic integration). *Russkii iazyk v Estonskoi Shkole*, No. 1 (1987): 53-56.
- Rihter, Elizaveta. "Mezhnatsional'nye sem'i Tallina: Kakie oni?" (Ethnically mixed families of Tallinn – what are they like?) *Tallin*, No. 5 (1985): 90-94.
- Rihter, Elizaveta. "Ob etnicheskom sostave i iazyke natsional'no-smeshannyh semei Tallina" (The ethnic composition and language in nationally mixed families living in Tallinn). *Eesti NSV Teaduste Akadeemia Toimetised: Ühiskonnateadused / Izvestiia Akademii Nauk Estonskoi SSR: Obshchestvennye nauki* (Proceedings of the Academy of Sciences of the Estonian SSR: social sciences) 31, Nr. 3 (1982): 263-276.

- Roos, J. P. "Context, Authenticity, Referentiality, Reflexivity: Back to Basics in Autobiography." In *Biographical research in Eastern Europe: Altered Lives and Broken Biographies*, ed. by Robin Humphrey, Robert Miller, and Elena Zdravomyslova, 27–37. Hampshire: Ashgate, 2003.
- Sakkeus, Luule. *Post-War Migration Trends in the Baltic States*. Tallinn: Estonian Interuniversity Population Research Centre, 1992.
- Sanders, Jimmy. "Ethnic Boundaries and Identity in Plural Societies." *Annual Review of Sociology* 28 (2002): 327-357.
- Schütz, Alfred and Thomas Luckmann. *The Structures of the Life-World*, transl. by Richard Zaner and Tristram Engelhardt, Jr.. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1990.
- Seljamaa, Elo-Hanna. "A Home for 121 Nationalities or Less: Nationalism, Ethnicity, and Integration in Post-Soviet Estonia." PhD diss., The Ohio State University, 2012.
- Semenova, V. and E. Foteeva, eds. *Sud'by liudei: Rossiia XX vek* (People's destinies: 20th century Russia). Moskva: Institut sotsiologii RAN, 1996.
- Semenova, Victoria and Paul Thompson. "Family Models and Transgenerational Influences: Grandparents, Parents and Children in Moscow and Leningrad from the Soviet to the Market Era." In *On Living through Soviet Russia*, ed. by Daniel Bertaux, Anna Rotkirch, and Paul Thompson, 120-145. London: Routledge, 2004.
- Semenova, Viktoria. "The Message from the Past: Experience of Suffering Transmitted Through Generations." In *Biographies and the Division of Europe: Experience, Action, and Change on the "Eastern Side,"* ed. by Roswitha Breckner, Devorah Kalekin-Fishman, and Ingrid Miethe, 93-113. Leske: Budrich, Opladen, 2000.
- Semenova, Viktoria. "Two Cultural Worlds in One Family: The Historical Context in Russian Society." *History of the Family* 7 (2002): 259-280.
- Skalnik, Peter. "Gellner's Encounter with Soviet Etnografiia." *Social Evolution and History* 2 (2003): 177–193.
- Slezkine, Yuri. "The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism." *Slavic Review* 53 (Summer 1994): 414-452.
- Smith, David. "Retracing Estonia's Russians: Mikhail Kurchinskii and Interwar Cultural Autonomy." *Nationalities Papers* 27 (1999): 455-474.
- Spencer-Oatey, Helen, ed. *Culturally Speaking: Culture, Communication and Politeness Theory*. London: Continuum, 2008.
- Spencer-Oatey, Helen. *What is culture? A compilation of quotations*. GlobalPAD Core Concepts. Available online: <http://go.warwick.ac.uk/globalpadintercultural>. Accessed: 10 Feb 2014.

- Spitzer, Alan. "The Historical Problem of Generations." *American Historical Review* 78 (1973): 1353-1385.
- Stiver Lie, Suzanne, Lynda Malik, Ilvi Jõe-Cannon, Rutt Hinrikus, eds. *Carrying Linda's Stones: An Anthology of Estonian Women's Life Stories*. Tallinn: Tallinn University Press, 2006, 2009.
- Suny, Ronald and Terry Martin, eds. *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Suny, Ronald Grigor. "The Contradictions of Identity: Being Soviet and National in the USSR and After." In *Soviet and Post-Soviet Identities*, ed. by Mark Bassin and Catriona Kelly, 17-36. Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- Suny, Ronald. *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution and the Collapse of the Soviet Union*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994.
- Susokolov, Aleksandr. *Mezhnatsional'nye braki v SSSR* (Inter-ethnic marriages in the USSR). Moskva: Mysl', 1987.
- Tambek, Elmar. *Tõus ja mõõn*. Tallinn: EPL Kirjastus, 2010.
- Tamm, Marek and Pille Petersoo, eds. *Monumentaalne konflikt: mälu, poliitika ja identiteet tänapäeva Eestis* (Monumental conflict: memory, politics and identity in contemporary Estonia). Tallinn: Varrak, 2008.
- Tamm, Marek. "In Search of Lost Time: Memory Politics in Estonia, 1991–2011." *Nationalities Papers* 41 (2013): 651-674.
- Tammaru, Tiit. *Venelased Eestis: ränne ja kohanemine* (Russians in Estonia: migration and localisation). Tallinn: Siseakadeemia kirjastus, 1999.
- Terentyeva, L. N. "Etnicheskaia situatsia i etnokul'turnye protsessy v Sovetskoi Pribaltike" (Ethnic situation and the ethno-cultural processes in the Soviet Baltic). *Ezhegodnik. Rasy i narody*, No. 9 (Moskva: 1979): 136-160.
- Terentyeva, L. N. "Opredelenie svoei natsional'noi prinadlezhnosti podrostkami v natsional'no-smeshannyh sem'iah" (The determination of ones' national attachments among the adolescents from the ethnically-mixed families) *Sovetskaia etnografia*, No. 3 (1969): 20-30.
- Tiit, Ene-Margit, ed. *Estonian Population and the Family. Family Problems X*. Tartu: Tartu University, 1990.
- Trunin, Mikhail. "Juri Lotmani kiri Jaan Krossile ajaloolise romaani päritolust ja mõningates erijoontest." *Vikerkaar* No. 9 (2012): 45-55
- Uhl, Katharina. "Oppressed and Brainwashed Soviet Subject' or 'Prisoners of the Soviet Self? Recent Conceptions of Soviet Subjectivity." *Bylye Gody* 2 (2013): 4-10.

- Vetik, Raivo and Jelena Helemäe, eds. *The Russian Second Generation in Tallinn and Kohtla-Järve. The TIES Study in Estonia*. Amsterdam University Press, 2011.
- Vihalemm, Triin and Anu Masso. "Identity Dynamics of Russian-speakers of Estonia in the Transition Period." *Journal of Baltic Studies* 34 (2003): 92-116.
- Vihalemm, Triin and Margit Keller. "Looking Russian or Estonian: Young consumers constructing the Ethnic 'self' and 'other.'" *Consumption Markets and Culture* 14 (2011): 293-309.
- Von Rauch, Georg. *The Baltic States: Years of Independence, 1917-1940*. London: C. Hurst, 1974, 1987.
- Vseviiov, David. *Nõukogudeaegne Narva elanikkonna kujunemine 1944-1970* (Formation of the population of Narva during the Soviet era 1944-1970). Tartu: Okupatsioonide Repressiivpoliitika Uurimise Riiklik Komisjon, 2001.
- Waldstein, Maxim. "Russifying Estonia? Iurii Lotman and the Politics of Language and Culture in Soviet Estonia." *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 8 (Summer 2007): 561-596.
- Wulf, Meike and Pertti Grönholm. "Generating Meaning Across Generations: The Role of Historians in the Codification of History in Soviet and Post-Soviet Estonia." *Journal of Baltic Studies* 41 (2010): 351-382.
- Wulf, Meike. "Politics of History in Estonia: Changing Memory Regimes 1987-2009." In *History of Communism in Europe* (2010): 245-267.
- Wuthrow, Robert, James Davison Hunter, Albert J. Bergesen, and Edith Kurzweil. *Cultural Analysis. The Work of Peter L. Berger, Mary Douglas, Michel Foucault, and Jürgen Habermas*. London: Routledge, 1984.
- Yurchak, Alexei. *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006.
- Zerubavel, Eviatar. *Ancestors and Relatives: Genealogy, Identity, and Community*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Appendix 1. Note on sources: interviews

The interview transcriptions remain currently with me under confidence as documents in word format. In the thesis, I refer to interviews by pseudonym, year of birth, and numeration in my database; I intentionally refrained from using any other categories (e.g. gender) in referring to them, but I considered pseudonym and year of birth minimally necessary for orientation. Information from all the interviews is used in the thesis, but I have referred in more detail to interviews that could be used through chapters; therefore there is some prevalence in citing older interviewees.

Nr.	Pseudonym		Year of birth	Gender	Interview		
	Name	Surname			Time (dd.mm.yy)	Length (by hour)	Transcription (by A4)
1	Elina	Nikonov	1952	F	26.03.09	0,80	14
2	Dmitri	Nikonov	1952	M	26.03.09	0,80	14 ¹
3	Pille	Okas	1985	F	26.03.09	0,63	10
4	Marie	Limonova	1981	F	26.03.09	0,70	11
5	Helen	Keerpuu	1981	F	22.07.09	0,53	9
6	Veiko	Rohula	1949	M	05.08.09	1,25	15
7	Viktoria	Kisseljova	1953	F	05.08.09	1,61	20
8	Marina	Toompuu	1955	F	06.08.09	2,25	23
9	Lea	Nikonov	1987	F	06.08.09	1,12	22
10	Viktor	Arhipelagov	1962	M	07.08.09	2,83	46
11	Kristiina	Paulus	1983	F	07.08.09	1,02	12
12	Mari	Keerpuu	1955	F	18.08.09	0,80	15
13	Silvi	Laiküla	1985	F	18.08.09	0,70	14
14	Jelena	Loore	1954	F	18.08.09	1,57	18
15	Natalia	Sharpov	1985	M	19.08.09	0,58	9
16	Inga	Ventsel	1984	F	20.08.09	1,55	23
17	Anna	Lauris	1983	F	19.09.09	1,25	18
18	Leida	Arhipelagov	1931	F	23.09.09	3,22	40
19	Ivan	Arhipelagov	1928	M	23.09.09	0,40	4
20	Jüri	Laiküla	1949	M	23.09.09	0,80	12
21	Heldur	Keerpuu	1928	M	24.09.09	0,55	9
22	Vera	Laiküla	1979	F	24.09.09	0,87	13
23	Oleg	Kisseljova	1983	M	27.10.09	0,87	14
24	Leo	Talvet	1929	M	28.10.09	1,05	14
25	Artyom	Gorin	1952	M	30.10.09	1,06	15
26	Gennadi	Lomonov	1950	M	30.10.09	0,50	2 ²
27	Norma	Sharpov	1958	F	03.11.09	0,73	14
28	Viljo	Paulus	1946	M	05.11.09	1,23	17

¹ Interviewed together.

² Based on notes (no audio recording).

Nr.	Pseudonym		Year of birth	Gender	Interview		
	Name	Surname			Time (dd.mm.yy)	Length (by hour)	Transcription (by A4)
29	Karl	Vainupea	1943	M	06.11.09	1,63	33
30	Toivo	Kõlar	1943	M	10.11.09	2,55	36
31	Olga	Kõlar	1948	F	10.11.09	0,55	10
32	Maris	Romel	1979	F	10.11.09	1,32	19
33	Asta	Gailit	1960	F	16.11.09	0,59	14
34	Anton	Gailit	1960	M	16.11.09	0,59	14 ³
35	Mait	Kits	1949	M	16.11.09	2,08	34
36	Tiiu	Meripuu	1978	F	17.11.09	1,08	20
37	Aleksander	Dimitriev	1966	M	18.11.09	1,33	25
38	Julia	Okas	1959	F	20.11.09	2,03	28
39	Tamara	Lebedeva	1947	F	20.11.09	1,63	29
40	Maarja	Leiner	1979	F	20.11.09	1,77	30
41	Andrei	Gurjev	1947	M	21.11.09	0,92	16
42	Maria	Lender	1950	F	16.09.09	1,50	4 ⁴
43	Boris	Simonov	1974	M	03.08.09	1,00	3 ⁵
44	Andres	Laas	1969	M	26.11.09	1,07	14
45	Veljo	Virkbaum	1972	M	26.11.09	1,00	18
46	Svetlana	Virkbaum	1975	F	26.11.09	1,00	18 ⁶
47	Sven	Jaaniste	1970	M	26.11.09	1,22	17
48	Anto	Vader	1967	M	26.11.09	1,17	20
49	Juhan	Rääbis	1973	M	27.11.09	0,75	17
50	Kadri	Lennuk	1982	F	08.12.09	1,00	19
51	Jaanus	Lender	1978	M	08.12.09	0,80	13
52	Evgeni	Godunov	1969	M	08.12.09	1,35	20
53	Luule	Alekseyev	1955	F	18.12.09	1,42	24
54	Sergei	Kormakov	1981	M	03.09.10	2,50	37
55	Inna	Tasa	1975	F	10.09.10	1,33	26
56	Filipp	Glebov	1964	M	13.09.10	1,85	27
57	Aivar	Roheline	1974	M	13.09.10	0,60	11
58	Raissa	Laanik	1981	F	13.09.10	0,70	13
59	Alo	Laanik	1978	M	13.09.10	0,70	13 ⁷
60	Nikolai	Alekseyev	1977	M	15.09.10	2,00	29
61	Vaida	Lodjapuu	1970	F	16.09.10	2,23	32
62	Aavo	Leidja	1960	M	17.09.10	1,50	6 ⁸
63	Ellen	Vetik	1987	F	17.09.10	1,60	30
64	Juhan	Rohula	1982	M	20.09.10	1,09	21
65	Teet	Laansoo	1986	M	21.09.10	1,45	22
66	Ariana	Rahumägi	1972	F	21.09.10	1,22	20

³ Interviewed together.

⁴ Based on notes (no audio recording), displaced numeration.

⁵ Based on notes (no audio recording), displaced numeration.

⁶ Interviewed together.

⁷ Interviewed together.

⁸ Based on notes (no audio recording).

Nr.	Pseudonym		Year of birth	Gender	Interview		
	Name	Surname			Time (dd.mm.yy)	Length (by hour)	Transcription (by A4)
67	Eino	Asu	1956	M	23.09.10	1,88	20
68	Vardo	Võsa	1941	M	29.09.10	1,55	30
69	Veronika	Võsa	1945	F	29.09.10	1,55	29 ⁹
70	Marko	Kits	1984	M	29.09.10	1,25	20
71	Sonia	Poska	1976	F	04.10.10	1,40	25
72	Jelena	Laius	1985	F	05.10.10	0,75	16
73	Eeva	Koit	1987	F	05.10.10	0,82	18
74	Aive	Sander	1978	F	05.10.10	1,75	27
75	Elsa	Vaher	1949	F	07.10.10	1,45	25
76	Madle	Vetik	1978	F	09.10.10	1,00	33
77	Zinaida	Laas	1949	F	09.10.10	2,00	35
78	Vambola	Laas	1947	M	09.10.10	0,75	14 ¹⁰
79	Laine	Vetik	1961	F	10.10.10	1,58	27
80	Helju	Dimitriev	1934	F	11.10.10	3,34	56
81	Anastassia	Semtsov	1969	F	11.10.10	0,91	16
82	Tiina	Semtsov	1947	F	11.10.10	0,51	12
83	Sirje	Semtsov	1967	F	11.10.10	0,51	12 ¹¹
84	Jaak	Kadak	1972	M	11.10.10	1,61	22
85	Maie	Koit	1961	F	06.08.11	1,72	33
86	Lidia	Sander	1956	F	14.06.11	3,17	46
87	Galja	Allikas	1933	F	15.06.11	2,23	24
88	Ilona	Loks	1939	F	20.06.11	2,00	31
89	Lena	Poska	1953	F	21.06.11	1,42	27
90	Jana	Kask	1976	F	21.06.11	3,01	43 ¹²
91	Danil	Kuzmin	1979	M	21.06.11	1,60	25
92	Polina	Kesamaa	1936	F	07.07.11	1,40	24
93	Ülo	Kesamaa	1933	M	07.07.11	2,05	39 ¹³
94	Feliks	Loks	1937	M	13.07.11	0,90	14
95	Daria	Poska	1931	F	14.07.11	1,90	24

⁹ Interviewed together.

¹⁰ Interviewed partially together.

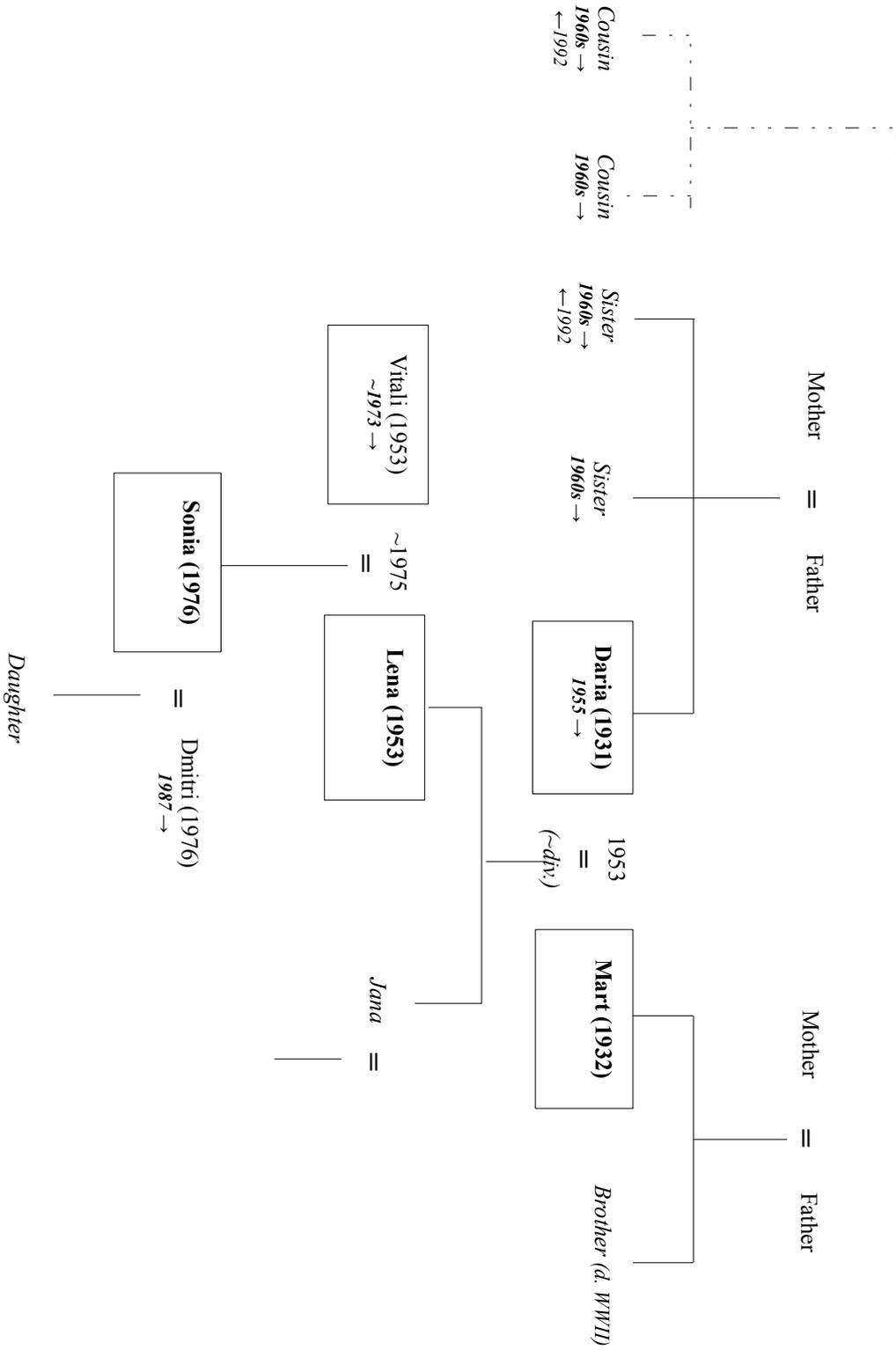
¹¹ Interviewed together.

¹² Second interview on 11.07.2011

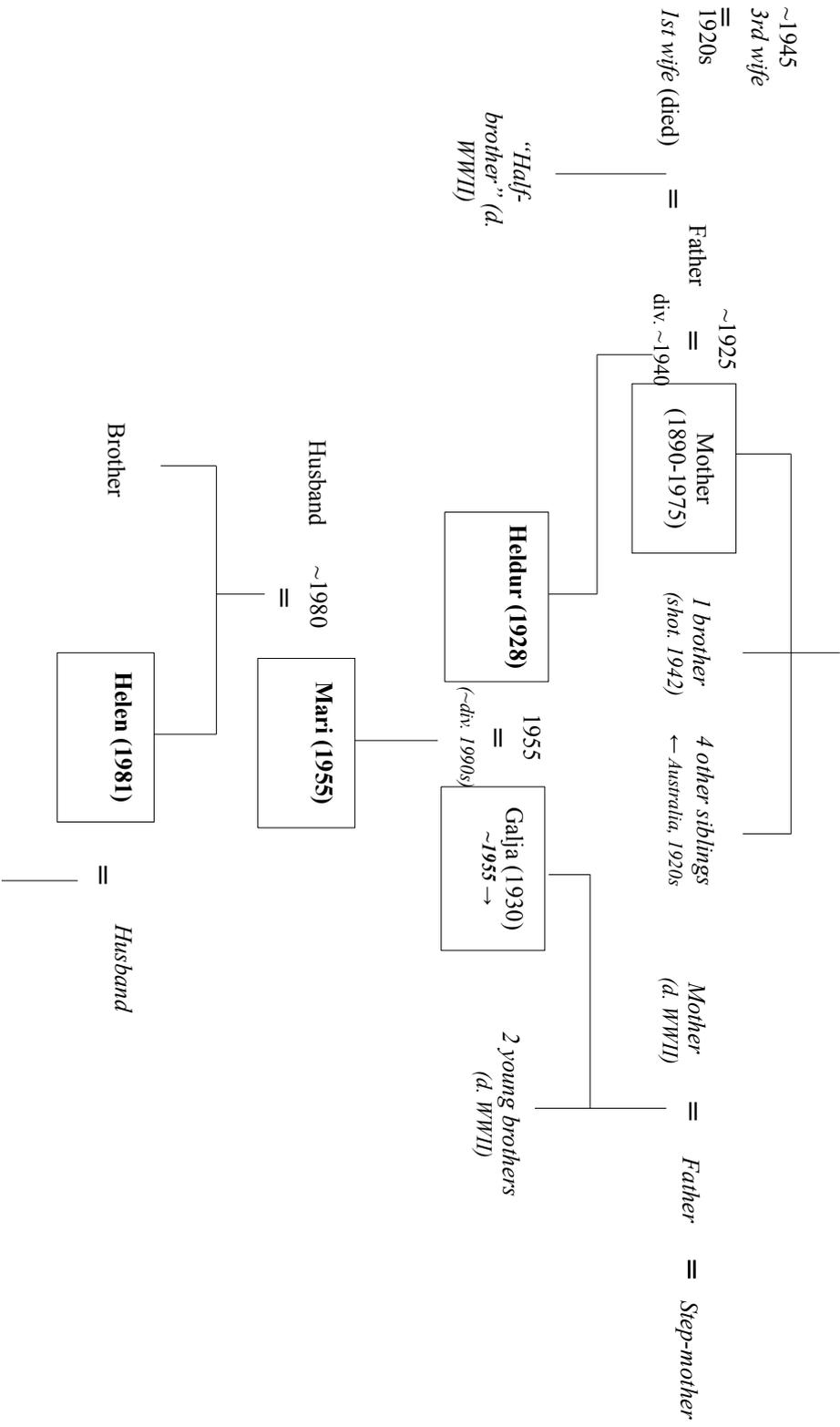
¹³ Interviewed partially together.

Appendix 2. Family trees

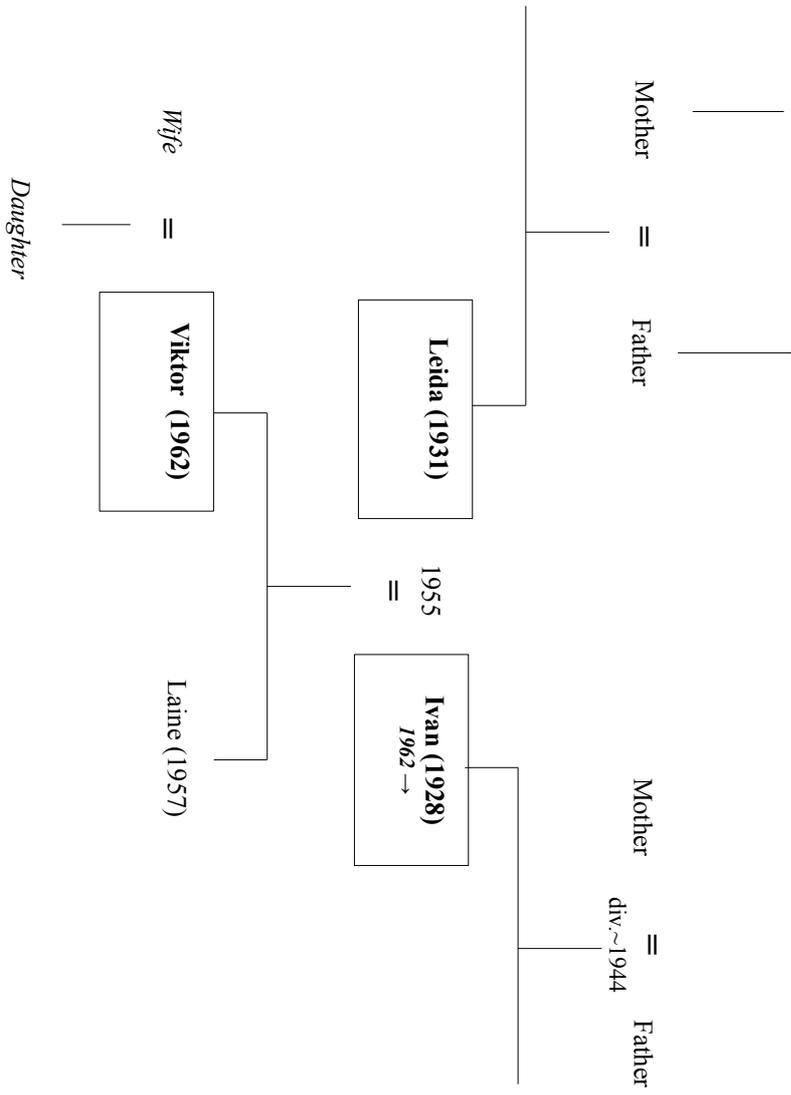
1.2.1. POSKA



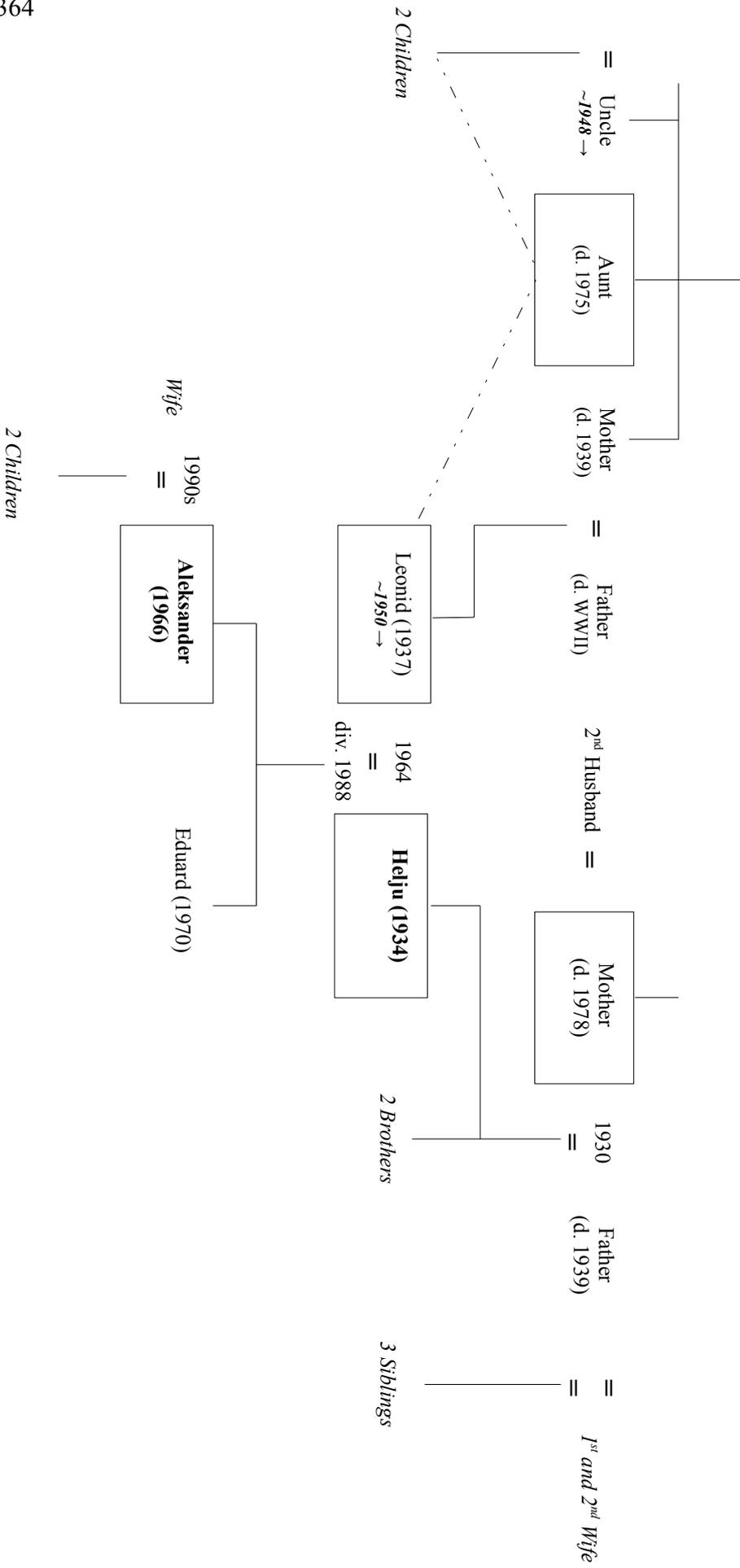
1. 2. 2. KEERPUU



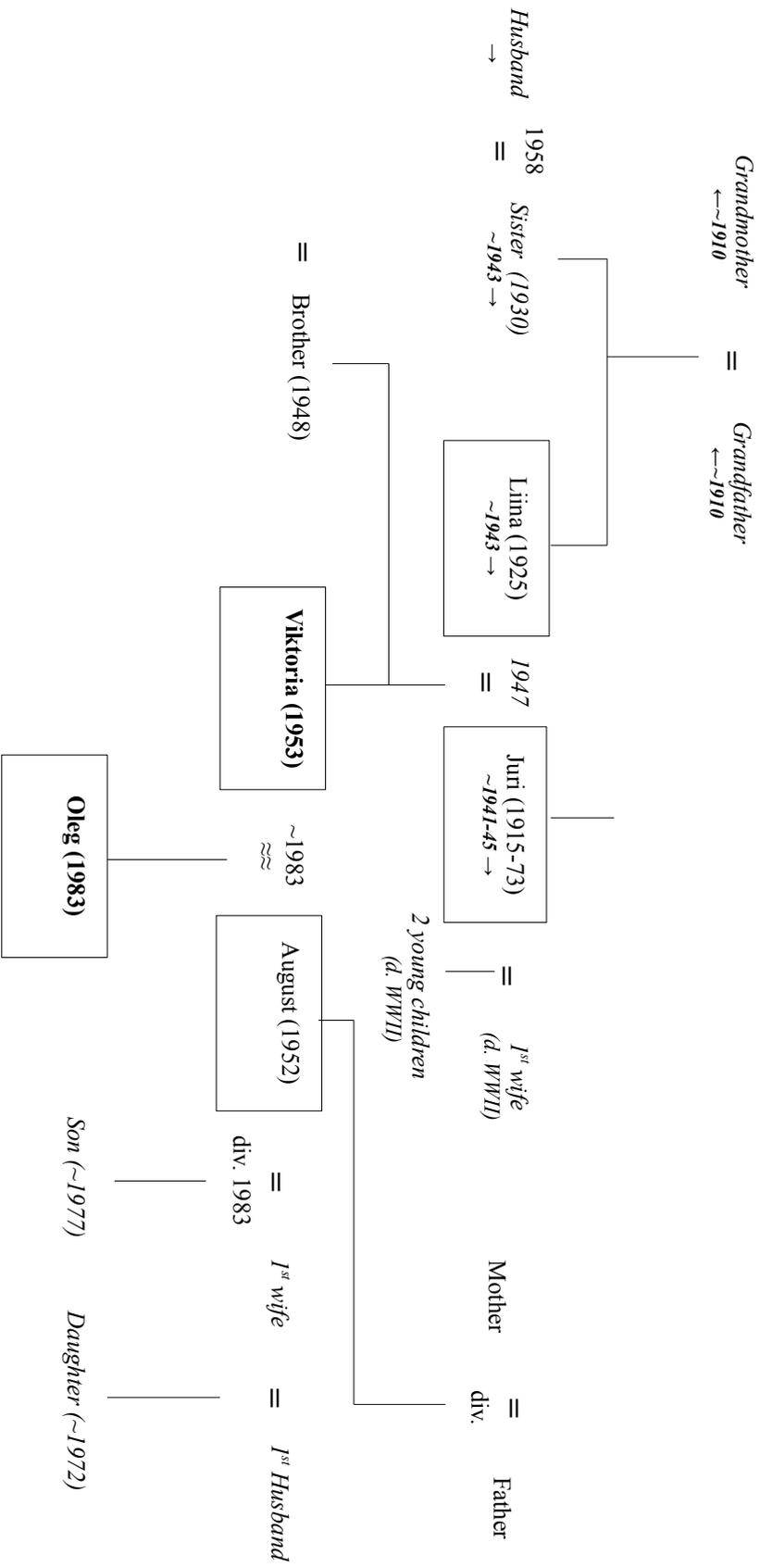
1. 2. 3. ARHIPELAGOV



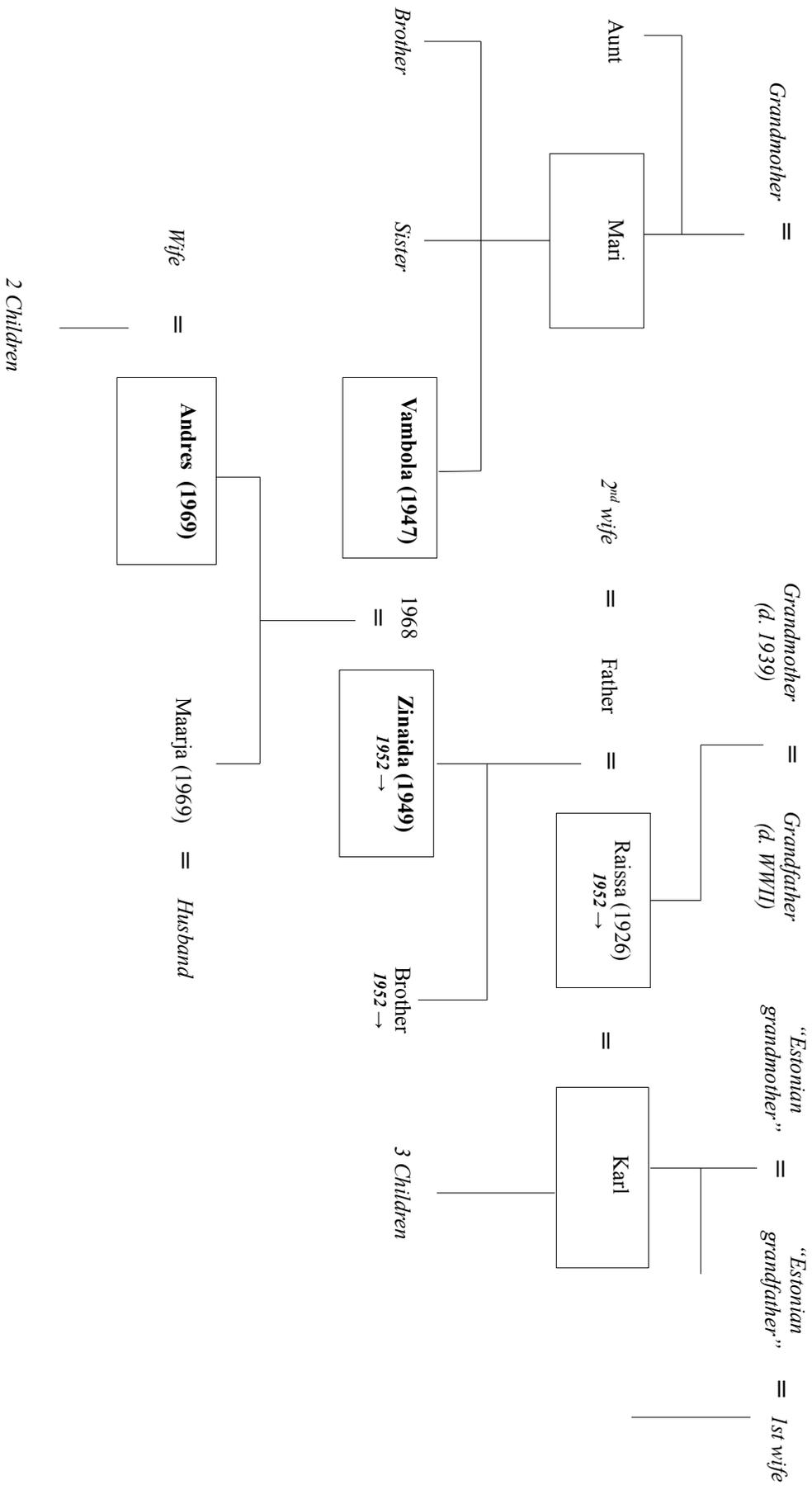
1. 2. 4. DIMITRIEV



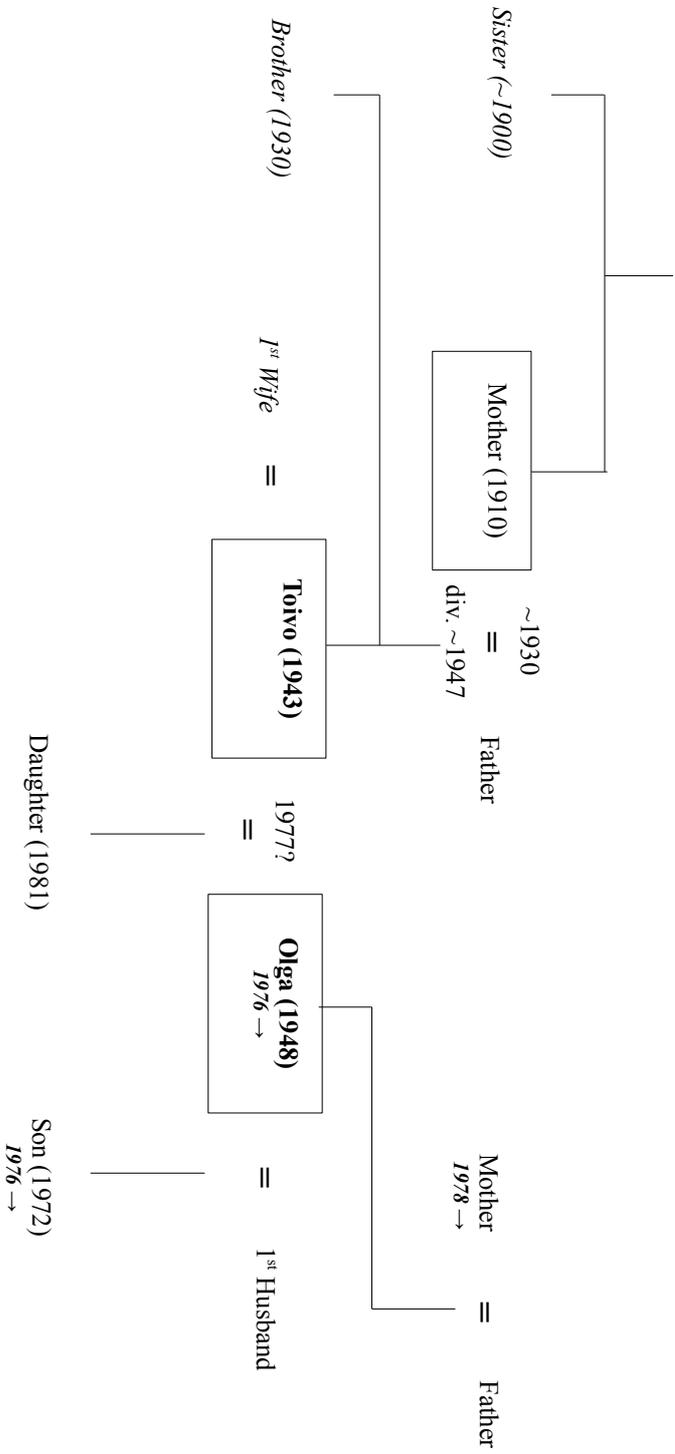
1.3.2. KISSELJOV



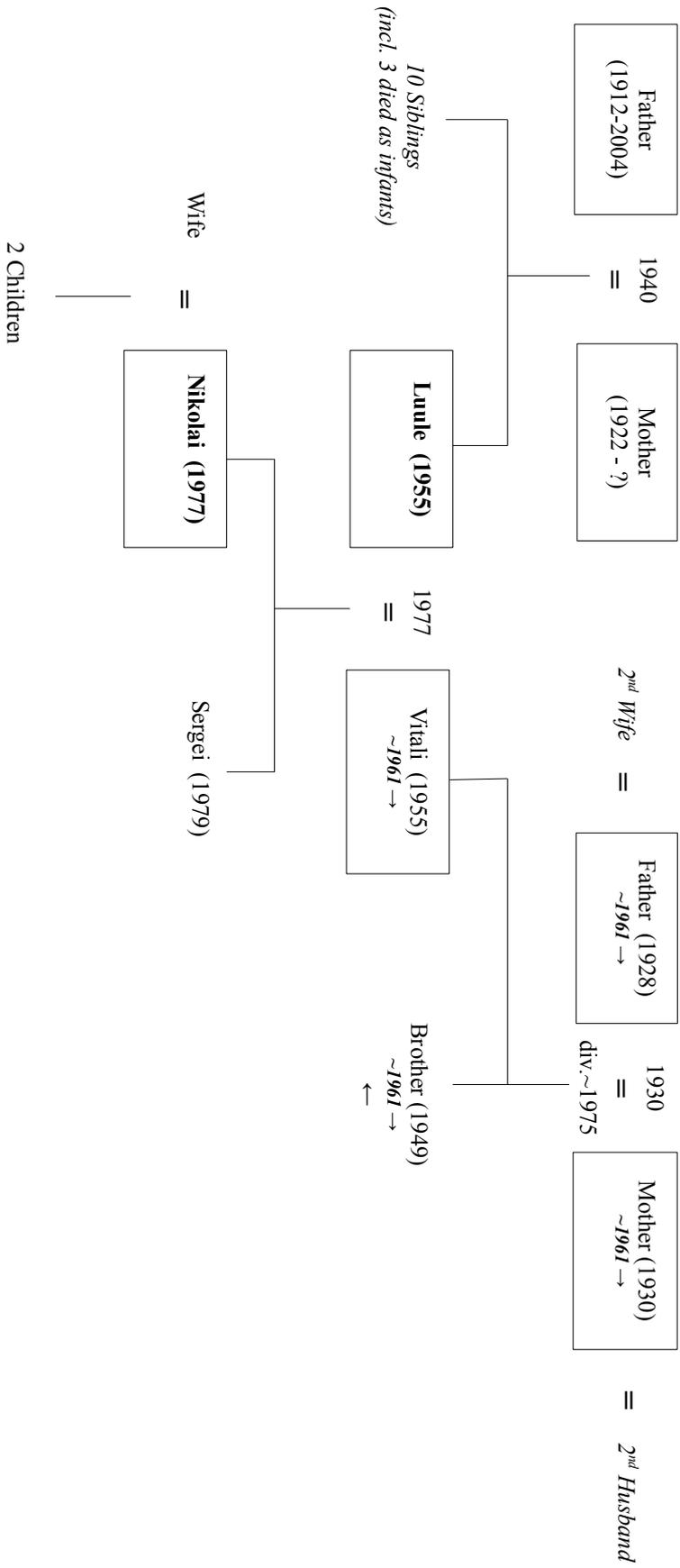
1.3.3. LAAS



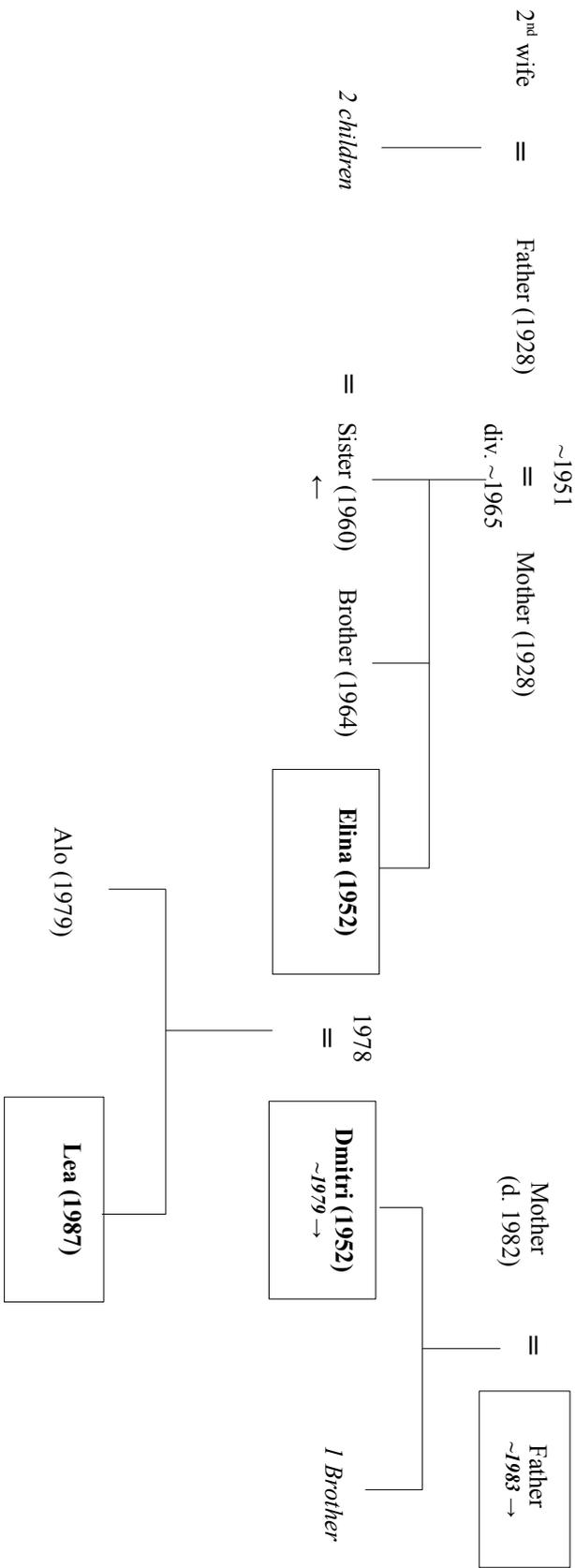
1.4.1. KÕLAR



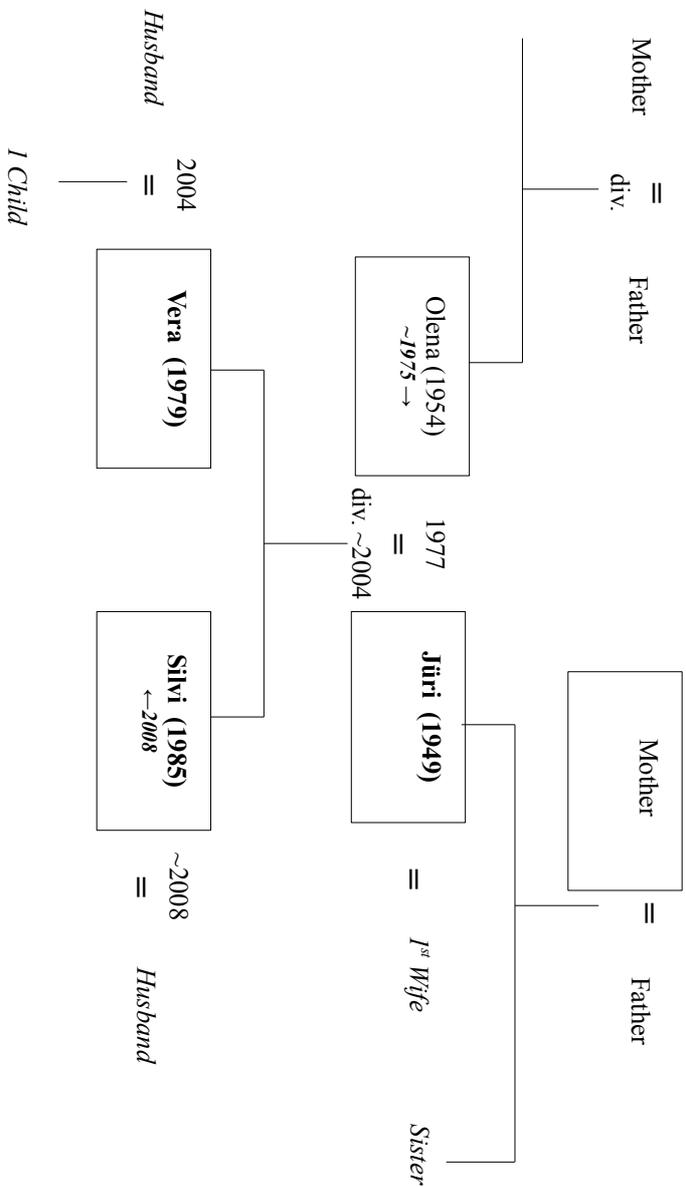
1. 4. 2. ALEKSEYEV



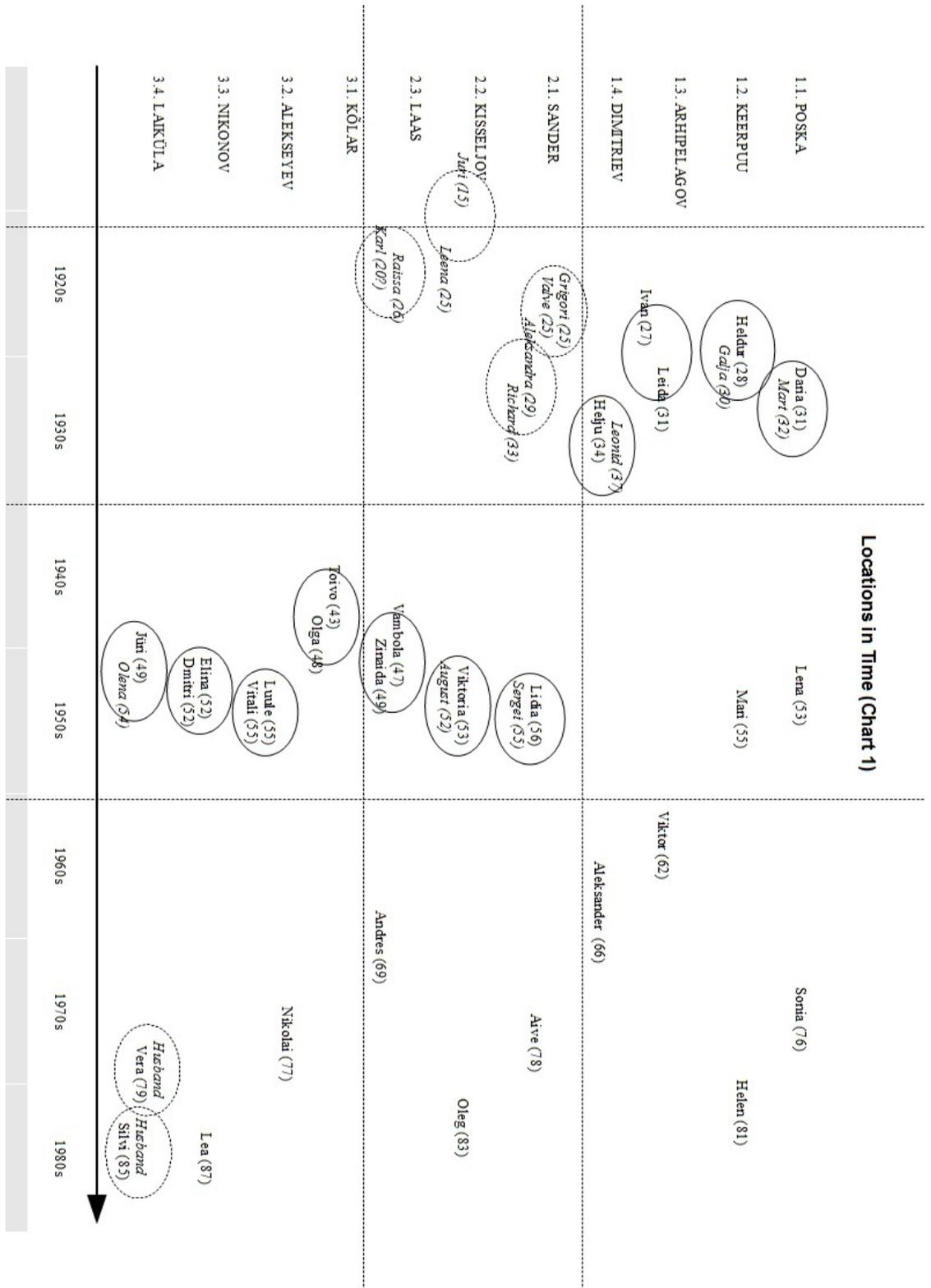
1.4.3. NIKONOV



1.4.4. LAIKÜLA



Appendix 3. Meetings and time



Appendix 4. Soviet studies of inter-marriage in Estonia

Inter-ethnic marriages were an object of study also in the Soviet Estonia, especially during the 1970s, but after the 1980s there have been no studies; also in larger terms is the link with the Soviet sociology and ethnology broken. Here I aim to revisit the studies of inter-ethnic marriages in the Soviet Estonia that were undertaken by Elizaveta Rihter in the late 1970s and in the 1980s. Ms. Rihter died in the 1990s and the original materials from her research have not been stored. Her research fits to the larger framework of the Soviet studies of ethnicity but whereas the more generic and central studies were mostly based on census data and some short questionnaires, she filled questionnaires based on personal interviews with the inter-ethnic couples (her original materials have not been preserved).¹ There were some other sociological research projects in Estonia which touched shortly on ethnic relations, but they rather focused on organisation of daily life in a very generic manner without providing discussions of ethnic relations.²

¹ For an overview of Soviet Estonian works on ethnic relations in Estonia at large see: Epp Jaanvärk and Klara Hallik, “Ülevaade aastail 1960-1982 rahvussuhete alal avaldatud töödest” (An overview of the works published on ethnic relations in 1960-82), *Eesti NSV Teaduste Akadeemia Toimetised: Ühiskonnateadused* Vol. 33, nr. 3 (1984): 203-215. From the all-union works, the following articles by L. N. Terentyeva cover the situation in the Soviet Estonia and touch upon the mixed marriages (especially the first one): “Opredelenie svoei natsional'noi prinadlezhnosti podrostkami v natsional'no-smeshannyh sem'iah” (The determination of ones' national attachments among the adolescents from the ethnically-mixed families), *Sovetskaia etnografia*, No. 3 (1969): 20-30; “Etnicheskaia situatsia i etnokul'turnye protsessy v Sovetskoii Pribaltike” (Ethnic situation and the ethno-cultural processes in the Soviet Baltic States), *Ezhegodnik. Rasy i narody*, No. 9 (Moskva: 1979): 136-160; and O. A. Gantskaia and L. N. Terentyeva, “Etnograficheskie issledovaniia natsionalnyh protsessov v Pribaltike” (Ethnographical studies of national processes in the Baltic States), *Sovetskaia etnografia*, No. 5 (1965).

² In Russian: Juhan Kahk, *Cherty shodstva – sotsiologicheskie ocherki* (Similar features – sociological essays) (Tallinn: Eesti Raamat, 1974); A. I. Holmogorov, *Internatsional'nye cherty sovetskikh natsii (na materiale konkretno-sotsiologicheskikh issledovaniï v Pribaltike)* (Moskva: Mysl', 1970). In Estonian: Juhan Kahk and Iurii V. Arutjunjan, *Sotsioloogilisi suletõmbeid Nõukogude Eesti kohta* (Sociological Pen Strokes about Soviet Estonia) (Tallinn: Eesti Raamat, 1980); A. Holmogorov, *Nõukogude rahvuste arengujooned (Baltikumis läbiviidud sotsioloogiliste uurimiste materjalide põhjal)* (Development features of soviet nationalities (Based on the materials from the sociological studies in the Baltic States) (Tallinn: Eesti Raamat, 1973).

Rihter's scholarly analysis was published in *The Proceedings of the Academy of Sciences of the Estonian SSR* in 1982 and is based on the study of 100 ethnically inter-married families of Tallin, but she also published more popular articles on her ongoing research in 1981, 1985, and 1987.³ In the focus of her study were the couples of “Estonian” and “Russian” (or “Ukranian” or “Belorussian” as “ethnically close to Russian nationality”) spouses. She found the families through questioning the 4th graders both in the Estonian and Russian-speaking schools; therefore the primarily found inter-ethnic children were born in 1967-69 and their parents were born in 1941-48 (with the maximum range of 1928-53). By 1985 she had already questioned 250 intermarried couples and in the later popular articles she mentions also the other sources, such as the interviews with population registry officers.

In her 1982 scholarly article Rihter's makes a strong effort to categorize and enumerate, which was probably also a precondition for publication.⁴ Based on the mentioned sample of 100 families she maps eight “family types” by judging spouses’

³ Elizaveta Rihter, “Ob etnicheskom sostave i iazyke natsional’no-smeshannyh semei Tallina” (The ethnic composition and language in nationally mixed families living in Tallinn), *Eesti NSV Teaduste Akadeemia Toimetised: Ühiskonnateadused / Izvestiia Akademii Nauk Estonskoi SSR: Obshchestvennye nauki* (Proceedings of the Academy of Sciences of the Estonian SSR: social sciences) Vol. 31, nr. 3 (1982): 263-276. Another longer article of hers is the following more popular one: “Mezhnatsional’nye sem’i Tallina: Kakie oni?” (Ethnically mixed families of Tallinn – what are they like?) *Tallin*, No. 5 (1985): 90-94. The next three articles are short and cover some aspects of her study: “Kliuch k umu i serdtsu” (A key to mind and heart), *Russkii iazyk v Estonskoi Shkole*, No. 4 (1981): 33-38; “Esche odin rezerv...” (One more reserve...), *Russkii iazyk v Estonskoi Shkole*, No. 4 (1985): 48-51; “Lichnye imena b bietnicheskih sem’iah: K voprosu ob etnicheskoi i iazykovoi integratsii” (Personal names in the bi-ethnic families: to the question of ethnic and linguistic integration), *Russkii iazyk v Estonskoi Shkole*, No. 1 (1987): 53-56.

⁴ Rihter, “Ob etnicheskom sostave,” 263. The article starts with the must-have references to the political directives: “The 26th Congress of the Communist Party of the USSR devoted much attention to the inter-ethnic relationships and the formation of internationalist ideology in people’s minds.” (In Russian: “XXVI s’ezd KPSS udelil mnogo vnimaniia mezhnatsional’nym otnosheniiam i formirovaniu internatsional’nogo mirovozzreniia v soznanii liudei.” This sentence illustrates the multiple usages of the Russian word *natsional’nost’* – as it means ethnicity, nation and nationality, in English.). A bit later in the text she would confirm that things are going in the “right” direction, she states that “In 1979 the author of the article observed the cultural convergence processes within the bi-ethnic families of Tallinn.” (Ibid.)

ethnicity (Estonian, Russian) and origins (local, newcomer, or either)⁵; these family types are presented through seven characteristics of family, spouses and children;⁶ these seven characteristics and spouses are presented in relation to ethnic belonging.⁷ (See the illustrations below). However, Rihter mostly focuses on first two family types (local Estonian man – incoming Russian woman; incoming Russian man – local Estonian woman) which both account for 30-40% of her sample. The shares of the other remaining six family types in the sample are ~30% in total but further numbers are not given. Rihter also does not motivate her use of the undefined categories on the schemes below (e.g. sparse lines, sparse lines mixed with dots, empty cells, empty and dark-filled cells are undefined). However, it is possible to conclude that the following taxonomies are used for mapping the seven characters of family, spouses and children and spouses own identities (see also the illustrations below):

1. Home language: Estonian, Russian, or both,
2. Non-Estonian parent's knowledge of Estonian language: 'yes', 'no' or 'weak'. (It is possible to presume that the horizontal lines (which otherwise mark "Russian") mean "no Estonian knowledge" and that the less tense vertical lines mean "weak knowledge of Estonian").
3. Food habits: Estonian, Russian, 'international and urban', 'Russian and urban', 'Estonian and urban', mixed. (Mixed categories are used a lot in this

⁵ The eight family types were defined by judging spouses' ethnicity and origins were the following: 1. local Estonian man – incoming Russian woman, 2. incoming Russian man – local Estonian woman, 3. local Estonian (man or woman) – local Russian (woman or man), 4. Estonian-Russian man – Estonian-Russian woman [‘Mixed’ parents without the specified place of origin, same also below], 5. local Estonian (man or woman) – Estonian-Russian (woman or man), 6. Russian (man or woman) – Estonian-Russian (woman or man), 7. incoming Estonian (man or woman) – Russian (woman or man), 8. incoming Estonian (man or woman) – Estonian-Russian (woman or man).

⁶ All the families were then presented according to seven characteristics that took a look at familial situation and several characteristics of a child or children: 1. home language, 2. Russian parent's knowledge of Estonian language, 3. family's food habits, 4. child's language skills, 5. child's name, 6. child's schooling language, 7. child's national self-nomination.

⁷ The seven characteristics (as well as the spouses identities – triangle refers to a man and a circle to a woman) were judged and then illustrated according to their 'ethnic' contents (capitalized a, b, v, g – in sequence of the Russian alphabet): A – Estonian (vertical lines); Ѕ – Russian (horizontal lines); B – neither / 'international' or 'urban' (dots); Г – both / Estonian and Russian (grid of lines). In addition to these 'ethnic' contents, Rihter uses lines to connect the mentioned seven characteristics and spouses in order to show "which mostly influences which one."

case, sometimes, all the food is either 'Russian and urban' or 'Estonian and urban').

4. Child's bilingualism: 'both' or 'missing'. (The representation of this category is unclear as 'Russian' and 'Estonian' options are completely missing).

5. Child's name: Estonian, Russian, 'international' (In this case, the author has not used 'mixed' categories).

6. Child's school: Estonian or Russian.

7. Child's national self-nomination: Estonian, Russian, 'international' (here again, no 'both' or weak forms or categories are used).

8. Parent's identity (central circle and triangle): Estonian, Russian, 'mixed', 'incoming Estonian' (dark), 'local Russian' (empty). (The 'mixed' heritage category is not designated as a grid but half of the triangle (a man) or circle (a woman) is filled with the horizontal and the other half with the vertical lines).

On the following pages I present Rihter's familial typologies based on the schemes which are in her 1982 article. The schemes are given as follows:

1.
local Estonian man
incoming Russian woman

2.
incoming Russian man
local Estonian woman

3.
local Estonian (man or woman)
local Russian (woman or man)

4.
Estonian-Russian man
Estonian-Russian woman
[no specified place of origin]

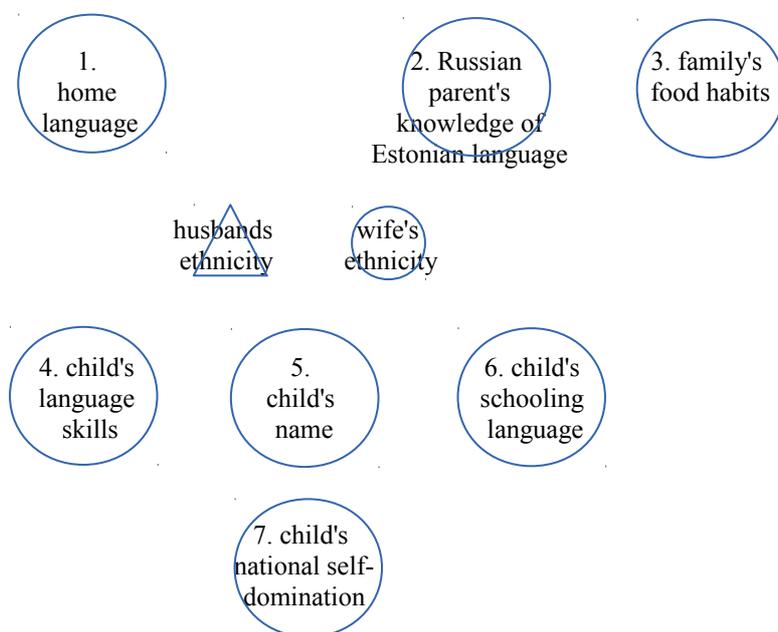
5.
local Estonian (man or woman)
Estonian-Russian (woman or man)
[no specified place of origin]

6.
Russian (man or woman)
Estonian-Russian (woman or man)
[no specified place of origin]

7.
incoming Estonian (man or woman)
Russian (woman or man)
[no specified place of origin]

8.
incoming Estonian (man or woman)
Estonian-Russian (woman or man)
[no specified place of origin]

Rihter's familial typologies are in the following format:

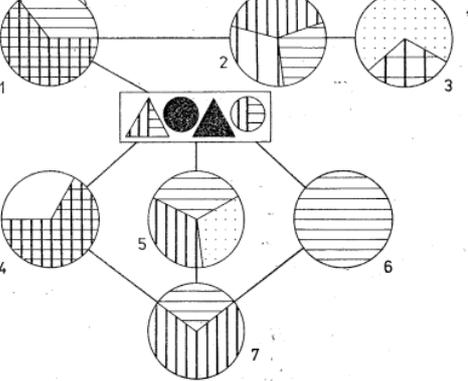
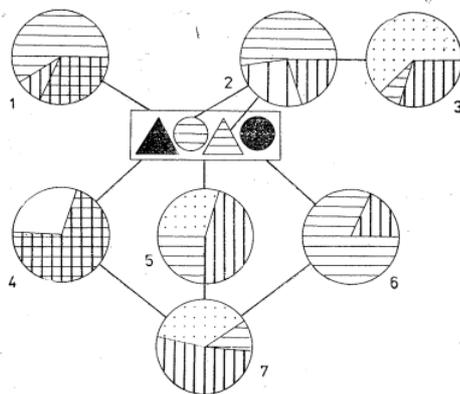
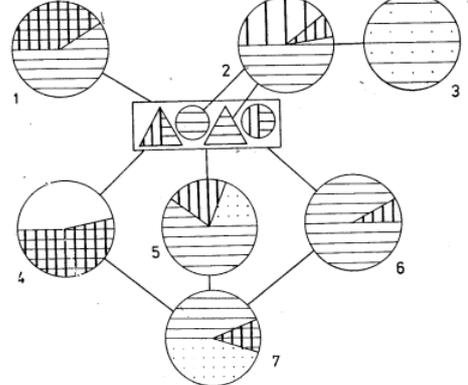
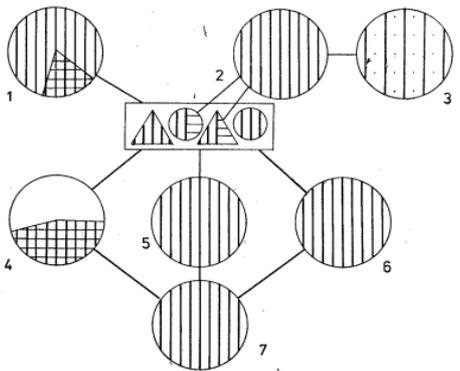
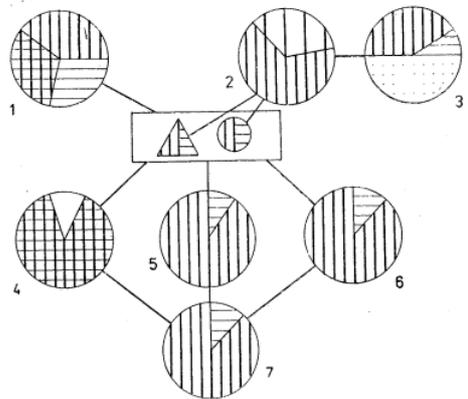
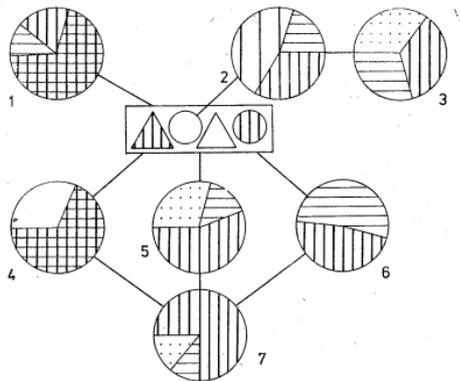
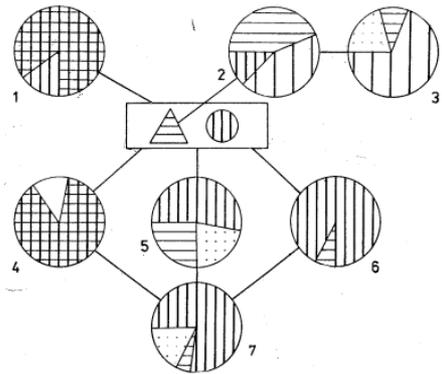
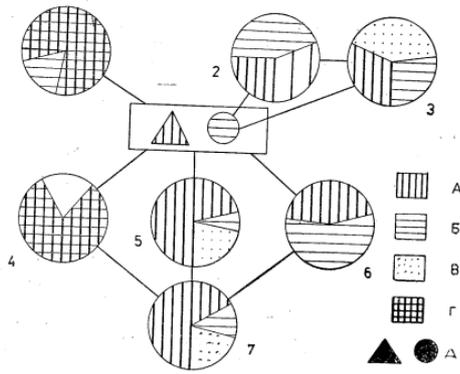


The seven characters of family, spouses and children and spouses own identities are given the following attributes:

- Vertical lines – “Estonian,”
- Horizontal lines – “Russian,”
- Dots – “neither Russian nor Estonian” or “international and urban,”
- Grid of lines – “both Estonian and Russian.”

Additional attributes (not defined by Rihter, but found on the schemes):

- Sparse vertical lines - “weakly Estonian,”
- Sparse horizontal lines - “weakly Russian,”
- Sparse grid of lines - “mix of weakly Estonian and Russian,”
- Sparse lines mixed with dots - “Estonian and international” or “Russian and international,”
- Empty cell – “missing” (child's bilingualism); or “local Russian (for parents),
- Dark-filled cell - “incoming Estonian” (for parents).



The “Category-troubles” on these schemes by Rihter should be evident. In an attempt to assign clear singularly defined categories and map the elements of ethnicity in the family, Rihter also added some elements of in-betweenness and mixity.

However, the assignments remain categorical and definite, context and situational characters does not enter her discussions and each family is represented by one “either-or” answer to each question. Some entrances remain plainly unclear, e.g. children bilingualism (nr. 4) is marked only in two ways either as 'full bilingualism' or as 'not existent'; parents ethnicity in case of 'mixed parents' (types 4, 5, 6, 8) is depicted visually as 'half-Estonian-half-Russian'; 'mixed children' are given more “leeway in mixity” (perhaps because they form the research object and are only in their formation years). In addition, 'mixed parents' there are also cases of 'local Russians' and 'incoming Estonians' (types 3, 7, 8) that are marked with either 'blank' or 'black' – but why? Rihter could not obviously discuss the links between ethnicity, living place, and historical experiences further.

The two first family types (out of eight in her 1982 article) are the main ones to be discussed in all the Rihter's articles.⁸ In *Tallinn*, Rihter presents a more popular overview of her research (based, already on ~250 families (but she does not say how many questionnaires were really returned) and she also presents a modified 3-fold typology in which two first categories remain the same and the third one includes all the types from three to eights from her 1982 typology (incl. their proportions in the sample):

⁸ Elizaveta Rihter's 1985 article in the Russian monthly *Tallinn* (“Mezhnatsional'nye sem'i Tallina: Kakie oni?”) could be considered a more holistic mediation between a scholarly and journalistic approach, her contributions to *The Russian language in an Estonian School* are short and about more specific topics (“Kliuch k umu i serdtsu” in 1981; “Esche odin rezerv...” in 1985; “Lichnye imena b bietnicheskikh sem'iah in 1987”).

1. local Estonian man – incoming Russian woman (40%);
2. incoming Russian man – local Estonian woman (30%);
3. marriages which involve local Russians, incoming Estonians and/or spouses with the prior “mixed” Estonian-Russian origins (30%).⁹

When going through Rihter's 1985 article in *Tallinn* and combining and comparing the scattered data which can be found there with the numbers in her other publications, I distilled and systematised the following information about the two first types of families.

⁹ This category is defined initially in a lengthier and misleading manner: local Estonian man – local Russian woman; local Estonian man – Estonian-Russian woman; local Estonian woman – local Russian man; local Estonian woman – Estonian-Russian man; Estonian-Russian man – Estonian-Russian woman. From this list the obviously more “Russian leaning” constellations such as types 6-8 from her 1982 article are missing: Russian (man or woman) – Estonian-Russian (woman or man); incoming Estonian (man or woman) – Russian (woman or man); incoming Estonian (man or woman) – Estonian-Russian (woman or man). On the later pages of the article, Rihter however hints to the fact that also these ones were included in this “category nr. 3”.

Table 4-1. Overview of inter-ethnic family situations

	Attitude to marriage of Estonian parents-in-law	Prior Russian language knowledge	Prior Estonian language knowledge	Estonian language during the marriage	Language usage in the family	Child's given name	Child's school	Child's "Ethnicity choice"
I (40%) local Estonian man; incoming Russian woman	30% - supportive 40% - "lukewarm" 30% - not supportive	(men) 70% - knew 30% - "knew weakly"	(women) 11% - knew 9% - "understood something" 80% - no knowledge	44% - "knew to some level"	(if living separately from parents-in-law) 75% - Russian; 25% - both or Estonian	74% - Estonian or international ("by husband") 26% - Russian ("by wife")	62% - Russian; 38% - Estonian	There is no direct correlation drawn to parents ethnicity but to schooling: I Estonian school: 100% "Estonian" II Russian school: -56% "Estonian" - 44% "Russian"
II (30%) incoming Russian man; local Estonian woman	59% - supportive 41% - "lukewarm" or opposed	(women) 72% - "knew well"	(men) 12% - knew 16% - "knew something" 72% - no knowledge	"only if studied as a child"	80% - Russian	20% - Estonian 20% - international 40% - Russian ("by husband")	30% - Russian; 70% - Estonian	
						62% - Estonian; ¹⁰ 18% - foreign; 22% - Russian	65% - Russian; ¹¹ 35% - Estonian	
						62% - Estonian; ¹² 12% - foreign; 26% - Russian	25% - Russian; ¹³ 75% - Estonian	

Table 4-2. Attendants of Russian-speaking schools

Perceived primary ethnic affiliation	Knowledge of Estonian	Comments
44% "Russian" ethnicity	24% - "speak freely"	- "10% went to an Estonian kindergarten" - "60% have Estonian family name (by the father)" - If an Estonian father: 24% were not born in Estonia [actually a more "mixed" type, then. - 32% of children with an Estonian family name – did not have a father ("death, divorce"). ¹⁴ - "Estonian father left [the family] after divorce" - "Mother is from bi-ethnic family and father – Russian" - "For a majority of youngsters, the choice of Russian nationality is conditioned by the insufficient or no knowledge of Estonian language."
56% "Estonian" ethnicity	60% - "speak freely" 20% - know weakly 20% - no knowledge	- Many went to an Estonian kindergarten. - "Language that has been acquired at a pre-school age (with a parent or relatives) is not forgotten. The one's who have no speaking practice know Estonian language weakly..." - "85% of the youngsters have got an Estonian family name." - "In them there is a feeling of territorial proximity with the indigenous population. (“I was born here, my family name comes from my father,” “My father is an Estonian and I will live in Estonia.”) (“So many of our people perished in the war that it is needed to support it” ¹⁵)

¹⁰ Data in this cell is from: Rihter, "Lichnye imena b bietnicheskikh sem'iah.

¹¹ Data in this cell is from: Rihter, "Esche odin rezerv..."

¹² Data in this cell is from: Rihter, "Lichnye imena b bietnicheskikh sem'iah. I cannot comment on the discrepancy between the *italic numbers* in these cells. As stated in general descriptions, "20% Estonian" here comes from Rihter, "Mezhnatsional'nye sem'i Tallina: Kakie oni?" whereas "62% Estonian" comes from Rihter, "Lichnye imena b bietnicheskikh sem'iah.

¹³ Data in this cell is from: Rihter, "Esche odin rezerv..."

¹⁴ Up to here, the data in this column was from: Rihter, "Lichnye imena b bietnicheskikh sem'iah.

¹⁵ This quote, from: Rihter, "Lichnye imena b bietnicheskikh sem'iah.

Rihter approached the people through the schools and by cross-calculating the data that is given by her for the first two family types (70% of informants) it is reasonable to believe that approximately the same number of children from both schools were questioned. This then means that we do not know how many children from intermarriages were put into Estonian and how many to Russian schools representative to the whole population.¹⁶

However, some other conclusions are rather straight-forward and could serve as hypothesis for further statistical work but also as bases for the discussion of my interview materials as indicators of some tendencies in family roles, cultural affiliations, naming conventions and so forth. Again, it should be kept in mind that the following statements are here solely based on the tables 1 and 2 which are presented above with applicability to Rihter's first two family types (local Estonian man – incoming Russian woman and incoming Russian man – local Estonian woman).

¹⁶ Based on the table 1 which takes its data from the Rihter's 1985 article we know more about the “70%” of the children who were born into the mixed families (this is in the case of: 40% with the local Estonian man – incoming Russian woman; 30% with the incoming Russian man – local Estonian woman). The details about the 30% of the other typologies is missing (in the case of marriages which take into consideration local Russians, incoming Estonians and spouses with the prior “mixed” Estonian-Russian origins), but we can assume that their tendencies towards the “Russian” and the “Estonian” cultural affiliation mutually exclude themselves. The simple cross-calculations for the case of that 70% is the following: Russian school attendants: based on the data from one article: $40\% \cdot 62\% + 30\% \cdot 30\% = 33.8\%$; based on a bit different proportions from another article: $40\% \cdot 65\% + 30\% \cdot 25\% = 33.5\%$. In sum approx. 34%. Estonian school attendants: based on the data from one article: $40\% \cdot 38\% + 30\% \cdot 70\% = 36.2\%$; based on a bit different proportions from another article: $40\% \cdot 35\% + 30\% \cdot 75\% = 36.5\%$. In sum approx. 36%.

1. Relationship between children schooling language (independent) and children “primary ethnic belonging” (dependent).

- Estonian schooling language *is a strong* indicator for perceiving primary ethnic belonging as “Estonian”.
- Russian schooling language *is not* an indicator for perceiving primary ethnic identification.

2. Relationship between parent's gender (independent), child's given name (dependent) and child's school choice (dependent).

- Father's ethnic belonging *is a very weak* indicator of child's given name's “ethnicity.”
- Mother's ethnic belonging *is a weak* indicator of child's schooling language¹⁷

3. Relationship between the family type (independent) and child's “primary ethnic belonging” (independent). (This hypothesis is speculatively constructed based on the two more clear-cut ones above.)

- Mother's ethnic belonging as “Estonian” *is a very weak* indicator of child's primary ethnic belonging as “Estonian.”
- Mother's ethnic belonging as “Russian” *is not an indicator* of child's primary ethnic belonging¹⁸

¹⁷ Another similar causality could be tested with an emphasis on family dynamics rather than on the spouses' gender. This however would test a bit different, following, situation:
 - “Estonian mother” - “Russian father” family type *is a very weak* indicator of child's “Russian” given name and *a weak* indicator of Estonian schooling language.
 - “Russian mother” - “Estonian father” family type *is a very weak* indicator of child's “Estonian” given name and *a weak* indicator of Russian schooling language.

¹⁸ This is analogous to the following:
 - “Estonian mother” - “Russian father” family type *is a very weak* indicator of child's Estonian “primary ethnic belonging.”
 - “Russian mother” - “Estonian father” family type *is not an* indicator of child's “primary ethnic belonging.”