

TALLINNA ÜLIKOOL  
HUMANITAARTEADUSTE DISSERTATSIOONID

TALLINN UNIVERSITY  
DISSERTATIONS ON HUMANITIES

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**MAARJA MERIVOO-PARRO**

**PURSUING ESTONIANNES IN COLD WAR U.S.A.:  
EDUCATION, RECREATION, HUMOR  
AND OVERLAPPING DIASPORIC CONDITIONS**

Tallinn 2018

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RECREATION, HUMOR AND OVERLAPPING DIASPORIC CONDITIONS**

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REPUBLIC OF ESTONIA  
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION  
AND RESEARCH



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## LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

The research component of the dissertation comprises of the following four papers, referred to in the analytical segment by Roman numerals:

- I. Merivoo-Parro, Maarja (2012). Pagulus kui naljaasi. (Exile as a laughing matter). *Mäetagused*, 50, 159–174.
- II. Merivoo-Parro, Maarja (2017). Estonian by Education: Estonian Supplemental Schools in Cold War America. *Forschungen zur baltischen Geschichte*, 220–250.
- III. Merivoo-Parro, Maarja (2018) Estonian by Recreation: Forging Ethnic Imagination through Communal Experience in Urban, Rural and Musical Spaces. *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung*, 67 (3), 375–396.
- IV. Merivoo-Parro, Maarja (2015). Claiming Ethnicity in Overlapping Diasporic Conditions: Estonian Americans and Academic Mobility During the Cold War. *Acta Historica Tallinnensia*, 21 (1), 106–124.

### Publications related to the dissertation

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Merivoo-Parro, Maarja (2015). *Esto-Muusika*. *Ulgu-Eesti leviplaadid 1958–1988*. Tallinn: Mortimer Snerd.

Merivoo-Parro, Maarja; Jürisson, Sander (2014). *Mis teha – siin ta on*. *Pagulase elu piltides*. Saateks. Jõe-Cannon, Ilvi (Ed.). (5–20). Tallinn: MTÜ Eesti Diasporaa Akadeemia.

Brüggemann, K.; Merivoo-Parro, M. (2013). *Chormusik, Patriotischer Rock und ein bisschen Punk*. *Estlands "Singende Revolution"*. Paul, Gerhard; Schock, Ralph. *Der Sound des Jahrhunderts*. Geräusche, Töne, Stimmen 1889 bis heute (512–517). Bonn: Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung.

Merivoo-Parro, Maarja (2013). *Oral History as Source and Methodology: Aspects of Multidirectional Communication*. *Mutvārdu vēsture: dialogs ar sabiedrību; Oral History: Dialogue with Society: Mutvārdu vēsture: dialogs ar sabiedrību; Oral History: Dialog with Society, Riia, 29.–30. märts 2012*. Ed. Ieva Garda-Rozenberga. University of Latvia, 77–82.

Merivoo-Parro, Maarja (2011). *New Yorgi Eesti Haridusselts ja pagulased*. *Acta Historica Tallinnensia*, 17, 110–123.

Merivoo-Parro, Maarja; Sillart, Lea (2010). *Viido Polikarpus: "I grew up with Estonia as Never Never Land"*. In: Kistemaker, Renée E.; Tietmeyer, Elisabeth (Ed.). *Entrepreneurial Cultures in Europe*. (68–71). Berlin: Verein der Freunde des Museums Europäischer Kulturen.

Merivoo-Parro, Maarja (2008). *Eklektika*. *Eesti kunst laias maailmas*. Tallinn: Eesti Kunstnike Koondis Torontos, Tallinna Linnamuuseum.

## ABSTRACT

After serfdom was abolished in the nineteenth century, Estonians have lived through a number of voluntary and forced migrations that resulted in a global diaspora with a rich and varied cultural landscape. The single largest exodus took place during the Second World War with more than a tenth of the population either fleeing Westward or being deported to Siberia. This dissertation seeks to create a pathway into the hidden underbelly of performing Estonianness in exile by dealing with how being Estonian was experienced and expressed in Cold War America. It touches upon several “soft” topics such as humor, music, education, recreation and mobility that together create a vantage point onto the ever elusive notion of mentality. When meaningful statements can be made, Estonian actions and reactions are interpreted in a wider American context and occasionally juxtaposed with other, not just Baltic diaspora cultures.

A large part of the people whom this study revolves around belong to the second generation (who were either born in exile or were minors during the exodus) and thus had little or no personal memories of Estonia-proper — it can be argued that for them homeland was an imaginary entity. In order to create a meaningful imagination, the elders organized various activities which can be perceived as not only a competition for young people’s time but also for their attention, both of which are limited resources. The exile community did not shy away from using economic and social capital to forge into being a seemingly endless cycle of national awakenings to be performed by the up and coming generation(s). An ethnic awareness and national consciousness were to be expected from all community members and thus exile Estonian patriotism began to resemble a secular religion transforming the Estonian Houses into temples of sort and alienating those who didn’t wholly agree with the consensus. In general discourse, these freewheeling nonaligned individuals and their offspring were usually subjected to othering and were seen as outsiders. However, these people also had a claim on Estonianness and they exercised their right of ethnic self-determination by (in return) othering the well organized Estonian-American establishment.

There is no one ideal recipe for creating posterity and for those who did not interact with the Estonian-American exile community at large, the main locus of ethnicity maintenance was the home. Likewise, the establishment also believed that the home was the most influential sphere, but in order to cover more bases a number of communal enterprises were created – mental rivers of sorts, where young people were logged toward the harbors of Estonianness. It was believed one could obtain this Estonianness by receiving the proper formal, nonformal and informal education and by partaking in communal recreation with both structured and unstructured activities such as scouts, guides, the Estonian World Festival ESTO, etc. Interestingly, for members of the second generation, being subjected to the active Estonian diaspora was not the only impetus for searching and finding rootedness in ethnicity. In fact, for many, their public school experience was influenced by a

wider societal aspiration for more varied and detailed ethnic consciousness across the board, to the point of the U.S. Congress (in the first half of the 1970s) debating and passing the Ethnic Heritage Studies Act which Estonians in turn used to further their cause.

By creating various urban and rural traveling spaces and places in pursuit of their agenda the former refugees and current immigrants were obliged to acquaint themselves with the vast realm of American voluntary associations. Beyond being an exercise of empowerment, organizing supplemental schools was also an education in and of itself. As the combination of a close reading of archival material and oral history interviews suggest, the supplemental school system was both a very Estonian reaction to what was taking place in international politics as well as an American response to what was happening in domestic society.

Another double-take can be diagnosed in the field of popular music – the diaspora mentality created a push-pull undulation for consumers and creators alike. At first music was to provide a sense of modernity, but as the years went on and the end of exile was nowhere to be seen, bit by bit the aural qualities of recordings became detached from the era of their production as the search for contemporaneity became overthrown by a yearning to render audible the intangible notion of Estonianness. Even though the diaspora pop scene did give birth to many of the “firsts” in Estonian music history (for example the first rock’n’roll record, the first tracks of electronic music, the first folk song rendition with a ‘jazzy twist’) the dominion of nostalgia it fell under brought about a fascinating tendency – when comparing Estonian pop music productions of the free world (with easy mental and physical access to the global pop scene) and those of Soviet occupied Estonia (made behind the Iron Curtain), the exile’s music can at times of course seem advanced, but it can also be perceived as lagging behind its counterpart. Also, unlike the more collective and regimented field of choral music which has (in addition to functioning as a cultural practice) been utilized as a mode of political agitation, the more individualized pop and the personal sphere of its consumption brought about a somewhat relaxed code of communication and exchange between practitioners on either side of the border resulting in noteworthy examples of cross-pollination between diaspora Estonian and Soviet Estonian culture. Because of the politically charged Cold War atmosphere, this is a noteworthy exception to the rule.

The United States of America had a pre-existing Estonian population comprising of farmers, laborers, intellectuals and artists as well as a significant leftist current due to earlier waves of migration from the attempted revolution of 1905 and failed communist *coup d'état* of 1924. After the influx of a substantial number of World War II Displaced Persons, the representatives from different waves of voluntary and forced migrations had to negotiate the terms of mutual existence in an institutionally narrow space. Albeit this brought about tensions and conflicts, after some years a sort of consolidation can be observed, a byproduct of which (as referred to earlier) was that a number of individuals became othered. The leftists, however, elicited a new category in exile discourse – that of non-other. They and



their actions were frowned upon by the dominant anti-communist exiles to the point of being largely excluded from public and private discourse and thus in a way forcibly forgotten.

The United States of America was not the only country harboring Estonian exiles – among others Sweden, Canada and Australia welcomed thousands rendering various memory cultures into being which created distinct political and mental borderlines between different diaspora communities. Allusions to these are sought and found by analyzing humor narratives that portray exile as comedic material. The close reading of archives pertaining to young exile Estonians academic mobility provides a rare vista onto the lived reality of crossing the aforementioned political and mental borderlines and consequently suffering the ills of contested alliances. This dissertation introduces the notion of overlapping diasporic conditions as a diagnosis for the described above. The author believes the construct to have a wide range of application which can easily exceed the Estonian context where it is used on its maiden voyage. Other implications on theory and methodology stemming directly from the experience of conducting the research, even though not utilized within its scope, are also presented.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The inception of a PhD is subtle, the process itself a pure joy and the birth involves drama. This I learned from others' experience. That there is so much poetry to it all, I learned from my own. The pursuit of knowledge is the ultimate moveable feast and I am privileged to have received a seat at the table.

The first stage of this dissertation was supervised by the patient and giving Aivar Jürgenson who helped fund my research progress by including me in his grant Ethnic and National in Estonian Diaspora Communities (ETF9066). A few years ago the main responsibility for my supervision went into the hands of the inspiring and efficient Karsten Brüggemann who was instrumental in guiding me through the writing process. Together they represent a dream team of supervisors and I am forever grateful for the big and little things they did to make this journey a life-changing one.

I owe a lot of gratitude to many generous scholarship funds that have sustained me and provided access to the international academic scene. The most influential of these was my year as a Fulbright scholar at the University of Minnesota where I had the privilege of spending countless hours engaged with the world's largest Estonian diaspora collection passionately curated by Elizabeth Haven Hawley and Daniel Nečas who provided support and inspiration throughout my submersion into the wealth of information the archive provides. Thanks to my local supervisor Donna Gabaccia I was able to get valuable feedback for earlier versions of this dissertation as part of two challenging interdisciplinary seminar series: Site and Incitement and Global Race, Ethnicity and Migration.

If my time in Minnesota can be said to have provided me with most of my sources as well as vantage points, then time spent at the University of Latvia provided me with the peace to write. My local supervisor for both my semester as a DoRa visiting fellow as well as a shorter two month sojourn as a Latvian Government Scholarship holder was Baiba Bela who also gave me the opportunity to teach.

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The means to look beyond archives was provided by the Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies who gave me a grant which helped me conduct an oral history project in the United States of America and thus gain insight into more aspects of the Estonian American community. I am moved by the generosity of spirit and welcoming manner of my interview partners who not only opened their heart and home to me but made my anthropological journey an adventure.

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To my friends – thank you for sharing your human condition and always believing in me (and for one of you regularly saying that you don't). I dedicate this work to my beautiful family – thank you for having me, and to my extraordinary husband – thank you for not letting me slip into the abyss.

Tallinn, 11 January 2018

## INTRODUCTION

It can be argued that Estonian history is nothing more than a long series of migrations. A common grand narrative would go as follows: the first inhabitants came to the territory of modern Estonia (immigration) approximately 10 000 years ago when the ice caps receded. These first tribes of hunter-gatherers were later joined by others (more immigration). As time went on a sedentary form of everyday life started to gain momentum. Apart from archaeological interpretations, little is known about the culture of these peoples until the 13th century when German crusaders came (immigration + diaspora) and brought religion with “fire and sword”. They were soon joined by Danes (immigration + diaspora) who played a big role in further developing the settlement at the site of present day Tallinn which went on to become an important trading venue during the Hanseatic period (a lot of im- and emigration). The Swedes were also interested in the land and started to make their own settlements (immigration + diaspora) in the North-Eastern coastline and islands. A permanent Russian presence (immigration + diaspora) can also be dated back to medieval times. In the 16th century Russian troops attacked East-Estonia, but were unsuccessful in the long run – when the Livonian War ended, Estonia was divided between Swedish, Polish and Danish rulers (more immigration and diasporas). The Swedes slowly but surely gained more influence, but during the course of the Great Northern War in the beginning of the 18th century, Peter I of Russia managed to defeat the Swedes and incorporate its provinces by the Baltic Sea. Russian rule and Baltic-German patronage persevered until 1918, when Estonia first declared its independence which lasted two decades after the 1920 end of the War of Independence. During World War II, Estonia was repeatedly occupied (short-term immigration + diaspora) and eventually remained within the confines of the Soviet Union, losing a large portion of its population (among other events through deportations, the Great Escape to the West and *Umsiedlung*) and becoming subject to colonization (emigration + diaspora and immigration + diaspora) until declaring sovereignty in 1990 and independence in 1991. The following years were marked by integration into various international organizations such as the European Union, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development as well as a return of diasporans (repatriation) and voluntary emigration (emigration + diaspora).

This very schematic and tradition-based overview (with somewhat arbitrary categorizations) attests to the inclination for a masochistic view on history, always told from the vantage point of the other that comes to conquer and rule. Indeed, this perspective has influenced Estonian historical thinking to the point where discussions rarely take place within the landscape of notions such as Renaissance and Baroque. Rather, units of comprehensive analysis and discourse utilized are for instance the Swedish time and the Czarist time. I would argue that this is because history here began to be written by these same “others” who naturally placed themselves into the fore of events. To me, this also hints at something that is quite obvious, yet understated – the territory of modern day Estonia has witnessed a

vibrant multicultural scene for a thousand years. Although mainstream culture has been a sedentary one, the effects of trade, war and geopolitical position imbue Estonian history to the point where the population can be interrogated through the notions of *homo migrans* and *homo viator*. Whereas the history of what can be called “us” in this context is frequently told through the movements and actions of “them” here, while history of “them” is never told through the movements and actions of “us” there. Almost never that is, because there is an exception to the rule: a tiny realm of scholarship focusing on Estonians abroad in the diaspora. This is the debate which this dissertation seeks to enrich.

When discussing diaspora (originally from the Greek word διασπορά - scattering) the first thing to be noted is that the notion itself both in its philosophical sense and its practical implications is inevitably a moving target. As Robin Cohen has succinctly put it: “diasporas are in a continuous state of formation and reformation”.<sup>1</sup> It can be said that talking about diasporas creates space and place for cognition and analysis by “[bending] together both roots and routes to construct new forms of community consciousness and solidarity that maintains identification outside the national time/space” as suggested by James Clifford.<sup>2</sup> There are numerous ways of defining the term diaspora, each useful in its own boundaries for certain types of scholarly ambition and unnecessary for others. What most if not all of them share, is the idea that in order for there to be a diaspora, there has to be a permanent presence of a group of people abroad. This aspect of being abroad seems enchantingly inviting. Having an instrumental value for definitions, it seldom succumbs to critical treatment itself. However, it seems like a value judgment in which being abroad, or “abroadness” is like a condition. Moreover, it is a condition that encompasses a wide palette of rhetorical and imaginative perspectives pertaining to often naturalized notions of nations, states and borders provoking one to ask what are the layers permeating the sphere of being abroad? What exactly constitutes abroad? Who is the one to determine abroad? These questions are useful to consider since they play a role in not only the socio-political realities past and present, but also inform the mentality of people leading and adhering to identity formation. That, for me, is the main point of interest in the topic of diaspora.

The first wave of diaspora scholarship in the second half of the twentieth century focused on conceptual homelands and dealt mainly with the Jewish, Armenian and Greek (victim<sup>3</sup>) diasporas.<sup>4</sup> As a result of World War II many people became

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<sup>1</sup> Cohen, R. 2010. *Global Diasporas. An Introduction*. New York: Routledge. p. 141.

<sup>2</sup> Clifford, J. 1997. *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. p. 251.

<sup>3</sup> In this context the term victim diaspora refers to one of Robin Cohen’s ideal types of diaspora, others being labor (as such he discusses indentured Indians, Chinese, Japanese, Turks, Italians, North Africans), imperial (he discusses the British and the Russians), trade (in his text Lebanese, Chinese, Venetians, business and professional Indians, Chinese, Japanese) and deterritorialized diasporas (in his book the Caribbean peoples, Sindhi, Parsi, Roma, Muslims). Cohen, R. 2010. pp. 18, 39-139.

<sup>4</sup> Brubaker, R. 2005. The “diaspora” diaspora. In: *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol 28, No 1. pp. 1-2.

dispersed and were perceived as having a variety of political statuses, thus fueling the discussion further into studies of exile, migration and politics during the Cold War. Towards the turn of the century a renewed interest in labor migration and emigrant communities proliferated the term yet again – at the beginning of the 1990s Khachig Tölölyan diagnosed the once relatively narrow term diaspora to share meaning with an enlarged semantic domain which not only included the notions refugee, exile community and expatriate, but also immigrant, guest-worker, overseas community and ethnic community.<sup>5</sup> The next additions were amorphous and fluctuating transborder and transethnic linguistic and religious communities as well as what Roger Brubaker tags putative diasporas such as the queer diaspora, the digital diaspora, the deaf diaspora, etc.<sup>6</sup> The described sequence of proliferation has resulted with the term transcending academia.<sup>7</sup> Diaspora and its derivatives<sup>8</sup> are now widely used in many different capacities in (internet-based and other) publications by the press, various organizations and individuals, simultaneously rendering it all-encompassing and thus hollow.<sup>9</sup> There have been similar paths for other humanities and social sciences key terms such as identity, narrative, discourse, paradigm and transnationalism that were well-received in public dialogue and became buzzwords in the media and popular culture.<sup>10</sup> This new era of overarching diasporic frames has influenced my understanding and utilization of the term and I loosely perceive diaspora as any (self-)recognized (semi-)permanent presence of people who (or ancestors) have moved outside of the geographical entity wherein the majority of their nation or ethnicity dwells or has historically done so.

Just as there is variety in the context of how the term diaspora is used, there are also different concepts for fathoming its nature. Vilho Niitemaa has penned a beautiful and telling depiction about what movements of people signify to those who study them: “Migration is a phenomenon that resembles water flowing from the hills: a mighty current formed from thousands of small streams flows along a comparatively narrow channel into a great ocean, where it mingles with the waters of other springs of the same kind. If we want to trace these manifold sources, ascertain their composition, the course they take, and the nature of this intermingling, we must investigate the streams of the gathering ground and the bends in the course as much as we also investigate the intermingling of the waters

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<sup>5</sup> Tölölyan, K. 1991. The nation-state and its others: In lieu of a preface. In: *Diaspora*, Vol 1, No. 1. pp. 3-7.

<sup>6</sup> Brubaker, R. 2005. p. 3.

<sup>7</sup> *Passim*.

<sup>8</sup> For example: Diasporization, diasporology, diasporicity, diasporistics. Brubaker, R. 2005. pp. 3-5.

<sup>9</sup> Morawska, E. 2011. “Diaspora” diasporas’ representations of their homelands: exploring the polymorphs. In: *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. Vol 34, No 6. pp. 1029-1031.

<sup>10</sup> Brubaker, R. 2005. p. 4.

in the ocean.”<sup>11</sup> Albeit not new, this nevertheless is a refreshing image to counter the more common arborescent models about cultures rootedness, the diasporic scattering of seeds; and people’s unity and separation being in a way either fixed or fixated as if forming part of the trunk and branches of a tree. Indeed, Niitemaa’s analogy offers a slightly more postmodernist view on migration, although it displays a similar logic of a structured narrative with a beginning, development and an end, as well as aesthetics inspired directly by the natural world. What is enlightening in his approach, is the way how migration (and through that arguably also diasporic entities) gain a fluid intangibility, which to my mind is a more accurate version in comparison with such as for instance Cohen’s Wittgenstein-inspired rope analogy, which portrays features of diasporas as fibers of meaning that entwine to create the diasporic “rope”.<sup>12</sup> Having this sort of a perceived liquid existence might help the notion and theoretical reference of diasporas escape the trap of instrumentalization whereupon they are solely used as tools for making or breaking certain discourses, aiding in the formation of central metaphors through which the public dialogue functions or even come to have a predetermined physical-material influence on a society or environment. The other end of the spectrum is equally perilous – when a diaspora becomes celebrated and folklorized to the point where a canon of narratives emerges that tell its story “perfectly”, it loses part of its very own ambivalent discursive power.

This dissertation aims to alleviate the ills both aforementioned extremes have brought upon Estonian diaspora studies by interrogating the mentality of the individual and the community via the lesser researched notions of humor, education and recreation, as can be seen in Table 1 and read in more detail in the chapter “Overview of Articles” as well as in the articles themselves which revolve around the Estonian refugee diaspora in the United States of America. The United States was not the only place of relocation – other countries such as Sweden, Canada and Australia became hosts to significant numbers of Estonian exiles. As is explained in the articles and chapter 2.1 of the dissertation, the migration process and trajectories form a kaleidoscope of exile experiences. The reason this research is designed to shed most of its light on the Estonian-American one is linked to the pivotal role that the United States of America played during the Cold War as the ideological and political antipode to the Soviet Union thus creating a unique situation for the diasporans and making it possible to perceive them as carriers of the purest form of opposition, simultaneously setting them apart from the Estonian exiles in other countries as well as serving as a model example to whom all else could be compared to. Thus far no overarching historical studies on the population dynamics of Estonians in America have been done. Due to the scarceness and arbitrary nature of available source material and the quantitative methodology involved with

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<sup>11</sup> Niitemaa, V. 1975. Preface. In: *The Finnish Experience in the Western Great Lakes Region: New Perspectives*, ed. M.G.Karni, M.E. Kaups, J. Jr. Ollila. New Perspectives. Turku: Institute for Migration. pp. vii-viii.

<sup>12</sup> Cohen, R. 2010. pp. 161–162.

making detailed solid statements on this front, this large and distinct topic of diaspora demography falls outside of the scope of the dissertation at hand.

**Table 1. Articles that combined form the dissertation.**

<b>Article</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Method</b>
Article I	Explore perceptions of liminalities, rites of transition, othering and self-deprecation through the representative and communicative functions of exile humor.	Historical analysis, narrative analysis, political semiotics.
Article II	Investigate the interplay between ethnicity and adolescence in a diasporic setting through the lens of organizing and experiencing education.	Historical analysis, qualitative content analysis, oral history.
Article III	Investigate reasoning behind innovations manifested and clashes sustained within communal and personal recreational practices in order to create pathways to a vantage point on the relationship between the conflicting drives toward modernity and nostalgia.	Historical analysis, ethnomusicology, music sociology, aesthetic-based inquiry, field research, anthropological participatory observation, oral history.
Article IV	Analyze the relationship between memory cultures within diaspora communities and their implications on those who cross their borders via evoking the notion of overlapping diasporic conditions.	Historical analysis, case study, narrative analysis.



These peer-reviewed articles published in academic journals can all be read and consulted as separate distinct units of scholarship. Put together they create an interface with which to explore intramural efforts instigated with the goal of informing the imagination of homeland among second generation American Estonians, who had little or no exposure to their historic homeland. Within the scope of this dissertation the term second generation is not primarily defined by year of birth, but rather seeks to unite people who spent either some or all of their formative years as minors in exile and had not been responsible for making the decision to escape nor had to start their life abroad as breadwinners, but instead were dependents. Due to the disruption created by the escape, and the challenges of re-establishment, the community created a new set of rules and expectations for the youth in order to navigate the new social reality of exile. The dissertation is engaged with the debates surrounding the intramural efforts for organizing activities, the activities themselves as well as the detectable outcomes they had. By drawing occasional comparisons with Baltic and other diasporas as well as positioning aspects of the Estonian diaspora experience within the larger American context, this dissertation seeks to overcome the widely used solipsistic stance whereby Estonian diasporas are observed as *das Ding an sich*. The articles forming the bulk of the dissertation are contextualized with additional chapters focusing on the history and historiography of Estonians in America, the notion of identity formation within the exile diaspora as well as commentary on the research process with respect to data and methodology. The additional chapters also shed light on the implications that years of archival and field research informing the dissertation have yielded with regard to terminology, methodology and theory. Hopefully they can serve as starting points for further scholarship on the interplay of diasporas and culture by sketching new pathways for an evergreen topic increasing in actuality during this age of global migrations.

# 1. ESTONIANS IN AMERICA: HISTORY AND HISTORIOGRAPHY

The history of Estonians in America is not a widely studied topic and thus far there are only a handful of impactful works that can be considered truly influential, all of which will be dealt with in the following chapter. It can be said that there definitely exists a gap in historiography which this dissertation aims to alleviate. In the spirit of progress, the chapter also proposes somewhat of a schismatic outline for the overview. I find the recent theoretical discussions surrounding the potential for exchange between the history and philosophy of history to be inspiring in their promise of a possibly shared hermeneutic space. The impetus is not towards dissolving one into the other, but rather a coexistence whereupon their contributions to each other need not be limited.<sup>13</sup> In an attempt to build on that principle within the discipline of history, I would like to propose the joining of history and historiography as a unique tool for conveying a wholesome backdrop to a truss of specific and wide-ranging articles in an otherwise sparsely researched multitude of experience, such as the case of Estonians in America within the scope of this dissertation. This is why the following (except 1.4) is an attempt to merge history and historiography as complementary spheres of knowledge.<sup>14</sup>

## 1.1. ORIGINS OF THE DIASPORA

The most important and widely consulted book on Estonian-American studies is the collaborative effort by Jaan Pennar, Tõnu Parming and Peeter Rebane published in 1975: “Estonians in America, 1627-1975: A Chronology and Fact Book”.<sup>15</sup> Pennar, Parming and Rebane were members of the exile diaspora and their narrative is a straightforward account of information available at the time, neither an interpretation nor critique of the source material in a wider cultural or historical context. This seeming deficiency is perhaps the reason why the work is just as relevant and useful today as it was at the time of publication, making it truly pivotal and indeed fundamental as it is still often consulted and cited as a one of a kind effort to encompass the history of Estonians in America in its entirety (up until 1975). As such, it stands apart from most of the (amateur and/or community

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<sup>13</sup> According to Herman Paul, allusions to the basis of arguments for creating this new welcoming space, functionally similar to the more established and longstanding and institutionalized amalgamation of history and philosophy of science, can be found in the works of William Dray, Alan Donagan, Raymond Martin and Larry Laudan. Paul, H. *History and Philosophy of History; A Hermeneutic Space*. Oral presentation at: *What Are Historians Doing: Practice and Pragmatics of History Writing*. Tallinn University. 24-25 August 2018.

<sup>14</sup> Certain omissions may occur in the chapter so as to not repeat information which will be given in the articles forming the the dissertation.

<sup>15</sup> Pennar, J., Parming, T., Rebane P. 1975. *Estonians in America, 1627-1975: A Chronology and Fact Book*. New York: Oceana Publications.

oriented) publications on the subject during the Cold War era which tend to not only depict but explain events in the context of exile.

In the book the authors proclaim that the first traces of people from the area of modern day Estonia on the area of modern day U.S.A. are from the 17th century when two men from Reval (modern day Tallinn) are reported to have been active in the Swedish colony by the Delaware River.<sup>16</sup> There is no definitive data about the 18th century when Estonian land went from being under Swedish rule to being governed by Russia, but the 19th century is significant for global Estonian diaspora in general because that's the time when serfdom was abolished – 1816 in the governorate of Estonia (modern day North-Estonia) and 1819 in the governorate of Livonia (modern day South-Estonia and North-Latvia).<sup>17</sup> In 1863 regulations for having a passport to travel externally were initiated which made it possible for Estonians to migrate and that's what many did.<sup>18</sup>

The most significant modern treatment of Estonian diasporas population history which (among other things) succinctly explains the motivation behind 19th century migrations comes from another collaborative effort: in 2010 Tiit Tammaru, Kaja Kumer-Haukanõmm and Kristi Anniste published their article “The Formation and Development of the Estonian Diaspora” in the *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*. Tammaru, Kumer-Haukanõmm and Anniste are all researchers who began their career in post-Soviet Estonia and their work has an affiliation with the Centre for Expatriate Estonian Studies. Owing to the Centre functioning under the Tartu University Institute or Department of Geography, the scholarship it has provided over the years (including the article in question) stands apart from the majority of diaspora studies in re-independent Estonia which are by and large conducted within the realm of Humanities. Thus, similar to the work of Pennar, Parming and Rebane, it will probably have a long term standing as the foremost authority on facts and figures pertaining to history of the Estonian diaspora at large. In terms of reasons for 19th century emigration, Tammaru, Kumer-Haukanõmm and Anniste put forth that while Estonia was in the forefront of demographic and economic change in the Russian Empire and experienced population growth as well as relatively rapid industrialization, both the emerging urban labor market as well as the university<sup>19</sup> were not easily accessible, thus fueling out-migration.<sup>20</sup> There were several other

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<sup>16</sup> *Passim*.

<sup>17</sup> Kasekamp, A. 2010. *Balti riikide ajalugu*. Tallinn: Varrak. pp. 91-94.

<sup>18</sup> Raag, R. 1999. *Eestlane väljaspool Eestit. Ajalooline ülevaade*. Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus.

<sup>19</sup> Jansen, E. 2007. *Eestlane muutuv asjas. Seisusühiskonnast kodanikuühiskonda*. Tartu: Eesti Ajalooarhiiv. pp. 374-394.

<sup>20</sup> Unlike elsewhere in Europe, the relationship between rural out-migration, demographic transition and industrialization was not as straightforward in Estonia and in the long term had major implications on identity formation. Tammaru, T., Kumer-Haukanõmm, K., Anniste, K. 2010. The Formation and Development of the Estonian Diaspora. In: *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* Vol. 36, No. 7. pp. 1157-1174.

push and pull factors facilitating this process<sup>21</sup>, not the least of which the Czarist government policy welcoming East- and Southbound migration which made many families, even whole villages take to the road together in search of a better life and liberation from the Baltic-German nobility.<sup>22</sup>

Compared to the history of Westward migration, this vector is much better documented and researched with first treatments published in the nineteenth century<sup>23</sup> and a continuation of scholarship throughout the 20th, including the Soviet period when the ideological pressures dictated that the points of entry were to be mainly through ethnology and folklore studies, which still dominate the field today.<sup>24</sup> Not only because of an established research tradition but also due to postwar Estonian diaspora in the West having a highly politicized self-image which is still relevant, is it possible to say that research regarding the East is more involved with visible and audible links between diaspora culture and homeland while research regarding the West is more engaged with manifestations of identity in diaspora culture as a thing in and of itself. It is important to add that albeit the historiographies might differ from each other, the histories themselves are in fact intermingled. The history of Estonians in America is connected to the movement of settlers within the Russian Empire. Estonian diaspora in America started forming on both the Pacific and Atlantic coast and comprised mainly of seamen and itinerant workers. However, the bulk of people who were attracted by the 1862 Homestead Act (giving applicants free land) began to immigrate and set up farms in the Midwest and elsewhere were not seamen or workers, for whom America was their first diaspora experience. Many of these homesteaders had already emigrated from Estonia some years earlier to try their luck in Crimea, Samara or other places opened up for colonization. Upon not finding the conditions of their labor satisfactory they opted not to return to their homeland, but instead embarked on another adventure and made their way to America. These repeat-settlers are responsible for creating the first Estonian congregation (South-Dakota) as well the first Estonian village (Irma, Wisconsin) where they erected the first Estonian church.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Jürgenson, A. 2002. Siberi eestlaste territoriaalsus ja identiteet. Tallinn: TPÜ Kirjastus. pp. 71-100.

<sup>22</sup> Tuisk, A. 2011. Olli orja säääl koskil... Orja- ja vabadusetemaatika Siberi eestlaste väljarändamisjuttudes. In: Acta Historica Tallinnensia 17. pp. 55-71.

<sup>23</sup> See for example: Palu (Pallo), K. 1897. Esimesed eesti väljarändajad ehk 40 aastat Samaaras. Tartu.

<sup>24</sup> See for example: Korb, A. 2007. Siberi eesti kogukonnad folkloristliku uurimisallikana. Tartu: Tartu University Press. Mikkor, M. 2006. 1930. aastad Kaukaasias "Edasi" kolhoosis põllumehe silme läbi ja ajalehe "Edasi" veergudel. In: Tuna V nr 2. Pp. 74-94. Notable works in the field of history include: Pullat, R. 2004. Lootuste linn Peterburi ja eesti haritlaskonna kujunemine kuni 1917. Tallinn: Estopol. Must, A. 2012. Siber ja Eesti. Jalaraua kölin. Tartu: Tartu University Press.

<sup>25</sup> Pennar, J., Parming, T., Rebane, P. 1975. pp. 4-7.

It is impossible to ascertain the exact number of Estonian immigrants during those early days of the diaspora — Estonia was not an independent country and in official immigration documents they were tagged Russian with reference to the empire they represented. Nevertheless, the presence of Estonians was substantial enough for the organization called German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio and Other States to make arrangements for pastor Hans Rebane to arrive in New York in January 1896 with a mission to start preaching in both Estonian and Latvian. Rebane also took it upon himself to publish the first Estonian language newspaper “Amerika Eesti Postimees” which among other things provided information and insight regarding local Estonians and the conditions of their life and labor<sup>26</sup> — Rebane was helpful to newcomers and repeat-settlers alike and his publication can be used as a source of information about the burgeoning diaspora which in urban locations was very male-dominated, having a better gender balance in the rural areas. This can be explained by the nature of the migration — seamen and laborers who had made their way into the big cities like New York and San Francisco had usually migrated alone whereas the people who came for the land often came with their whole family either from Estonia-proper or from an Estonian settlement somewhere in the Russian Empire.<sup>27</sup>

## 1.2. GETTING ORGANIZED AND DIVING INTO POLITICS

The first organizations Estonians created were mutual welfare societies crucial for providing a sense of security in their chosen country which was not sympathetic to the plight of its builders when there was an accident or someone fell ill. Such was the first recorded Estonian association<sup>28</sup> the Amerika Eesti Heategew Selts, established in 1898.<sup>29</sup> In addition to functioning as a sick benefit fund, it also provided opportunities for social interaction.<sup>30</sup> Later others followed suit — Lootus (Hope) in 1905<sup>31</sup> and on the West Coast Eestlaste Laulu Selts (Estonian Singing Society) in 1904.<sup>32</sup> Competition gave way to consolidation and vice versa with 1905 marking the first rupture in dynamics — the Russian Revolution brought with

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<sup>26</sup> In Latvian sources Hans Rebane is referred to as a member of the Latvian diaspora and his contribution to their newspaper *Amerikas Westnesis* (American Herald) is duly noted. Zaķe, I. 2010. *American Latvians: Politics of a Refugee Community*. New York: Routledge. p. 17.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*. “Amerika Eesti Postimees”. 1897-1911. New York.

<sup>28</sup> The Latvians organized themselves somewhat earlier — in 1892 the Philadelphia’s Society of Free Letts was established. Zaķe, I. 2010. p. 17.

<sup>29</sup> *Amerika Eestlaste Album II*. 1919. p. 95.

<sup>30</sup> *Baltimore’i Seltsi ajaloo*. [Regarding the history of the Baltimore Estonian Association]. The Baltimori Eesti Selts/Baltimore Estonian Association Records, Estonian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

<sup>31</sup> *New Yorki Eesti Seltsi Põhjuskiri*. 30.01.1910. p. 1. [Regarding the New York Estonian Society] The NY Eesti Hariduse Selts/New York Estonian Educational Society Records, Estonian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

<sup>32</sup> Pennar, J., Parming, T., Rebane, P. 1975. p. 7.

it a wave of thinkers and activists<sup>33</sup> on the run, among others Estonians, some of whom<sup>34</sup> established themselves in the U.S.A. In 1906 the Socialist Party of America welcomed an Estonian section and newspapers followed suit: 1907 “Töömees” in California<sup>35</sup> and 1909 “Uus Ilm” in New York.<sup>36</sup> The latter managed to secure a large circulation and became a forum for left wing activists. The articles depict not only the political and social mores of the authors and their time but also give valuable insight into the dynamics of Estonian communities all over the United States of America and make ideologically charged and probably biased but nevertheless informative excursions into the realm of activities conducted by competing organizations and apolitical American Estonians.<sup>37</sup>

Unfortunately, there has not been a scholarly effort to dissect the left wing Estonians in 20th century U.S.A. Because of communication issues discussed further on in this chapter in combination with the aforementioned politicized self-image of the Cold War Estonians in exile leadership, there was never a consolidation of archives and very little is known of left wing activity outside of what can be ascertained within the scope of the periodicals which fortunately contain both detail and emotion and could yield new insights if they were to be subjected to systematic analysis. I believe the time is ripe for such an investigation and now it would not be seen subversive or perilous by the American Estonian community at large, but rather would be welcomed as a curiosity.

The second major rupture in Estonian American diaspora group dynamics took place after Estonia profited from the general confusion of World War I by declaring itself an independent country on February 24th 1918 and managing to subsequently reach a victory against Soviet Russian troops and German free corps in a two year conflict now known as the Estonian War of Independence. According to the archives of the Estonian Constituent Assembly, many American Estonians were enthralled by the turn of events and tried to help on their end by gathering donations, making an effort to initiate commercial partnerships between Estonians

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<sup>33</sup> For a pan-Baltic perspective, see: Palmer, A. 2006. *The Baltic. A New History of the Region and its People*. New York: Overlook. pp. 241-251.

<sup>34</sup> Prominent destination countries nearer to Estonia included, for example, Finland, Sweden and Switzerland. Zetterberg. S. 2013. *Kultuurisillad ja revolutsioonituuled*. Helsingi eesti kogukond 20. sajandi alguses. Tallinn: Tänapäev. pp. 77-97.

<sup>35</sup> “Töömees: Eesti Töölise Ajaleht”. 1907-1908. Oakland, California.

<sup>36</sup> Pennar, J., Parming, T., Rebane, P. 1975. pp. 8-13. “Uus Ilm”. 1909-1989. New York: Uus Ilm.

<sup>37</sup> The revolution-minded newcomers from Latvia established the newspaper “Strādnieks” (“Worker”) and similar to the Estonian case are characterized more “politically active and intellectually enthusiastic” compared to the “Old Latvians” or “veclatvieši”. However, “Strādnieks” did not share the longevity of “Uus Ilm” which was continuously in print for eighty years. Inner tensions between Social Democrat and Bolshevik fractions among Latvians in combination with actions by American authorities brought it to a halt in 1918. “Strādnieku Cīņa” (“Workers’ Struggle”) replaced it. During the Cold War “Amerikas Latvietis” (Latvian in America) became not only the main vehicle for American Latvian left-wing propaganda, but also fell under Soviet influence, as was the case with the Estonians’ “Uus Ilm”. Zaķe, I. 2010. pp. 17-19.

and Americans as well as embarking on a self-guided diplomatic mission to convince the United States government to validate the new republic with a *de jure* recognition.<sup>38</sup> Their actions indeed drew attention to Estonia's plight: in May of 1919 a joint demonstration at Carnegie Hall brought together 5000 Estonians, Latvians, Lithuanians and Ukrainians<sup>39</sup> and their *ad hoc* engagement was useful when reaching out to the Red Cross for assistance and making arrangements for organizing postal services and transportation between the two countries.<sup>40</sup> But even so, officials in Estonia were wary of their compatriots abroad and cautious with extending the mandate. Despite direct requests<sup>41</sup> for permission to act as official representative, the leaders in Estonia-proper could not bring themselves to commit to any of their American Estonian partners, presumably out of a fear of being tricked into handing negotiations over to somebody who might secretly be part of the by then notorious left wing section of the diaspora<sup>42</sup> who consistently voiced their incomprehension as to why there was a need for an independent Estonia in a situation where Russia had finally undergone a successful revolution, which was a recurring topic in "Uus Ilm".<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Before independence the left-wing Estonians in America can be said to have been better organized thanks to their common beliefs and shared goals. With the advent of the Republic of Estonia, the other end of the political spectrum began to consolidate as well — 1918 witnessed the birth of the Amerika Eesti Ühisus [American Estonian Association] which aspired to be a force of equal stature to that of the leftists. Amerika Eesti Ühisuse aruanne Asutavale Kogule. [American Estonian Association's report to the Estonian Constituent Assembly] 20.08.1919. ERA.957.11.104.

<sup>39</sup> Pennar, J., Parming, T., Rebane, P. 1975. p. 14.

<sup>40</sup> Amerika Eesti Ühisuse aruanne Asutavale Kogule. [American Estonian Association's report to the Estonian Constituent Assembly] 20.08.1919. ERA.957.11.104.

<sup>41</sup> Amerika Eesti Ühisuse kiri Asutavale Kogule. [Letter from the American Estonian Association to the Estonian Constituent Assembly] 11.06.1919. ERA.957.11.104.

<sup>42</sup> Amerika Eestlaste Album II. 1919. p. 98.

<sup>43</sup> Just as was the case with the laboring Finns, hundreds of left-wing American Latvian Marxists decided to leave the U.S.A in order to seize what they perceived as the historic opportunity to take part in liberating the working class by moving back to Russia (and Latvia). Zaķe, I. 2010. pp. 19-20. At first they found themselves amid a familiar mosaic of political opinion. Bartele, T., Salda, V. 2001. Latvieši Maskavā. 1915-1922. Daugavpils: Daugavpils Pedagoģiskā universitāte. pp. 16-35, 58-100. Albeit their enthusiasm was publicly exhibited as evidence of the inferiority of capitalism, they were treated with mistrust (some later repressed) and over the years they became disillusioned with the realities of the Soviet system of governance. Many wrote letters to friends and relatives who had stayed in America and asked for help with basic necessities, many decided to not share their failure and disappeared without leaving a trace in the archives. Akmetiņš, O. Vēstules no Maskavas: Amerikas latviešu repatriantu likteņi Padomju Krievijā, 1917-1940. East Lansing (Michigan): Gauja, 1987. pp. 3-20, 49-70, 83-105. Just as in the case of the Finnish in America, the socialist faction lost a lot of its power and energy. For more on leftist Finns in America and the Soviet Russia, see: Lam, K. 2013. Shared Space, Varied Lives: Finnish-Russian Interactions in Dacha Country, 1880s-1920s. Dissertation. Michigan State University. Labouring Finns. Transnational Politics in Finland, Canada, and the United States. 2011. M.S. Beaulieu, R.N. Harpelle, J. Penney. (Eds.). Turku: Institute of Migration.

There is no evidence of an infiltration having taken place, but other affairs did prove Estonian officials right to be concerned. The *Amerika Eesti Ühisus* which united all those willing and able to cooperate for the good of the new republic resulted in suing one of its leaders Ivan Narodny or Jaan Sibul over financial issues.<sup>44</sup> The next executive Peter A. Pabstel tried and failed to become an official Estonian consul, but did manage to convince U.S. officials to recognize passports created by the *Amerika Eesti Ühisus* as valid travel documents which were then allegedly used by American Estonian communists on their journey to Estonia.<sup>45</sup> On July 28th 1922 the United States of America finally extended its *de jure* recognition to the Republic of Estonia<sup>46</sup> and welcomed its official diplomats soon after, thus putting an end to the era of haphazard cowboy diplomacy by émigrés,<sup>47</sup> which is another strand of Estonian American history in wait of a historiography.

### 1.3. EFFORTS TO CONSOLIDATE DURING THE INTERWAR PERIOD

Despite at the time being considered the melting pot of nations, America was home to prejudice and anti-immigrant sentiment notably experienced by the African-American, Chinese and Irish populations, to name a few. For a long time, Estonians were also considered undesirable and were tagged “white Mongols” because of their Caucasian appearance which was to hide their conniving nature stemming from the fact that (up until the birth of the republic) Estonians were not perceived as belonging to the camp of freedom loving peoples — for why else would they not self-govern? The other major accusation was based on Estonians’ close cultural and linguistic ties to Finland which was home to several Sami peoples who not only spoke variants growing on the same strange Finno-Ugric language tree, but also appeared physically Asian. Since Estonians did not, they were feared to mix and mingle with White Anglo-Saxon Protestants inconspicuously and thus play their fatal role in America’s racial suicide. This line of reasoning is delineated in one of the most compelling accounts on the rhetoric surrounding the reception of Baltic immigrants and refugees — Ben Maegi’s doctoral dissertation “Dangerous Persons,

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<sup>44</sup> Those are not the only aliases of this adventurous man – it is believed he entered the U.S.A. under the name John D. Rockefeller in the company of Maksim Gorky’s adoptive son Zivony Peshkov and before Estonia’s independence became a goal to fight for, he was collecting money for the Russian revolution. Pennar, J., Parming, T., Rebane, P. 1975. p. 8.

<sup>45</sup> Kirjavahetus Eesti esindustega New Yorgis. 1920-1921. [Correspondence with Estonian diplomats in New York, 1920-1921]. ERA.957.11.545.

<sup>46</sup> Medijainen, E. 2008. The USA, Soviet Russia and the Baltic States. From recognition to the Cold War. In: *The Baltic Question During the Cold War*. Hiden, J., Made, V., Smith, D.J. (Eds). London, New York: Routledge. p. 24.

<sup>47</sup> The pro-independence Latvians in America were equally active in proclaiming and playing a role in securing a future for the fledgling Republic of Latvia under the blue-green-golden flag they believed would represent the country once it had firmly established international relations. Zaķe, I. 2010. pp. 20-22.



Delayed Pilgrims; Baltic Displaced Persons and the Making of Cold War America, 1945-1952”.<sup>48</sup>

Maegi’s work boldly goes to territories rarely visited in Estonian diaspora scholarship and makes a thankworthy attempt at writing a coherent Baltic narrative from an American vantage point. The main focus of the dissertation is on exploring how perceptions about Baltic Displaced Persons changed during the years of hot debate surrounding their possible immigration and the years of the immigration itself. The not often discussed topic of racialization which he pioneers and makes pertinent comments to can help explain why the 1924 Immigration Act set the annual quota for Estonians at a little over one hundred.<sup>49</sup> Another reasoning is of course that the Act was to maintain the *status quo* of America’s ethnic composition.<sup>50</sup>

The year of the Immigration Act was also a significant year for Estonian history in general — on December 1st 1924 communists unsuccessfully attempted a *coup d’état* which prompted many who were involved to escape the country in fear of an impending backlash. Some managed to reach the United States of America and join forces with comrades already there — both San Francisco and New York were hotbeds of Estonian communism, which seems to have been not only for true believers, but also somewhat of a social norm in several workers’ circles. The interwar Reds were preaching the doctrine as well as they could, but in fact were perceived by contemporaries from Estonia to be quite bourgeois and individualistic in their everyday lives as evidenced among others in the meticulous descriptions penned by pastor Karl Kaups who toured the United States in 1928. His travelogue “Rändelamus Ameerikas” has both a descriptive as well as an evaluating stream and due to its wide scope could become a viable source for not only Estonian American studies, but also make a contribution to American studies as a mirroring account of how the country and its people were perceived.<sup>51</sup>

Political events brought with them a change in narrative context: prior to the attempted *coup* of 1924 the ‘Red’ New York Estonian newspaper “Uus Ilm” referred to the homeland as “white Estonia”, after the culprits of the failed *coup* were charged and sentenced, it was referred to as the “executioners’ Estonia”<sup>52</sup>. At the same time people siding with independent Estonia went to partake in the Song Festivals<sup>53</sup>, raised funds to support Estonian Olympians and kept in touch with the

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<sup>48</sup> Maegi, B. 2008. Dangerous Persons, Delayed Pilgrims; Baltic Displaced Persons and the Making of Cold War America, 1945-1952. Dissertation. University of Minnesota, Minneapolis.

<sup>49</sup> Pennar, J., Parming, T., Rebane, P. 1975. pp. 17, 125.

<sup>50</sup> Divine, R.A. 1957. American Immigration Policy, 1924-1952. New Haven: Yale University Press 1957. pp. 5, 17.

<sup>51</sup> Kaups, K. 1930. Rändelamus Ameerikas. Keila: E.B.K. Selts. p. 258.

<sup>52</sup> “Uus Ilm” 1923-1925.

<sup>53</sup> Ameerika Eesti Muusika Klubi. Oktoober 1926. [Documents of the American Estonian Music Club] The NY Eesti Hariduse Selts/New York Estonian Educational Society Records, Estonian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

homeland via organizations like Fenno-Ugria and Välis-Eesti Ühing.<sup>54</sup> Needless to say this almost tangible chasm between contrasting views, discourse and actions *vis-à-vis* the historic homeland made it impossible to embark on joint efforts and the communities remained divided both ideologically and practically,<sup>55</sup> hence the left wing Estonian archives and heritage fading into obscurity and their history remaining largely unwritten, as discussed earlier in this chapter. The pro-Estonia groups are in a slightly better position for research (as of yet unconducted) because some of their organizations merged with or morphed into exile establishments.<sup>56</sup> They also managed to create their own longeval publication to balance out the effect of “Uus Ilm” – in October 1931, the first edition of the monthly journal “Meie Tee” (Our Way/Road/Path) appeared with a declaration of love for the homeland and a mission to build a bridge between home and away.<sup>57</sup> It printed a plethora of letters and articles depicting the lives and livelihoods of Estonians in various corners of the United States and as such is a valuable resource<sup>58</sup> for many topics, among them the lived experience of the Great Depression. There were also other periodicals which were published for the Estonians in America at various times, among them religious titles like “Ameerika Teekäija” or “Ristirahvaleht”, the political pro-independence “Estonia” and the commercial “Ameerika Eestlane,” which according to Eugenie Mutt’s 1928 pamphlet “Ameerika eestlased” on the Estonians in America, were well-received despite their shortcomings.<sup>59</sup>

Her account is also rich on information regarding Estonians’ livelihood — women were occupied as seamstresses and servants in households and restaurants, men worked as tailors and were active in different fields of manual labor, worked with wood, metal, in construction and were quite unionized. By her account, the East Coast Estonians were more entrepreneurial.<sup>60</sup> For most Estonians in America everyday life was filled with work until the Wall Street Crash of 1929 which had a notoriously devastating effect on the whole economy and notably influenced East Coast Estonian men who earned their livelihood in construction<sup>61</sup> and needed to find new avenues to ensure their survival. At the same time it appears that the women who were mostly employed as servants were able to move around within

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<sup>54</sup> Kiri Välisministeeriumi Informatsiooni Osakonnalt New Yorgi Peakonsulaadile. 12.12.1928. [Correspondence between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Estonian Consulate in New York] ERA.1608.1.411. Välis-Eesti Ühingu seletuskiri. Oktoober 1928. [Explanatory note of the Organization of Estonians Abroad] ERA.1608.1.411. “Meie Tee”. March 1932.

<sup>55</sup> “Meie Tee”. December 1931.

<sup>56</sup> A case in point is the New York Educational Society. Merivoo-Parro, M. 2011. New Yorgi Eesti Haridusselts ja pagulased. Acta Historica Tallinnensia 17, 110-123.

<sup>57</sup> “Meie Tee”. October 1931.

<sup>58</sup> Used for example in my and Sander Jürisson’s up and coming book about the visual sources of Estonian communities in North and South America up until the Second World War. Merivoo, Parro-M., Jürisson, S. 2018 (forthcoming). Eestlased Ameerikates. Tallinn: MTÜ Eesti Diasporaa Akadeemia.

<sup>59</sup> Mutt, E. 1928. Ameerika eestlased. Tartu: Sõnavara.

<sup>60</sup> Mutt, E. 1928. pp. 9-12.

<sup>61</sup> “Eesti Hõim” nr. 4 1928.

their own sector. Another common pathway to navigate the crisis was for the wife to unofficially assume the duties of janitor which the husband was formally responsible for, leaving the latter free to pursue odd jobs. Generally, the number of marriages seems to have dropped during the economic crisis,<sup>62</sup> but organizational activities were as vibrant as ever with new associations appearing in Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, South-Carolina, Washington and elsewhere. In addition to the Lutherans and Baptists, American Estonians also had a Pentecostal congregation. Despite a surge in source material from organizational records to periodicals during this period, the number of Estonians themselves is still under debate. The Federal census of 1930 was the first one to have Estonian as a category in the nationality section and the official data accounts for 3550 of them.<sup>63</sup> William Wolkovich-Valkavicius has delved into the quantitative information available and believes this to be an under estimation not only because of the potential language barrier hindering an exhaustive scope for the survey but also due to the fact that low wage workers would often rent the same living space and sleep in the same bed in shifts and unless the interviewers made several trips to the same dwellings, they only accounted for a portion of its inhabitants.<sup>64</sup> In 1932 the journal “Meie Tee” estimates the number to be 4000<sup>65</sup> and seven years later the “Baltic Times” (probably erroneously) 60 000.<sup>66</sup>

#### **1.4. FROM WORLD WAR II TO THE END OF THE COLD WAR<sup>67</sup>**

The history of Estonian refugees in the aftermath of World War II as well as their activities during the Cold War are discussed in the next chapter. They are also dealt with in detail in the articles comprising the bulk of this dissertation. The refugees’ relationship with American Estonians who were already in the United States when they arrived, is depicted in my article “New York Estonian Educational Society and Refugees”, which albeit not being part of this dissertation can be easily accessed online free of charge.<sup>68</sup>

In terms of historiography, the most recent overarching treatment of Estonian Displaced Persons was penned by Kaja Kumer-Haukanõmm, who in 2012 defended her dissertation “Teisest maailmasõjast tingitud Balti pagulaste problemaatika

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<sup>62</sup> “Meie Tee”. November 1932.

<sup>63</sup> Maegi, B. 2004. p. 21.

<sup>64</sup> Wolkovich-Valkavicius, W. 1983. Immigrant Population Patterns of Finns, Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians in the U.S. Federal Census of 1930. *Lituanus*, Vol 29, No 1. [http://www.lituanus.org/1983\\_1/83\\_1\\_02.htm](http://www.lituanus.org/1983_1/83_1_02.htm) Site visited: 01.02.2018.

<sup>65</sup> “Meie Tee”. November 1932.

<sup>66</sup> “Baltic Times”. September 1939.

<sup>67</sup> This sub-chapter will only discuss the historiography of the period. The history will be dealt with in chapter 2.

<sup>68</sup> Merivoo-Parro, M. 2011. [http://www.kirj.ee/public/Acta\\_hist/2011/issue\\_2/acta-2011-17-110-123.pdf](http://www.kirj.ee/public/Acta_hist/2011/issue_2/acta-2011-17-110-123.pdf) Site visited 26.08.2018.

aastatel 1945-1952 Eesti pagulaste näitel”<sup>69</sup> (The Fate of Baltic Refugees and Displaced Persons in 1945-1952: the Example of Estonian Refugees and Displaced Persons) where she discusses their group dynamics and legal status, issues pertaining to the threat of repatriation and provides a thorough account of the international organizations put in charge of dealing with the refugee crisis. Her research challenges the popular notion of an elite exodus during World War II for purely ideological reasons and instead claims the refugees to have represented a healthy cross-section of interwar Estonian society. She also exposes the economic considerations behind further migration and depicts the various motivations of receiving Western democracies in addition to the widely celebrated humanitarian one. The already mentioned “Dangerous Persons, Delayed Pilgrims; Baltic Displaced Persons and the Making of Cold War America, 1945-1952” by Ben Maegi is also pertinent here, as it contextualizes the plight of the Balts in a wider rhetorical framework with an emphasis on the development of popular opinion of and public policy towards them. Both put heavy emphasis on a close reading of written sources and while Kumer-Haukanõmm transforms information into quantitative data about the refugees themselves, Maegi makes an effort to operate in the less tangible sphere of mentality and discourse surrounding the DPs and the positive transformation of their perception in American society from not the most desirable of migrants in the interwar period to (as the title of his dissertation suggests) delayed pilgrims whose contribution to the American economy and society were welcomed, evinced by their (as well as other Baltic and Jewish) overrepresentation among DP immigrants.

There are two sizable non-historical contributions to the field of Estonian-American studies – one belonging to the sphere of bibliography and the other to community autobiography. The cultural realm of the exiles is to the fore in Anne Valmas’ 2003 doctoral dissertation titled “Eestlaste kirjastustegevus välismaal 1944-2000”<sup>70</sup> as well as her two volume “Estonian Books Abroad 1944-2010”.<sup>71</sup> They encompass not only Estonians in America but the whole global Estonian diaspora and fall within the realm of bibliography, thus they can mainly be used for gaining facts about publishing activities, which combined with other sources have the potential to create historical insight. The other strictly speaking non-historiographical yet significant book is the recently published end result of a decades long project of collectively composing a communal autobiography of the American Estonian refugee diaspora and its activities. It was completed under the editorship of Priit Vesilind with the publication of “Estonians in America, 1945-1995: Exiles in a Land of Promise”<sup>72</sup> The tome’s authors are dozens of local activists in different

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<sup>69</sup> Kumer-Haukanõmm, K. 2012. Teisest maailmasõjast tingitud Balti pagulaste problemaatika aastatel 1945–1952 Eesti pagulaste näitel. Dissertation. Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus.

<sup>70</sup> Valmas, Anne. 2003. Eestlaste kirjastustegevus välismaal 1944-2000. Dissertation. Tallinn: Tallinna Pedagoogikaulikooli Kirjastus.

<sup>71</sup> Valmas, A. 2017. Estonian Books Abroad 1944-2010 I & II. Tallinn: Teaduste Akadeemia Kirjastus.

<sup>72</sup> Vesilind, P. 2016. Exiles in a Land of Promise. USA: Estonian American National Council.

regions of the U.S.A. who give an account of events in their area and the organizations they participated in. Albeit this is not an academic publication, by providing an insider view on the political history, it does make its unique chronicle-like contribution to the sparsely researched field of Estonian American studies. In fact, this book is not an isolated publication but rather the continuation of a tradition to create and publish narratives of a historical nature concentrating on events, people at specific localities and/or their involvement in different organizations. Some, like the “Minnesota eestlased 1949-1999”<sup>73</sup> edited by Harry Teder focus on exile diasporans’ activities. Others look back further into the past towards the original settler communities, such as the “Eestlased Oregonis: ülevaade vanaeestlaste asumisest Oregoni osariiki käesoleva sajandi algul, nende kultuuriline, ühiskondlik, sotsiaalne ja majanduslik areng ja tegevus võõrsil”<sup>74</sup> compiled by Helmuth Kalmann. Publications like this<sup>75</sup> have a historically minded narrative, but they usually lack a citing apparatus and scholarly perspective which hinders their use as historiography. However, because they combine an impassioned narrative with local knowledge and rare visual material, they do often provide a coherent and personified version of the story of a community and as such can easily succumb to analysis as source material. A special case which is hard to define is Ferdinand Kool’s “DP Kroonika. Eesti pagulased Saksamaal 1944-1951”.<sup>76</sup> It is an extremely detailed representation of what happened to Estonians in postwar German Displaced Persons’ camps and mentions a plethora of documents and materials, which were available to the author at the time of writing. Unfortunately, Ferdinand Kool was unable to see the opus to print personally and it was published more than three decades after his demise. Much of what he writes and cites has become unobtainable, making his narrative both unique and valuable as well as excluding it from the pool of verifiable scholarly publications.

From the other end of the spectrum comes perhaps the most archivally informed monograph that has a connection to the Estonians in the U.S.A.: Indrek Jürjo’s “Pagulus ja Nõukogude Eesti. Vaateid KGB, EKP ja VEKSA arhiividokumentide põhjal.”<sup>77</sup> Albeit the focus is not on the American Estonian refugee community *per se* but rather explores the undercurrents of the exiles and Soviet Estonians’ somewhat thwarted efforts to communicate through the Iron Curtain in general, it

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<sup>73</sup> Minnesota eestlased 1949-1999. 2000. H. Teder (Ed.). Minneapolis: Minnesota Eesti Selts.

<sup>74</sup> Eestlased Oregonis: ülevaade vanaeestlaste asumisest Oregoni osariiki käesoleva sajandi algul, nende kultuuriline, ühiskondlik, sotsiaalne ja majanduslik areng ja tegevus võõrsil. H. Kalmann. (Compl.) Portland: s.n.

<sup>75</sup> See for example: Eestlased Washingtoni osariigis 1949-1999. 2001. E. Mihkelson, H. Shuey, L. Hannibal, *et al.* (Eds.). Seattle: Seattle Eesti Selts. Estonian Americans: Seabrook, New Jersey: 1949-1999. 1999. E. Truumees, E. Bajars. (Eds.) Seabrook: Seabrooki Eesti Ühiskond. 20 aastat Connecticuti Eesti Seltsi: 1950-1970. 1970. F. Kool (Compl.). Willimantic: Connecticuti Eesti Selts. Long Islandi Eesti Selts XV. 1966. [USA]: Eesti Postimehe trükk.

<sup>76</sup> Kool, F. 1999. DP Kroonika. Eesti pagulased Saksamaal 1944-1951. Lakewood: Eesti Arhiiv Ühendriikides.

<sup>77</sup> Jürjo, I. 2014. Pagulus ja Nõukogude Eesti. Vaateid KGB, EKP ja VEKSA arhiividokumentide põhjal. Tallinn: Tammerraamat.

does boast a compelling depiction of the how the political landscape of the Cold War shaped and influenced the lived reality of “the great watershed.” Jürjo’s point of departure is the abundant archives of the KGB, the Estonian Communist Party and Väliseestlastega Kultuurisidemete Arendamise Komitee<sup>78</sup> (Committee for Developing Cultural Ties with Estonians outside of Estonia). Due to the one sidedness of the source base, this archivally hyper-informed narrative can nevertheless be only conditionally treated as part of diaspora studies.

Another somewhat external addition to exile Estonian studies comes from Ieva Zaķe’s “American Latvians: Politics of a Refugee Community”. Published in 2010, it deals as the title suggests, singularly with Latvians. However, the cultural scope and sociological insight Zaķe provides by unraveling layers of trauma and fear permeating the seemingly straightforward exile diaspora mentality so often taken at face value, drive the debate regarding Balts in America on to a whole new level.<sup>79</sup> She does not shy away from opportunities to expose communal myths and debase stereotypes while touching upon the uncomfortable and unpleasant aspects of generational conflict, political myopias and the ghost of Nazi-collaboration. Albeit this does not immediately translate to a large quantity of citations within the scope of the dissertation at hand, Zaķe’s scholarship has informed the writing of it not so much with regard to what in fact resulted in being written, but with regard to what was not necessary to be (re)written. The same is true about Inta Gale Carpenter’s dissertation “Being Latvian in exile: Folklore as ideology” which provides an insider’s view on negotiating ethnicity and the Cold War “Latvian cause” within the wider diaspora society as well as self-reflection in the face of continuity and change.<sup>80</sup>

Luckily, the exile Estonians in America have been actively publishing autobiographies as well as engaging with their community heritage in writing, which has resulted in a variety of publications both in books as well as in shorter journalistic formats, for example, in their nationally available newspaper *Vaba Eesti Sõna*, dating back to 1949. That being said, the field of Estonian American studies still has a lot of gaps that need filling especially with regard to the lived experience of belonging to the diaspora, questions of identity, ethnicity, cultural adaptation and assimilation. The articles comprising this dissertation use thus far largely unconsulted primary archival sources to explore mental borderlines, memory cultures, rites of transition and agency among members of the Estonian refugee

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<sup>78</sup> More on VEKSA in 2.2.

<sup>79</sup> She has structured her narrative on the American Latvians into five segments: the first deals with the act of going into exile; the second portrays American Latvians as a prime example of ethnic anticommunists; in the third she confronts the accusations of collaborating with Nazis that were made against some community members at the height of the Cold War; the fourth is dedicated to exploring the troubled relationship between Latvians on opposing sides of the Iron Curtain; and in the fifth she traces the emotional history of the end of exile and problems in relation to repatriation and consolidation. Zaķe, I. 2010. pp. 17-195.

<sup>80</sup> Carpenter, I.G. 1988. *Being Latvian in exile: Folklore as ideology*. Dissertation. Indiana University, Bloomington.

diaspora in Cold War America. The dissertation seeks to portray the realities of sedentary diasporic existence with its plethora of claims on community and individual as well as position it in the wider context by addressing the notions of various relevant others that can be said to have been engaged within the process of intramural identity formation, thus breaking new ground in American Estonian historiography. It is important to note that the topic of Estonian diasporas in other countries and regions have different landscapes of scholarship. With varying degree the aforementioned trends in literature do apply to other diaspora societies as well with Canada standing out from the rest with its community-based collaborative efforts resulting in a three volume general treatment of Estonian exile life, close to 2000 pages, “Eestlased Kanadas: ajalooline koguteos I, II & III”, published from 1975 to 1997.<sup>81</sup>

In terms of scholarship, Canadian, Swedish and to a lesser degree Australian Estonian communities have received much more attention than the ones in South-American countries, the United Kingdom and Germany. Almost nothing has been written of Estonians in Africa, whereas by far the most active and elaborate research activity has been on the Eastern (incl. South-Eastern) and most recently on the Northern front.<sup>82</sup> This can first and foremost be explained by the sheer volumes of the diasporas, availability of their archives and, at least from the perspective of researchers from Estonia-proper, and accessibility issues. The most notable non-U.S. focused researcher is the already mentioned Aivar Jürgenson,<sup>83</sup> an ethnologist with a wide geographical and topical range who has published extensively about Estonians in Siberia<sup>84</sup>, the Caucasus<sup>85</sup> and South-America<sup>86</sup>. He has several points of entry at his disposal, having looked at the diasporas through the interplay of territoriality and identity, voluntary and forced migration, as well as, the ethnic and national dimension. Albeit none of his work directly applies to the Estonian diaspora experience in the U.S.A., in its entirety it can be (and has been used in this dissertation) as a versatile source of inspiration on creating various vantage points onto the topic of any Estonian community outside of Estonia.

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<sup>81</sup> Eestlased Kanadas: ajalooline koguteos. 1975. A. Kurlents, R. Antik, J. Olvet. (Eds.). Toronto: Kanada Eestlaste Ajaloo Komisjon. Eestlased Kanadas: ajalooline koguteos II. 1985. V. Lillakas, P. Kopvillem, E. Kuris *et al.* (Eds.). Toronto: Kanada Eestlaste Ajaloo Komisjon. Eestlased Kanadas: ajalooline koguteos III. 1997. V. Lillakas, H. Oja, P. Loosberg *et al.* (Eds.). Toronto: Kanada Eestlaste Ajaloo Komisjon.

<sup>82</sup> A good resource for publications dealing with various aspects of the Estonian diaspora is the annually updated Baltic Heritage Network bibliography: [https://www.balther.net/et/kasulikud-  
viited/](https://www.balther.net/et/kasulikud-viited/)

<sup>83</sup> He is also one of the supervisors of this dissertation.

<sup>84</sup> See for example: Jürgenson, A. 2006. Siberiga seotud: Eestlased teisel pool Uuraleid. Tallinn: Argo.

<sup>85</sup> See for example Jürgenson, 2016. Gruusia-Abhaasia sõda Abhaasia eestlaste mälestustes. In: Acta Historica Tallinnensia 22. pp. 112–141.

<sup>86</sup> See for example: Jürgenson, A. 2011. Ladina rahva seas: Argentina ja sealsed eestlased. Tallinn: Argo.

## 2. EXILED ESTONIAN IDENTITY FORMATION

The study of diasporas essentially deals with how a group of people (in the diaspora) co-exist with another group of people (in the host society) in relation to yet another group of people (in the country of origin). Thus the discussion about diasporas implies a certain large-scale consolidated identity in the form of nation as a(n apparently stable) category which enables the differentiation between “us” and “them”. According to Benedict Anderson, nations and hence their diasporas, are imagined as limited sovereign communities<sup>87</sup> with features permanently in flux and re-historicized. When analyzing the archival traces of exile Estonians in Cold War America, it becomes evident that the pursuit and performance of something they called “eestlus”, or Estonianness can be argued to have been at the core of activities and communal self-regulation. This Estonianness<sup>88</sup> is an umbrella term representing an amalgam of cultural artefacts and fantasy which manifest through tangible and intangible heritage and practices perceived as unique to Estonians.<sup>89</sup> Other nations have terms with similar discursive energy: for example, Latvians refer to “latvietība”, Finns have “suomalaisuus” and the Italians speak of “italianità”. The following is meant to provide context for the discussions about exile Estonian identity evoked in the articles comprising the bulk of this dissertation.

### 2.1. FROM ESCAPE TO EMIGRATION

There is a lot of variety in individual stories of escape as well as the means that were used to flee Estonia and the routes taken.<sup>90</sup> The most common ones entailed

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<sup>87</sup> Anderson, B. 1991. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. New York: Verso. pp. 6-7.

<sup>88</sup> For a discussion on the narrative construction of Estonianness in (auto)biographies with reference to post-memory, see: Kirss, T. 2006. *Rändlindude pesad*. Tartu: Eesti Kirjandusmuuseum. pp. 667-683.

<sup>89</sup> In the case of exiled Estonians in America I propose the development of a new term “nethnic” which alludes to the indivisibility of ethnic and national identity, while at the same time acknowledging that they are not one and the same. It combines the prevalence of language and culture to the perseverance of political ambition and lets them nurture each other. At least with regard to the mentality of Baltic diasporas, using the term nethnic could yield significant results in divorcing the research of very specific and historically similar peoples from existing constructs that are generally unbeneficial to their characteristics and unaccommodating to their innovations, thus unduly colonizing the theorization of their experience. The term nethnicity could at this point be somewhat centripetally defined as a person’s self-identification with a language and a culture that combined have legal claim to statehood and fuel the pursuit of said statehood in a non-expansive, non-violent manner with the goal of creating conditions that would ensure the vitality of the language and culture as well as fill their bearers with a sense of collective derived from the recognition of the individual. This proposition stems from my research and is not itself used within its scope.

<sup>90</sup> See for example an account of escaping on a bicycle: Aasmaa, I. 2009. *Jalgrattaga vabadusse*. Tallinn. For a general discussion regarding the historic and narrative variety, see Kirss, T. 2006. pp. 615-618.



either perilous journeys by relatively small boats to Sweden<sup>91</sup> or (also danger-ridden)<sup>92</sup> voyages on large military vessels to Germany.<sup>93</sup> According to memoirs many refugees had no intention of leaving Estonia for good. They escaped to avoid yet another Soviet occupation<sup>94</sup> and hoped that the end of the war was close and with that Estonia would continue as the independent country it had been before.<sup>95</sup> Among the people partaking in what is now known as the Great Escape of September 1944, there was hope that exiles would be back home by Christmas or spring.<sup>96</sup> As we know, that was not the case and instead many spent the remainder of the war traveling from place to place trying to find stability and sustenance<sup>97</sup>, both of which were hard to come by.<sup>98</sup>

Some of the people who made it to Germany had to escape or try to escape the Soviets a second time — the Red Army had already claimed vast areas before the division of Germany into American, British, French and Soviet occupation zones was ratified by Allies during the Potsdam conference in 1945.<sup>99</sup> By adding the fact that neutral Sweden was not war-torn and had the capacity and infrastructure to react and cater to the humanitarian crisis, it would seem that the Estonians who had reached Sweden were in a relatively better situation compared to those in Displaced Persons<sup>100</sup> camps in Germany.<sup>101</sup> However, Sweden's neutrality also meant that they found it hard to refuse Soviet demands<sup>102</sup> to return Baltic and German soldiers

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<sup>91</sup> Raag, R. 2009. Eestlaste põgenemine Rootsi Teise maailmasõja ajal. In: Eestlaste põgenemine Läände Teise maailmasõja ajal. Tartu: Korp! Filiae Patriae. pp. 55-62.

<sup>92</sup> See for example an account of the sinking of the torpedo-struck hospital ship "Moero" in: Lääne, T. Hallik, E. 2012. Kõnnin või merre. Meritsi läinud eestlaste lood I. Tallinn: MTÜ Paduvere Talumuuseumi Selts. pp. 127-136.

<sup>93</sup> Kumer-Haukanõmm, K. 2006. Eestlaste Teisest maailmasõjast tingitud põgenemine läände. In: Suur põgenemine 1944. Eestlaste lahkumine läände ja selle mõjud. Kumer-Haukanõmm, K., Rosenberg, T., Tammaru, T. (Eds). Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus. pp. 14-21.

<sup>94</sup> The first one had taken place in 1940-1941, right before the German occupation of 1941-1944.

<sup>95</sup> Kumer-Haukanõmm, K. 2006. pp. 20-22.

<sup>96</sup> Kirss, T. 2006. p. 611.

<sup>97</sup> Kumer-Haukanõmm, K. 2012. p. 53.

<sup>98</sup> Kirss, T. 2006. pp. 101-115. See for example: Heljo Laev. 2009. In: Eestlaste põgenemine läände Teise maailmasõja ajal. pp. 221-249. And Maret Paljak 243-264. For an account on life in DP camps, see: Kool, F. 1999. pp. 422-467

<sup>99</sup> L'hommedieu, J. 2008. The origin of the U.S. non-recognition policy of the Soviet annexation of the Baltic states. In: The Baltic Question During the Cold War. p. 61.

<sup>100</sup> Coining of the term is sometimes attributed to sociologist Eugene Kulischer. 2011. Ferrara, A. 2011. Eugene Kulischer, Joseph Schechtman and the Historiography of European Forced Migrations. In: Journal of Contemporary History Vol 46, No 4. pp. 722-723.

<sup>101</sup> Balkelis, T. 2009. Living in the Displaced Persons Camp: Lithuanian War Refugees in the West. In: Warlands. Population Resettlement and State Reconstruction in the Soviet-East European Borderlands, 1945-1950. Great Britain: Palgrave Macmillan. p. 26

<sup>102</sup> Refugees fears of forcible repatriation from Sweden are a recurring topic in memoirs. Kirss, T. (2016). Suhtlejad ja võitlejad. Eestluse tuleviku problemaatika 1976. aasta Pocono seminari näitel. In: L. Kurvet-Käosaar, M. Laak (Ed.). Adressaadi dünaamika, kirjanduse pingeväljad. Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus. Pp. 260-261. The event is often discussed at length. See for example: Küng, A. 2002. Baltikumile elatud aastad. Tallinn: Olion. pp. 29-46.

who had previously fought against the Soviets and were currently held in Swedish internment camps. In fear of repressions, several of them committed suicide right before they were to be handed over to the Soviet authorities in January 1946 in the event now known as the *Baltutlänningen*.<sup>103</sup> This forcible repatriation was perceived as a dangerous precedent and many Estonian refugees in Sweden decided to re-migrate from Sweden to somewhere further out of the Soviet's reach.<sup>104</sup>

There was no international consensus regarding the future of the Estonian refugees or the other almost 8 million people<sup>105</sup> who found themselves displaced at the end of the war, so any and all ventures to move about outside of the Displaced Person (in Germany) and refugee (elsewhere) camp system were risky. There was no guarantee of employment, financial support, or legal status. Even so, in Estonian diaspora studies the years immediately following World War II are often referred to as the time of the “vikings” – that’s how people who pooled their money to buy (often barely seaworthy) vessels to sail across the Atlantic became known as. The first of approximately 30 boats to reach its destination was *Erma*, arriving in Little Creek, Virginia on December 15th 1945 after 128 days at sea.<sup>106</sup> Nobody on board had a visa, some even lacked a passport. Nevertheless, they received a warm welcome from the press and among others, were praised by (then Congressman and later POTUS) John F. Kennedy for their courage, integrity and love of freedom.<sup>107</sup> These Displaced Persons were renamed Delayed Pilgrims by the Society of Mayflower Descendants in Pennsylvania attesting to the Balts’ worthiness to carry such a title. They were allowed to stay, but as more boats found their way to American shores, the public and politicians were harder to impress and two years later in 1947 there is evidence of “vikings” being turned away with a suggestion they should enter via Canada to outfox the quota system<sup>108</sup> which had governed U.S. immigration since the 1920s. In addition to North-America, the boat people also reached different South-American and African countries, sometimes by design, other times by accident — the old and cheap boats crowded with families were no match for strong winds and currents which sometimes decided the route instead of the captain.<sup>109</sup>

The majority of Estonian refugees stayed in camps awaiting governments and international organizations decision about their future. Discussions took time to form into policies and most Estonians spent about half a decade in limbo, resisting

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<sup>103</sup> Zalcmanis, J. *Baltutlänningen 1946 i dokument*. Stockholm, Sweden: Militärhistoriska förlaget, 1983.

<sup>104</sup> Kirss, T. 2006. p. 447.

<sup>105</sup> Kumer-Haukanõmm, K. 2012. Eesti põgenikud Taanis 1945-1952 ja nende edasine saatus. In: *Eesti Ajalooarhiivi toimetised*. Tannberg, T. (Ed.) Tartu: Eesti Ajalooarhiivi Kirjastus. p. 472.

<sup>106</sup> Vesilind, P. 2016. p. 9.

<sup>107</sup> For a collection of published sources on this, see: Akmetiņš, O. 1976. *Latvians in Bicentennial America*. Iowa: Latvju Grāmata. pp. 93-112.

<sup>108</sup> Maegi, B. 2004. pp. 59-105.

<sup>109</sup> Raag, R. 1999. pp. 71-73.

Soviet repatriation propaganda and leading a surprisingly vibrant cultural life by organizing Song Festivals, theater performances, publishing, schools<sup>110</sup> and (in collaboration with other Balts) a University.<sup>111</sup> The unofficial Estonian refugee capital in Germany was Geislingen where almost 5000 Estonians lived and worked. The conditions in the U.S. governed zone of Germany were much better than elsewhere. Rationing was in place everywhere, but the ones in the U.S. zone were generous enough for some families to regularly send part of their foodstuffs to relatives in the French zone.<sup>112</sup> The U.S.A. was also attractive as a possible destination, but it was not until 1948 that Congress finally passed the Displaced Person's Act which granted entry to 400 000 DPs, among them approximately 10 000 Estonians.<sup>113</sup> It was hoped that Balts who were perceived as able farmers and sturdy agriculture laborers might help alleviate the shortage of workforces in rural areas like the Mississippi Delta. However, upon arrival it quickly became obvious this would not happen.<sup>114</sup>

## 2.2. NEW LIFE IN THE NEW WORLD

The migration process was tedious, lengthy and involved numerous screenings that entailed identity cross-checks, medical examinations and interviews.<sup>115</sup> Even when that process was a success, passage to the U.S.A. would only be secured for those who had an organization or individual vouch for them and had a standing offer of employment and accommodation. Many received these from churches and missions, some from American companies and others benefitted from the Estonians who had already established themselves in the United States during more peaceful times.<sup>116</sup> These people now became known as *vanaeestlased* or old-Estonians and after having created organizations to draw attention to Estonia's plight and provide financial and moral support to the people who had fled the country already at the beginning of the war,<sup>117</sup> with the spontaneous arrival of the "vikings" and the more planned influx of DPs, they continued their undertaking. Upon arrival the DPs

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<sup>110</sup> Valmas, A. 2017. Pagulaskultuuri jälgedel: artikleid väliseesti kultuurist. Tallinn: Teaduste Akadeemia Kirjastus. pp. 14-24.

<sup>111</sup> Merits, H. 2015. The Story of The Baltic University. Documentary film. Amsterdam: Merits Productions. Kool, F. 1999. pp. 365-467, 712-868.

<sup>112</sup> Merivoo-Parro, M. 2010. New Yorgi Eesti Haridusselts ja Pagulased. Magistritöö. (MA thesis) Tallinna Ülikool. p. 63.

<sup>113</sup> Raag, R. 1999. pp. 71-73.

<sup>114</sup> Even when Estonians did assume a position in agriculture (for example, at New Jersey's Seabrook Farms or California's Cucamonga fruit district), they tended not to stay very long and made successful attempts at transcending the boundaries they were assigned to. Vesilind, P. 2016. pp. 199-202, 342-351.

<sup>115</sup> Kumer-Haukanõmm, K. 2012. pp. 54-55.

<sup>116</sup> Merivoo-Parro, M. 2011. p. 112.

<sup>117</sup> For example, the *Ülemaailmne Eesti Ühing* (World Association of Estonians) in 1940, *Eesti Abistamiskomitee* (Estonian Committee for Assistance) in 1941. Pennar, J., Parming, T., Rebane, P. 1975. pp. 24-25.

really did benefit from the Estonians already there. In some places like New York, there was an Estonian House which not only served as a center for social life, but also gained new functions by becoming a post office and job fair.<sup>118</sup> As was explained earlier, the prerequisite for applying for immigration was the promise of a job. In some host countries like the United Kingdom or Australia, the authorities were strict about the obligation to honor these initial contracts. The United States was more lenient and let newcomers quit their designated employment and move around the country in search of something better, giving them instant access to the pursuit of the coveted American dream.<sup>119</sup>

Some of the newcomers also chased their exile-Estonian dream by becoming active diasporans and playing an increasingly vital role in local Estonian organizations to the point of taking over leadership positions and eventually becoming something of an establishment or elite who played a major role in defining the central metaphors through which the public dialogue within the community functioned. This brought about tensions between the newcomers and the old-Estonians,<sup>120</sup> but the sheer quantity of the DPs as well as their politically charged and passionate view of the world and their role in it did not leave much doubt as to how the rivalry would end and when it finally did, tensions receded.<sup>121</sup> Many of the newcomers were not only active in their region, but also quickly set up international organizations to further their cause of keeping the issue of Estonia being occupied actively present in international political discourse.<sup>122</sup> The ease with which this global network was put in place can be explained with their years long experience in the camps which entailed living in close quarters and organizing events, schools and societies together with meager means.<sup>123</sup> Productive working relationships were established and even though by the beginning of the fifties most exiles had left Germany and were dispersed all over the world, collaboration continued.<sup>124</sup> The plethora of organizations within every large host country as well as very visible cooperation between them across international borders gave the Estonian diaspora an air of grandeur and the Estonians were perceived to be a much larger minority group in their respective countries than they actually were.<sup>125</sup> This helped get attention and exposure when trying to get their message across to politicians and the media.

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<sup>118</sup> Merivoo-Parro, M. 2010. p. 80.

<sup>119</sup> *Passim*.

<sup>120</sup> Vana Ameerika Eestlaste Ühingu asutamisprotokoll 27.10.1951. (Meeting minutes of The Old American Estonian Association) Box Eesti Ameerika Kodanike Ühing. The Eesti Amerika Kodaniku Ühing/Estonian American Citizens Association Records, Estonian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

<sup>121</sup> Merivoo-Parro, M. 2010. pp. 53-58, 77-82.

<sup>122</sup> Because of the abundance of different local, regional and global societies, the organizational spectrum can be said to have been oversaturated. Raag, R. 1999. pp. 75-81.

<sup>123</sup> For a detailed account, see: Kool, F. 1999. pp. 363-546, 712-868.

<sup>124</sup> Merivoo-Parro, M. 2011. pp. 120-121.

<sup>125</sup> Kalm, A. 2015. *Balti musketärid USA Kongressis*. Tallinn: Kirjastus Aade. pp. 7-15.

Another method for making ‘a lot of noise’ was cooperation with Balts<sup>126</sup> and other captive nations which proved especially potent when *realpolitik* threatened the non-recognition policy<sup>127</sup> and brought with it dangerous precedents like Australia *de jure* recognizing Estonia and other Baltic States as part of the USSR. When a fierce global Baltic response followed, Australia withdrew the recognition.<sup>128</sup>

Thus far there is no evidence of wide scale (clandestine) collaboration between Estonians abroad and Estonians in Soviet Estonia. The ties between the two communities were sparse not just because this kind of cooperation would have been perilous. The cooperation was almost nonexistent because the exile establishment was stringent on keeping away from Soviet Estonia, its people and their culture.<sup>129</sup> They wished to not only convey their own clear message of non-recognition, but also feared that should they play a more open hand, they might be tricked and indeed there were organizations set in place looking to do just that, the most famous of these was VEKSA or *Väliseestlastega Kultuurisidemete Arendamise Komitee* (Committee for developing cultural ties with Estonians outside of Estonia). Formally it was a democratic volunteer organization, but in fact answered directly to the Communist Party’s propaganda division and the KGB.<sup>130</sup> Among other things it had a goal to gain the trust of organizations uniting refugees, get control over the communication between the refugees and their family members in the Soviet Union and using whatever leverage they had to secretly distort any harmonious ‘vibes’.<sup>131</sup>

The rise of VEKSA provoked a wave of mistrust against everything coming from Soviet Estonia. A number of extremists arose from among the diaspora communities who considered anyone keeping contact with relatives back home to be a pinko (somebody suspected of leftist leanings, derogatory in the Cold War exile diaspora context).<sup>132</sup> People who visited the homeland were sometimes thrown out of culture clubs. Thus characters with vehement opinions were actually able to ideologically narrow the realm of what was socially acceptable among the diaspora community. In a way this development brought the two Estonian communities separated by ocean and social order closer together – both groups were now subject

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<sup>126</sup> For a plethora of detailed accounts involving Latvians protesting against the Soviet Union and its policies, see: Auliciema, M., Beķere, K., Hinkle, M. *et al.* 2018. *Nyet, Nyet, Soviet! stāsti par latviešu politiskajām demonstrācijām trimdā*. Rīga: "Latvieši pasaulē" - muzejs un pētniecības centrs.

<sup>127</sup> Medijainen, E. 2008 pp. 28-30.

<sup>128</sup> Dunsdorfs, E. *The Baltic Dilemma*. 1975. The case of the *de jure* recognition by Australia of the incorporation of the Baltic States into the Soviet Union. New York: Robert Speller & Sons Publishers.

<sup>129</sup> Merivoo-Parro, M. 2015. Claiming Ethnicity in Overlapping Diasporic Conditions: Estonian Americans and Academic Mobility During the Cold War. *Acta Historica Tallinnensia* 21 (1). pp. 106-124.

<sup>130</sup> Jürjo, I. 2014. pp. 190-191.

<sup>131</sup> A compendium of VEKSA propaganda articles can be found in: Salu, H. 1983. *Piinlikud lood*. Tallinn: Perioodika.

<sup>132</sup> For example: Heino Ainso, Hellar Grabbi, Rein Taagepera, Tõnu Parming and others. Kirss, T. 2016. pp. 262-263, 265-267.

to self-regulation due to artificial taboos and American Estonians lost a part of their freedom.<sup>133</sup> On the other hand, there were those who considered it vital to stay in touch and be united through culture – for them communication was both a means and an end for keeping Estonian culture alive.<sup>134</sup>

It can be said without a doubt that the definite tension between hardliners, communication-minded and the wider diaspora festered until the 1980s when Mikhail Gorbachev initiated the policies of glasnost and perestroika enabling Soviet Estonians to start communicating their dissent. The perestroika dance on the borderline of tradition and change required an acute sense of risk: the true weapons of choice were ultimately intellectual strength and restraint / self control. Events in Estonia were peculiar mainly because of the fact that resistance also picked up a cultural staple and used it as a weapon – song.<sup>135</sup> Choral music from the nineteenth century national awakening was put on a pedestal, and new patriotic songs were composed and sung by choirs, crowds and popular artists. The notions expressed through music were bolder than those which people dared to say out loud in speeches or write in articles and manifestos. Singing became integral to most political gatherings during the regaining of independence which is why it is also known as the era of the Singing Revolution. The foundation of it – a living, vigorous singing tradition – had survived russifications thanks to the network of choirs and the tradition of the Song Festivals which began in 1869.<sup>136</sup>

One might suggest that the utilization of cultural means as political arms to be simply a result of the narrow field of options for opposition in the Soviet Union. This allusion loses its ground when observing the activities of exiled Estonians who mostly lived in free democratic societies where they became used to practicing their rights as citizens in the struggle for Estonia's independence.<sup>137</sup> Their political methods of operation varied from delicate lobby work<sup>138</sup> to mass demonstrations.<sup>139</sup> However, among their means of protest, singing was one of the most common. It was generally viewed to be an important part of culture which is why love of song and the habit of singing were (often) successfully handed down to new generations born and raised in North America. Choral music was an integral part of the Estonian culture world festival ESTO<sup>140</sup> and it was able to maintain its position throughout

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<sup>133</sup> For more on this see articles III and IV of this dissertation.

<sup>134</sup> Kirss, T. 2016. pp. 261-287.

<sup>135</sup> Clemens, W.J. 1991. *Baltic Independence and Russian Empire*. New York: St. Martin's Press. pp. 1-11.

<sup>136</sup> Šmidchens, G. *The Power of Song. Nonviolent National Culture in the Baltic Singing Revolution*. Seattle: University of Washington Press. pp. 160-260, 307-327.

<sup>137</sup> Raag, R. 1999. pp. 75-81.

<sup>138</sup> Morris, H.M., Made, V. 2008. *Émigrés, dissidents and international organizations*. In: *The Baltic Question During the Cold War*. pp. 144-151.

<sup>139</sup> *Ameerika baltlased ja NATO laienemine Balti riikidesse*. *Baltlaste lobitöö Ameerikas 1996-2004*. *Dokumendid Vello Ederma arhiivist*. 2008. pp. 2-4.

<sup>140</sup> Ojamaa, T. 2017. *Festivalide funktsioon kodu- ja eksileesti kultuurisuhtluse kujunemiseks*. In: *Methis Vol 15, No 19*. pp. 11-12.

the period of Soviet occupation. In fact, the Estonian choirs were operatives in the *välisvõitlus* – the battle for Estonia’s independence and a common concept<sup>141</sup> is that in the diaspora the Singing Revolution did not last for five years as it did in Estonia-proper, but 50 years of Soviet induced exile.<sup>142</sup>

It can be said that in Estonia's process of re-establishment as an independent country, the manifestation of Estonian patriotism in song was a means of catharsis for both the transition from a totalitarian society into a democratic one and for the reunion of Estonian people all over the world. With the end of the Soviet Union drawing near, direct contacts between exile Estonians and Soviet Estonians grew, political events began to be coordinated globally up until in a surprising turn of events following an attempted *coup d'état* in Moscow, Estonia regained its independence on August 20th 1991.<sup>143</sup> Just like in the case of American Latvians and Lithuanians<sup>144</sup>, after initial euphoria and disbelief, the diaspora experienced a sense of relief followed by an identity crisis. However, those craving to continue working to further Estonia’s progress obtained new goals like building the country up and getting memberships in international organizations.<sup>145</sup> Some moved to Estonia, reclaimed land and real-estate and got involved with business or politics.<sup>146</sup> The majority remained in America and formed the old guard with regard to the constant influx of labor migrants who in some areas (like California and New York) are nevertheless now exerting a major influence.

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<sup>141</sup> Merivoo, M. 2007. Eesti taasiseseisvumine ja laul. Bakalaureusetöö. (BA thesis) Tallinna Ülikool.

<sup>142</sup> An extension of the term has been offered by Brüggemann and Kasekamp who perceive the spontaneous joint singing at Soviet era festivals during the 1960s and onward as a form of latent protest worthy to be considered as part and parcel of the Singing Revolution narrative. However, unlike the diaspora events of the time, there was a complete lack of explicit pro-independence political messaging. Brüggemann, K., Kasekamp, A. 2014. “Singing oneself into a nation?” Estonian song festivals as rituals of political mobilisation. In: Nations and Nationalism 20 (2). pp. 270-271.

<sup>143</sup> A foundation of centuries long cultural development helped pave the path towards Estonians survival, resistance and the emancipation from under the Soviet regime, but it would be a mistake to understate the role that the wider political context played in the process of Estonia’s regaining of independence. Clemens, W.J. 2003. Comparative Repression and Comparative Resistance: What Explains Survival? In: The Sovietization of the Baltic States, 1940-1965. Tartu: Kleio. p. 41.

<sup>144</sup> Eidintas, A. 2003. Lithuanian Emigration to the United States 1868-1950. Vilnius: Mokslo ir enciklopedijų leidybos institutas. pp. 219-223. Žake, I. 2010. pp. 161-192.

<sup>145</sup> For a cohesive narrative on Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian independence movements, see: Lieven, A. 1994. The Baltic Revolution. Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and the Path to Independence. New Haven: Yale. pp. 214-384.

<sup>146</sup> Merivoo-Parro, M. 2017. Kiirkohtingud õõnestajatega. In: Vikerkaar 4-5. pp. 79-89.

### 2.3. IMAGINING OTHERNESS: DIVERSITY AND DIVISION

As already mentioned, maintaining Estonianness was the general goal of many exiled Estonian activities in the United States.<sup>147</sup> The passion with which former refugees tackled the challenges of this new beginning can be traced back not only to the forced nature of their migration, but also to earlier series of events. Namely, the people who escaped Estonia during World War II had been shaped by two decades of national independence as well as the period of Konstantin Päts' authoritarian regime (1934-1940).<sup>148</sup> Both played a pivotal role in the construction of Estonian nationalism. Pille Petersoo has outlined some general markers concerning its nature and makes a compelling case for recognizing that in the complex process of constructing and maintaining identity, nations are capable of having a number of simultaneously relevant Others, who also serve a vital rhetorical function during the process of identity construction, maintenance and transformation<sup>149</sup>: "National identity formation should not be seen as a strictly "monogamous" affair between one nation and one significant Other."<sup>150</sup> Petersoo's model can be adopted to fill the needs of analyzing identity construction not only in Estonia-proper, but also in the diaspora.<sup>151</sup> According to Petersoo, the form of otherness determines its social and political consequences — if the otherness in question is recognized, it yields the floor to diversity; if it is negated, division will take a central role.<sup>152</sup> That's the impetus behind her typology of possible Others depicted in Table 2. These Others can be either internal or external and evaluated as positive or negative and as such coexist.

**Table 2. Possible Others in identity formation according to Pille Petersoo<sup>153</sup>**

The Other	Positive	Negative
Internal	Type 1	Type 2
External	Type 3	Type 4

<sup>147</sup> Kruuspere, P. (Ed.) 2008. Eesti Kirjandus paguluses. Tallinn: Eesti TA Underi ja Tuglase Kirjanduskeskus. pp. 9-23.

<sup>148</sup> A thorough account on the nature of the regime can be found in: Pajur, A. 2018. Konstantin Päts: Poliitiline biograafia. II osa, Riigimees (1917-1956). Tartu: Rahvusarhiiv.

<sup>149</sup> Petersoo, P. 2007. Reconsidering otherness: constructing Estonian identity. In: Nations and Nationalism 13 (1). pp. 117.

<sup>150</sup> *Passim*.

<sup>151</sup> By building on Anna Triandafylliou's assertion that changing circumstances remodel the symbolic, material and affective needs of the people which in turn prompts the nation to redefine itself in order to remain relevant, Petersoo preaches in favor of observing the relationship between the nation and its Others dynamically over time. Gerard Delanty's stress on the character and content of the discourse surrounding the dichotomy between the Self and the Other is iterated in order to stress the vital role rhetoric has in constructing the nature of the difference created via evoking the dichotomy. Petersoo, P. 2007. pp. 118-119.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>153</sup> *Passim*.



The easiest section to find a reference point to, is that which in many cases is the first and only stop on the path towards finding the boundaries of identity — the external negative Other (Type 4). In the case of the Estonian exiles in Cold War America, this category was inhabited by the Soviets ruling Estonia.<sup>154</sup> They were perceived to pose an existential threat to not only the persons comprising the diaspora but also the Estonian nation, culture and way of life in general. Beneficial to Petersoo's model, this dichotomy can be read in the context of international relations. It also holds up with regard to the historicizing examples she uses that evoke the notion of a fear of enemies (by referencing the antique dialectic of Greeks versus Barbarians) and the discursive power of this type of othering in the shaping of ideological foundations (by referencing animosity between Britain, France and Germany).<sup>155</sup> The first can be observed in the exiled Estonian establishments' strict views on communicating with the homeland — as long as Estonia was under Soviet rule, active correspondence outside of family ties cultural or economic cooperation as well as visits were all frowned upon, one could even say they were banned. Of course, no diaspora police existed to enforce these rules, but the people who had erred in these categories did risk a community backlash as well as sanctions limiting their opportunities to take part in societal life. The othering of Soviets did indeed also have an effect on the ideological functioning of the diaspora — any and all left wing political currents within their own ranks, the wider U.S. society or other countries were *a priori* considered subversive and diagnosed evil because of their supposed attachment to the Soviet system. Curiously, the rise of the Soviet Union had not only prompted the birth, but shaped the evolution of the exile diaspora — even though rhetorically it is perceived as the antipode, genealogically it is of close relation. This paradox was not lost on diasporans and however happy, successful or exuberant they were as a group, they often made a point of lamenting the aforementioned particularities of their situation, or even their group existence as a whole.

As a category, the external positive Other (Type 3) is just as easily discernible and yields not one but four immediate points of reference, all of which were in active use during the Cold War. The first major external positive Other for Estonian exiles in the United States is of course the only group of people powerful enough as a unit to provide a rhetorical and practical counterbalance to the Soviets and yet remain unthreatening in their might — the Americans. However, they cannot be said to have been used as a role model or perceived as representing a standard to aspire to — the vastness of the country and its plethora of roles were too big of a bite to swallow, so instead diaspora Estonians and the Americans were thought to be little and big brother in a family of nations and states that share a (declared) love of democracy and uphold an anti-communist stance. Other members of this group of positive Others are representatives of other exile representatives of captive nations

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<sup>154</sup> In Petersoo's inquiry into the collective psyche of the Estonians, this category is inhabited by Russians. Petersoo, P. 2007. pp. 127-129.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibidem*.

under Soviet yoke or belonging to its sphere of influence, such as the Latvians and Lithuanians, Cubans, Hungarians, Vietnamese, Koreans and others with whom rhetorical kinship resulted in political alliance both within the boundaries of specific organizations (such as the Assembly of Captive European Nations, Joint Baltic-American National Committee) and outside of them in the context of a looser form of civic engagement.<sup>156</sup> In addition to the Americans, the diaspora Balts and other captive nations, the fourth significant external positive Other for the Estonian exiles in the United States were the Finns who albeit being a relatively small nation with modest military might, had been able to hold on to their independence and carried on after the end of World War II as a full-fledged member of the international forum. Their country being somewhat bigger, but still relative in size to Estonia, sharing in the Finno-Ugric linguistic and cultural space and seemingly always one step ahead had made them a target of Estonians admiration during the time of the national awakening in the nineteenth century.<sup>157</sup> Unlike the case of Americans, Finns are regularly seen as a role model to aspire to representing a standard to be obtained.

With regard to the internal positive Other (Type 1), which by Petersoo's definition is a non-threatening minority group within the political territory of the majority, the group of *vanaeestlased* is a good fit. These are the people who had made their way to the United States before the Second World War as labor migrants looking to either gain as much capital as possible and eventually return home to a new standard of living or establish themselves in the New World and spend their lives in a positive buzz from the cocktail of capitalism and democracy. They weren't always cast as the internal positive Other, but started out from the position of external positive Other during the times before DP immigration took place and the refugees were still in camps awaiting help and assistance in making the leap across the Atlantic. The *vanaeestlased*, or Old-Estonians with their personal freedom and relative affluence seemed not only literally but also emotionally thousands of miles away and in no way sharing the same desperate situation with the refugees, hence they were the external positive Other. As soon as the refugees had made the leap and found themselves on American soil, the *vanaeestlased*, or Old-Estonians in power positions running the organizations and ruling the Estonian Houses began to be seen as an internal negative Other because of their resistance to the exiles intense agency that did in fact eventually overwhelm and overrule the pre-existing populaces. Depending on the location, this process took from a few months to a few years.<sup>158</sup> With that, a change of perceptions occurred and the *vanaeestlased* no longer posed a threat nor did they offer competition and were thus able to obtain

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<sup>156</sup> Vesilind, P. 2016. pp. 64-79.

<sup>157</sup> Petersoo also casts Finland as a representative of an external positive Other in her depiction of the Estonian identity. Petersoo, P. 2007. pp. 126-127.

<sup>158</sup> For an account of how this process took place in the Latvian diaspora, see for example: Latviešu trimdas desmit gadi: rakstu krājums. H. Tichovska. [Ed.] 1954. Toronto: Astras apgāds. pp. 270-366.

their most consistently held role within the collective psyche of the Estonian exiles in America — that of internal positive Other.

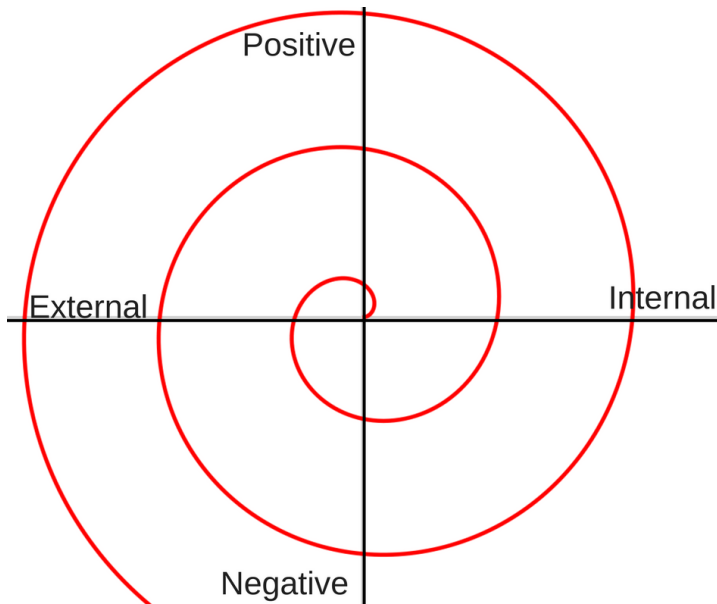
With that the role of internal negative Other (Type 2) was freed and reformed to encompass any and all strays from within the exiled Estonian establishment and its sphere of influence. This was a category for exiled Estonians who had a falling out with leaders (or a substantial number of regular members) over issues regarding intra- or extramural politics, the allocation of social and financial capital or simple rules of conduct. At first, they might have been believed to be taking a break from activities, but as time went on and a return process was not initiated on either side, they slipped into the Other category within the internal negative Other: the exiles who seem to have just fallen off the map for no apparent reason. There was always reason, of course: long distances requiring time and money to reach Estonian centers and events, health issues, marrying into another active ethnicity group or simply a wish to transcend the exile mentality and begin anew, to name a few. The exiled Estonian establishment was keen to unite as many constituents as possible not only for financial but also emotional reasons. The work they did outside the community to keep the Estonian issue alive and lobby for the maintenance of a non-recognition policy towards the occupied Baltic States complimented their equally activity-laden intra group agenda of cultural generativity. The latter was a contingency plan or survival tactic, a Noah's Ark of sorts, should the worst case scenario of Estonia not regaining independence before Estonian culture there had withered away, become a reality. Being in the establishment was of course a position of power, but even more it was a position of obligation which is why internal disputes (of which there were many) crumbled not only the mandate of the elected but also their morale, so when people strayed away they were reprimanded behind their back for withholding their unique contribution, but this bloodletting was in fact necessary to maintain coherence (both in tumultuous times and the sedate periods) during the decades long self-proclaimed battle for Estonian culture and independence.<sup>159</sup>

In addition to Pille Petersoo's matrix with four distinct possible Others in a group's identity formation I would like to propose an additional category relevant for Estonian diaspora studies: the category of the non-Other. The main relevance of this category is in the realm of narrative studies and could provide a home for topics, people and occurrences that are regarded so alien and/or threatening that they are not allotted space on the straightforward double axes of internal/external, positive/negative. As phenomena they can be deduced to a spot far along the axis of negative, but because they are avoided in both implicit and explicit rhetoric and in a way actively forgotten, they can become practically forgotten and thus undetectable in narrative identity construction, transformation and maintenance. Their presence can be deduced by taking into account the wider political, social and historical realities, but they cannot be pinned down with actual discourse. The case that

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<sup>159</sup> For more on the topic, see articles II and III of this dissertation.

inspired the addition of this category is that of the Estonian communists in America, whose very existence and actions were so frowned upon that during the Cold War they were largely excluded from public and private discourse among Estonians exiles with only fleeting references in archives<sup>160</sup> and almost no knowledge of them exhibited in the oral histories that I conducted with representatives of the second generation. This is where division and diversity merge. In order to visually convey how this new category relates to the Others, see Chart 1 below.



**Chart 1.** The spiral leading from the narrative Other to the Non-Other superimposed on the categories of possible Others.

In Chart 1 the two dyads proposed by Petersoo are reimagined from their table format onto axes and superimposed with a spiral. The center of the spiral marks the distinct narrative recognition of the idea of an Other. Each new layer further away from his center represents the process of diluting the narrative representation of the Other further into obscurity and nearer to the point it can no longer be pinned down and thus becomes the non-Other. The spiral is not meant as a quantifying tool, but can help visualize the relative aspects of narrative cognition. However far we move on the spiral of narrative analysis leading from Other to non-Other, the categories of positive, negative, internal and external will still hold their ground in historical analysis. The new model takes nothing from their discursive power, it merely adds another dimension which can be evoked when necessary. This new category of non-

<sup>160</sup> Merivoo-Parro, M. 2010. pp. 20, 35.

Other in Estonian diaspora identity formation and the corresponding model are the result of the research conducted for this dissertation, not a tool that was available when the articles were written. That being said, the groups mentioned here as significant Others, do get attention in the articles of this dissertation. Basically, it can be said that thinking in groups is a fundamental human attribute, a tool to provide the aptitude for gathering information while minimizing the amount of cognitive effort. The groups or categories themselves can be interesting and informative, but so are the activities of grouping and categorizing — groupness is, after all, a variable.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Brubaker, R. Loveman, M., Stamatov, P. 2004. Ethnicity as cognition. In: *Theory and Society* 33. pp. 38, 45-46.

### 3. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The history of the Estonian diaspora is not an extensively researched topic and this dissertation seeks to fill a gap in the literature pertaining to the mentality of Estonians in Cold War America by relying heavily on primary source materials as well as creating new ones via an oral history project.

#### 3.1. ARCHIVAL SOURCES

The majority of the primary sources which this dissertation relies upon are deposited in the vaults of the Immigration History Research Center and Archives (IHRCA), located at the Elmer L. Andersen Library on the West Bank campus of the University of Minnesota. I had the privilege of spending a whole academic year submersed in the collection as a Fulbright Visiting Student Scholar. The vast Estonian-American collection at the Immigration History Research Center and Archives was originally created by the Estonian Archives in the United States near Lakewood, New Jersey. Established in 1966, it was then and is today largely staffed by volunteers and operates in a communally built house. Beginning in 2003 the archive has been sending materials to the IHRCA for permanent preservation.<sup>162</sup> The archives of Estonian Supplemental Schools, Boy Scouts and Girl Guides, regional organizations, Estonian Houses, as well as, documentation pertaining to major events can all be found there, alongside personal papers depicting activists' lives, deeds and correspondence. With a few exceptions<sup>163</sup>, the majority of audiovisual sources have not yet been transferred to Minnesota and can still be accessed in Lakewood.

Personal collections often contain valuable insight not only into the lives of individuals, but also shed light on what was going on behind the scenes of the organizations. A great example of this kind of collection is Aime Kangro's papers that contain her correspondence with fellow diasporans like Ivar Grünthal, Mall Jürma, Elina Toona, Arvo Vihalemm and others. The topics include discussions about diasporan Estonian literature and the literary scene, utopias and dystopias pertaining to the future of Estonians abroad, open debates about tensions within and between community organizations, as well as news, and gossip about friends and family. Since Aime Kangro was involved with the Kesk-Lääne Eesti Noorte Koondis (KLENK), or Midwestern Estonian Youth Association, her collection is rich in its documentation and publications, thus in a way can also be treated as a (quasi-)organizational archive.<sup>164</sup> Another example worth mentioning is the

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<sup>162</sup> Various authors. 2006. Lakewood Estonian Association - 60. History of an Ethnic Community in New Jersey. Toms River: Lakewood Estonian Association. pp. 35-38.

<sup>163</sup> For example, the recordings with "vikings" in Voldemar Veedam Papers. IHRCA Archives, University of Minnesota.

<sup>164</sup> The Kangro, Aime Papers, Estonian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

personal collection of Scout leader Herbert Michelson whose dedication to the cause is evidenced by the inclusion of not only materials meticulously depicting the beauty and success of diaspora scouting, but also its problems, pitfalls and scandals.<sup>165</sup>

Organizational papers can be divided into two groups: documents of entities that have a strong connection to a specific location and documents of entities which seek to unite people from different regions for some common goal. Belonging to the first group are Estonian Houses, congregations, supplemental schools and hobby groups, examples of the second include Estonian Students Fund in the United States, the world festival ESTO, Estonian American National Council and others. In both cases the collections are surprisingly detailed and contain both qualitative and quantitative data which makes it possible to find correlation between economic patterns and member participation.<sup>166</sup> However, since most of the archives were created on a volunteer-basis, there do exist certain grey areas and blind spots that limit the amount of confident conclusions a researcher can make based on these materials alone.<sup>167</sup> Nevertheless, they still serve as a solid starting point for an investigation. A common characteristic of diaspora archives is the co-existence of meeting minutes, letters and clippings (or whole publications) from the printed press which allude to the reality of the diaspora press being seen as a valid historical source that has a place not only within the archive, but within the narratives derived from the archive.<sup>168</sup>

Albeit the Immigration History Research Center and Archives host the world's largest Estonian archive abroad, there is a plethora of sources preserved at various branches of the Estonian National Archives: from the many facets of diaspora life that they preserve, within the scope of my dissertation I mainly cited sources pertaining to diplomatic relations and foreign policy.<sup>169</sup> For a visual submersion into Estonian life in North America I submerged myself into the rich film collection

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<sup>165</sup> The Michelson, Herbert Papers, Estonian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

<sup>166</sup> A telling example is the effect bingo nights had on the Minnesota Estonian House from their inception in 1965 as a measure to create revenue to their heyday in the early seventies which coincided with the golden years for the organization until being back-taxed for its operation in 1977 and being forced to sell the house a year later. Various documents. The Minnesota Eesti organisatsioonid (Estonian organizations in Minnesota) Records, Estonian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

<sup>167</sup> For example, the occasional inconsistencies of documentation and/or filing from one year to the next year, misplaced or missing documents; leaving out information that belongs to the realm of shared knowledge at the time, but is difficult to reconstruct later; deciding not to keep an archival trace of certain activities; overstocking on others; censoring etc.

<sup>168</sup> A similar tendency can also be observed in the Latvian-American collection at IHRCA. See for example: The American Latvian Youth Association (ALJA) records, IHRC Archives, University of Minnesota.

<sup>169</sup> For example: Välisministeerium. [Ministry of Foreign Affairs] ERA 957. National Archives of Estonia. Eesti Peakonsulaat New Yorgis. [Estonian Consulate in New York] ERA 1608. National Archives of Estonia.

at the Estonian Studies Centre in Toronto.<sup>170</sup> Another significant diversion from strictly American Estonian sources came when I made an effort to contextualize the supplemental school experience in a wider Estonian diaspora context by looking into materials that dealt with Estonian education in Sweden. These I was able to find at the Baltic Archives at the National Archive in Stockholm<sup>171</sup>. For an even wider Baltic diasporic setting, I chose to consult American Latvian archives in the United States<sup>172</sup> as well as the State Archives of Latvia.<sup>173</sup> While Latvians are close to Estonians in terms of history and politics, I was also interested in exploring the cultural and linguistic similarities with Finns. In order to gain perspective into the history of Finnish migration to the United States and thus better fathom the context of the diasporas I conducted research at the Turku Migration Institute which has a rich library dealing with Finnish identity as well as primary materials depicting the life of settlers and political activists.

The broader themes that I dove into within the span of the articles forming the bulk of the dissertation can all be said to have the notion of communication at their core, so in addition to historical analysis the main methods for creating a bridge of meaning between the archival sources and my argumentation are narrative analysis and qualitative content analysis. They exist side by side and occasionally make an appearance together, depending on the combination of topic at hand and sources available. Occasionally, texts published in diaspora printed press are also treated as primary source material and subjected to further analysis (observable for example in the first article dealing with humor studies).

The reason why I chose not to have an overarching theory guide my way through the content of the archives is that I have yet to find one that could encompass the methods I need while simultaneously covering all the bases necessary and leaving room for discovery. Other strands in the Humanities and Social Sciences can and have benefitted from the rule of theory, but history as a discipline deals with too much chaos for any implant from their neighbors to truly blossom as a monoculture. Rather, these implants can bear more fruit as a semi-loose ecosystem governed by academic freedom and give way to intuitive interpretation which takes place on a vector beginning in a sphere governed by inaccuracy and bias leading to a sphere

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<sup>170</sup> My fascination with audiovisual materials of the diaspora can also be classified as part of my mission to engage with historical anthropology and albeit my acquaintance with these sources is not immediately discernible from the text of my dissertation, they do form an important part of the background knowledge that I as a researcher born in Soviet Estonia and raised in the Republic of Estonia, needed to forge in order to write about the past of exile. For more on my aspirations to contact the past of the community experience see chapter 3.4.

<sup>171</sup> For example, Lund Estonian Supplemental School Board. Estniska skolföreningens kompletteringsskola i Lund (ingår i Balstiska arkivet), in: Riksarkivet. Stockholm.

<sup>172</sup> The exile Latvian paper trail I examined was preserved at the Immigration History Research Center and Archives at the University of Minnesota.

<sup>173</sup> I mostly dealt with organizational papers, for example, Konektikutas Latviešu biedriba. (Connecticut Latvian Society) National Archives of Latvia, the State Archives of Latvia, LVA 2136. fonds.



governed by their opposites. It is an individual aspiration with results that can be judged by other individuals in the collective, as has been the case with the peer-reviewed articles comprising this dissertation. The already mentioned methods of qualitative data analysis as well as others referred to in Table 1 are used in their widest possible form in order not to limit the potential implications of the dissertation with an explicit theoretical framework that could possibly take precedence over the history unfolding through the available source material.

### 3.2. PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

There are numerous forms that participant observation can take from observation to interaction. The timeframes for different activities can vary and span from a few hours to months or even years and the object of inquiry can be strictly external or it can involve autoethnography by the researcher. In each case new data is created.<sup>174</sup> I can never visit the time that I study, but I can visit some of the people and the places. This I have faithfully done on numerous occasions in an effort to inform my research with an anthropological element which might not be immediately discernible in the output, but is certainly an ingredient in the input of the dissertation. There are three distinct spheres of participation which I enacted throughout the course of my doctoral studies: the private sphere in the home, the social sphere in the community and the public sphere in the wider society. I explored and shall discuss them in reverse order.

I was keen to get first hand knowledge about the vast and intricate American non-profit sector because that is where all the exiled Estonian organizations “lived”, which is why I spent a summer interning in Washington D.C.<sup>175</sup> and taking related classes at Georgetown University. Combined these two experiences gave me the theoretical and practical tools I needed to comprehend the legal realm Estonian American organizations navigated in, recognize innovation, and separate it from change. My internship placed me at the heart of political lobby and enabled me to not only walk in the halls of the Capitol and the White House but also talk with key figures of several anti-communist groups<sup>176</sup>, thus informing my imagination of Cold War events that I had previously researched.

Whenever possible, I would not only take part but play a role in diaspora Estonian events that I knew were considered vital manifestations of community, such as the Estonian World Festival ESTO. Whenever I spent time at an Estonian House I sang in their choir. When I went to research community archives, I also volunteered

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<sup>174</sup> DeWalt, K.M., DeWalt, B.R. 2010. Participant Observation: A Guide For Fieldworkers. New York: AltaMira Press. pp. 12-24.

<sup>175</sup> My internship was with the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation, part of the Heritage Foundation. Both are topically and ideologically relevant to the Cold War Estonian American experience.

<sup>176</sup> Here I refer to other ethnic groups who have formed their own anti-communist lobby groups, for instance other Baltic nations, Cubans, Koreans, the Chinese.

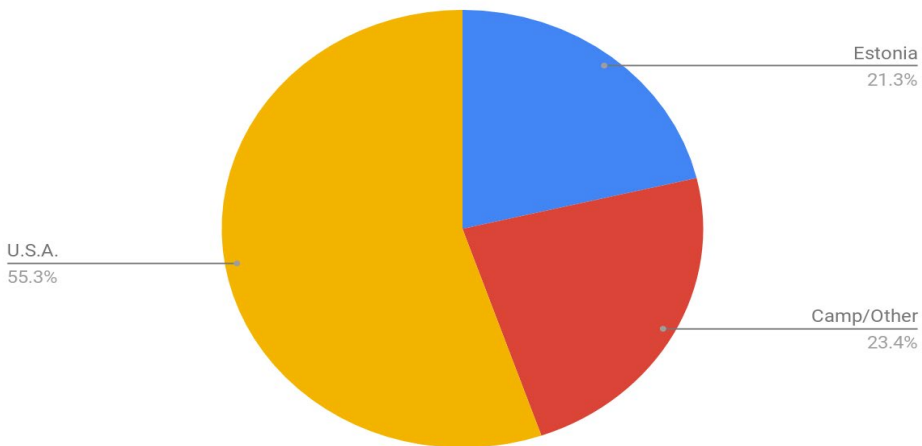
there. If there was an Estonian church service nearby, I would attend. All of this was pursued with the purpose of gaining insight into the everyday life of diaspora organizations and inspired me to serve on the board of the global Baltic Heritage Network which unites memory institutions and people who deal with Baltic heritage outside of the Baltics, many of whom are former exiles.

I also spent time with Estonians in America in very informal situations by accepting invitations to briefly stay at people’s homes where I could get a sense of their routine and discuss the issues I research in the comfort of a private and relaxed setting, which proved to be very illuminating and crucial for the oral history project I embarked on. I kept a journal where these occurrences merged with a self-reflective autoethnography in order to raise my awareness on the interplay of objective and subjective information I received and synthesized.

### 3.3. ORAL HISTORY

In addition to countless open conversations with members of the Estonian diaspora in America which I was able to have during my participant observation, I also conducted 48 oral history interviews: 25 with men and 23 women. The overwhelming majority of the informants spent some or all of their adolescence in America. For a clear distinction based on place of birth, see chart 2 below.

Place of birth

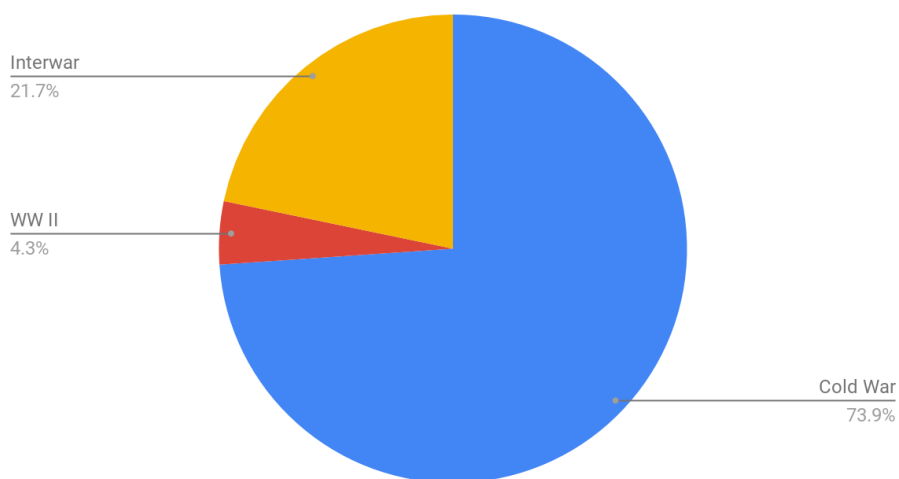


**Chart 2.** Oral history project interviewees divided according to place of birth.

Chart 2 demonstrates that people born in the United States of America comprise the majority of the interviewees (more than half), close to a quarter of the informants were born on their way to their final destination America and first saw the light of

day in either a Displaced Persons' camp in Germany or as temporary dwellers in another country. The rest (a little over one fifth) were born in Estonia. As for the time of birth, the majority of my informants came into this world after World War II had ended, just a few were born during and — as can be expected — the ratio of people who were born during the interwar period largely corresponds to the people who declared Estonia as their place of birth (both amounting to a little over one fifth of the entire pool of informants).

### Time of birth



**Chart 3.** Oral history project interviewees divided according to time of birth.

Some of the interviewees had family ties and were siblings or spouses, thus providing me with a unique opportunity to hear more than one side of a story. Among the informants were people whom I knew beforehand as well as others whom I was able to reach thanks to the snowball method of each interview partner referring me to the next as a tool for expanding the network. This proved crucial in the case of persons whose family had lost touch with the community as well as with its cultural and political establishment, making them perceived as “rogue” individuals whom the community othered as known unknowns. While the otherwise very informed community activists had little or no knowledge of these people, they themselves had managed to keep an awareness of others like them and thus as the set of double snowballs started rolling, I was led to uncharted territories where I had the privilege of facing more than one set of base narratives that are used to frame or root one’s personal story into a wider system of meaning.

Oral histories as source material are unique because having been “deliberately created solely for historical purposes,”<sup>177</sup> they have a distinct agency. This agency is discernible not only in the narrative, but also in the roles played by interviewer and interviewee. This is where the discursive energy of oral history comes from, as Alessandro Portelli points out, there are no wrong answers<sup>178</sup> and Charles Joyner agrees: “informants never lie to a good historian (although they may try to), they just reveal the truth in some unique ways”.<sup>179</sup> Thus, both from a practical and epistemological perspective, oral history is a moving target because of its constant dealings with what gets communicated to whom and when. In order to facilitate the future decoding of the narratives I used a three stage model for conducting the interviews. During the first stage, I asked the interviewee to tell me their whole life story as they saw fit. Depending on the person and the situation, this could take anywhere between a minute and an hour.<sup>180</sup> I made a point of not interrupting the narrative to minimize my impact and instead took in whatever information was donated in the order it naturally manifested. When an informant expressed they had finished, we entered the second stage in the interview during which I asked further questions about the topics that had been present in the life story and thus already brought up by the informant. Only when that stage was dealt with did I inquire about the things that were at the heart of my research and had not yet made a spontaneous appearance on their own, for example, mentality, identity, education, recreation, mobility, emotional evaluations etc. I find that closing rather than opening with questions renders the interview further into the realm informed by voluntary and instinctive action which provides a solid basis for diagnosing meta-utterances or observing the internal consistencies in the narrative.

Interestingly, despite the many individual and group differences between representatives of the two “snowballs,”<sup>181</sup> there is not a clear-cut divide between how the notion of Estonian-American is perceived. It appears neither to be a mere hybrid form of the two terms it seeks to unite nor does it occupy the grey area between them, but rather it seems to be a separate category in and of itself. It allows people to distance themselves from both Estonia and America and talk of both as “that” place. Also, for both parties (at least in retrospect) there seems to be a great deal of appreciation for the sense of community that members of previous generations were able to forge. These people often filled the voids in family trees — blood relatives in the form of uncles, aunts and most importantly grandmothers and grandfathers were hard to come by in exile, so various community members were used to either collectively or individually serve their purpose, if not on a daily basis,

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<sup>177</sup> Starr, L. 1996. Oral History. In: Oral History. An Interdisciplinary Anthology. Ed. Dunaway, D.K., Baum, W. K. Walnut Creek: Altamira press. pp. 39-61.

<sup>178</sup> Portelli, A. 1996. What Makes Oral History Different. In: Oral History. An Interdisciplinary Anthology. Ed. Dunaway, D.K., Baum, W. K. Walnut Creek: Altamira press. pp. 32-42.

<sup>179</sup> Joyner, C. 1996. Oral history as communicative event. In: Oral History. An Interdisciplinary Anthology. Ed. Dunaway, D.K., Baum, W. K. Walnut Creek: Altamira press. pp. 292-297.

<sup>180</sup> The majority of the interviews themselves were just under two hours.

<sup>181</sup> See for example, article 3 of this dissertation.

then at least during events and gatherings. This tendency is not only observable in rhetoric about childhood memories, but can also be detected in more recently formed narratives (such as discussions of funerals) where it sometimes bridges the gap between the organized and the individual Estonian-Americans.

There is a lot of literature on the ethics of oral history and the importance of guarding sensitive information donated by informants and of the need to keep ethnographic disclosure from morphing into a form of surveillance.<sup>182</sup> This is the reason I only present general information about my interviewees here, all the while being aware that when there is a discrepancy between when anonymity is allowed and when it is expected, the vulnerability of the informant can very easily convert into the vulnerability of the researcher,<sup>183</sup> even though in the context of oral history both parties are involved with the creation of historical facts within the *matrix of meaning*.<sup>184</sup> Due to the long duration of my dissertation project, I met several of my informants many times over the years and was often faced with something that oral history theoreticians have not yet found a solution to — a problem I call forgotten intimacy. Sometimes the two people drawn together on opposite ends of the table with one bringing the questions and other providing the answers can result in a strong sense of rapport. It is my experience that in everyday life most people don't have the chance to speak their mind at length, which makes them susceptible during an oral history interview where everything they say is not only casually heard but carefully listened to. Depending on the specific people and circumstances involved, the narrative can at times become quite intimate and explore topics of personal relationships, conflicts, trauma and dreams not usually shared, indeed, sometimes even surprising the narrator with their very existence. The problem of forgotten intimacy appears when the interviewer and interviewee meet again in the context of the same study, but as a result of time passing, the informant has forgotten the details of what was discussed and assumes the conversation remained on the depth that would be customary for their personal comfort zone when talking to strangers. In other words, they believe the researcher to be much less informed and offer a narrative that operates on a level of premeditated clichés that were overcome the first time around. I see potential for a study on good practices in these types of situations among researchers of the Estonian diaspora as a starting point for dialogue on creating guidelines that would help simultaneously ensure the integrity of the interview and the emotional well-being of both informant and oral historian as well as further the field as a whole.

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<sup>182</sup> De Genova, N.P. 2002. Migrant “Illegality” and Deportability in Everyday Life. In: Annual Review of Anthropology Vol. 31. pp. 419-447.

<sup>183</sup> For a more detailed argumentation on these issues, see: Merivoo-Parro, M. 2013. Oral History as Source and Methodology: Aspects of Multidirectional Communication. In: Mutvārdu vēsture: dialogi ar sabiedrību; Oral History: Dialogue with Society. Ed. Garda-Rozenberga, I. Riga: University of Latvia. pp. 77–82.

<sup>184</sup> Friedlander, P., 1996. Theory, Method and Oral History. In: Oral History. An Interdisciplinary Anthology. Ed. Dunaway, D.K., Baum, W. K. Walnut Creek: Altamira Press. pp. 150-160.

Generally, it can be said that the level of detail and variety of experience evident in the testimonies give rich insight into the life worlds of Estonian refugees' offspring in the United States. For the purposes of this dissertation, however, the interviews served as a backdrop and a way to pave a path into the collective psyche of the community, not so much as direct source material to be frequently cited themselves. They do get mentioned, but the insight they boast deserves an independent outlet and I have plans to ensure that happens within the scope of further research I intend to do in this field.

## 4. OVERVIEW OF ARTICLES

Article I explores humor — a seldom researched subject matter in Estonian diaspora-studies. Humor is often regarded as a social phenomenon,<sup>185</sup> a form of communication<sup>186</sup> as well a specific language that communities use as a tool for shaping their views of the world<sup>187</sup> and constructing social realities. The almost omnipresent incongruity-resolution principle that makes jokes “work” trains people to fathom several perspectives simultaneously. It is a great skill to have not only in everyday life, but also in extreme situations where this aptitude can make the difference between surviving and perishing. Humor is reported to have been used by victims of crimes against humanity as a means of psychological alleviation.<sup>188</sup> The Estonians who fled during World War II faced a number of difficulties during their journey, their sojourn in camps as well as during their re-establishment in a new host country. There were those who sought to lighten the load by treating the tragedy of exile as a source for a new, more relaxed comic narrative on the matter. Albeit there is a plethora of primary resources<sup>189</sup> that could be analyzed in this context, researchers tend to prefer the distinct and somewhat ossified grand narrative of exile itself to the inventive mirror image created by writers and artists. Article I shows the value of such sources by making meaningful observations about the refugees’ collective identity, intra-group relationships and connections with the wider world based on the discourse utilized in a body of humorous texts published in the postwar Estonian-American newspaper *Vaba Eesti Sõna*. Attention is given to the context, characters and topics used there as well as their communicative and representative functions with an emphasis on notions of self-deprecation, othering, liminalities and rites of transition. The results suggest that in addition to providing comic relief, these fictional texts could have also functioned as a mode of mental purgatory for their intended readers.

Article II casts a wide net by making an effort to provide both a close reading of archives pertaining to the adventure of setting up the Estonian supplemental school network<sup>190</sup> as well as situating said experience within a wider American context. The first stop on that voyage is a discussion over the social construction of

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<sup>185</sup> Martin, R.A. 2007. *The Psychology of Humor: An Integrative Approach*. Amsterdam: Elsevier Academic Press. P. 5. Kuipers, G. 2008. *The Sociology of Humor*. In: *The Primer of Humor Research*. Ed. Raskin, V. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter. p. 361.

<sup>186</sup> Berger, A.A. 1977. *Humour as a System of Communication*. In: *It’s a Funny Thing, Humour*. Ed. Chapman, A. J., Foot. H. C. Oxford: Pergamon Press. p. 403.

<sup>187</sup> Boskin, J. 1997. *History and Humor*. In: *Humor Prism in Twentieth-Century America*. Ed. Boskin, J. Detroit: Wayne State University Press. pp. 19-20.

<sup>188</sup> Martin, R.A. 2007. pp. 269, 287-288.

<sup>189</sup> One of these is “Mis teha – siin ta on. Pagulase elu piltides” – Estonia’s first graphic novel by Arnold Sepp and Endel Kõks, first published in 1947 and recently re-published by the Estonian Diaspora Academy with a foreword by Maarja Merivoo-Parro and Sander Jürisson.

<sup>190</sup> For a brief overview of Latvian supplemental schools in the Cold War era, see for example: Archīvs. Raksti par Latviskām problēmām. 1984. E. Dunsdorfs [Ed.]. Melbourne: Pasaules brīvo latviešu apvienība un Kārļa Zariņa fonds. pp. 183-192.

adolescence in Cold War America with regard to young people transforming from producers to consumers as well as the rhetoric surrounding juvenile delinquency and desegregation. The reasoning behind investing financial and social capital towards creating Estonian supplemental schools as well as the hurdles involved are depicted through the inventive and varied processes of organizing faculty and finances. Examples of good practices among Estonians in Sweden and Estonians in Canada as well as cooperative efforts are also touched upon, especially with regard to establishing goals, outlining curricula and producing study-aids. Maneuvering the rocks and rapids of ethnicity and adolescence in the diaspora was quite the undertaking challenging children and adults alike, which is why a separate chapter is devoted to how the supplemental schools were experienced by people moving on the continuum of student-teacher-parent in a system sustaining itself through a cycle of knowledge acquisition and distribution.

Even though a majority of the American Estonians in exile are thought to have sided with the Republicans on their foreign policy, their domestic endeavors seem to have benefited from Democratic reforms: the second generation's coming of age took place during a wider societal interest in ethnicity (as manifestation of minority culture)<sup>191</sup> that Estonians as late arrivals had easy access to. A corpus of student essays written by a multicultural class of young adults is used to contextualize the Estonian American experience within the wider palette of U.S. diasporas. In order to historicize the tradition of exile supplemental schools themselves, attention is also given to how Estonian education functioned prior to migration while still being in the U.S. governed zone of Germany. The social mores lamented and manifested there make allusions to a system of continuities and ruptures and provide evidentiary support for making the claim that the actions within the realm of Estonian supplemental education in Cold War America represent both an Estonian reaction to what was going on in the world as well as an American one to what was happening within the boundaries of the U.S.A. itself. The conclusion of intramural youth work gaining traction and importance as part and parcel of the exiles self-proclaimed mission of generativity for the Estonian nation and culture abroad inspired an investigation into the realm of recreation and resulted in the article presented next.

Article III indulges the notion that in the struggle for young people's attention the communities sought out spaces and places for performing Estonianness together.<sup>192</sup> The urban *loci* constitute both immobile Estonian Houses, but also major traveling cultural events such as the West Coast Estonian Days or the global Estonian Festival ESTO. The rural spaces were meant for Boy Scouts and Girl Guides. Albeit being part of the scouting and guiding organizations at large, the American Estonian

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<sup>191</sup> Smith, A.D. 2006. Ethnicity and Nationalism. In: The SAGE Handbook of Nations and Nationalism. G. Delanty, K. Kumar. (Eds.). London: SAGE. p. 170.

<sup>192</sup> Similar efforts can be ascertained among Latvians in America. For an account of how they went about setting up a "Little Latvia" in the Midwest, see for example, Meija, S.D. 2005. Latvians in Michigan. East Lansing (Michigan): Michigan State University Press. pp. 50-58.



Scouts also had a tangible Estonian accent in their practices. Moreover, since Estonians never formed ethnic enclaves in the U.S.A. and instead were scattered, a novel form of solitary scouting was introduced, which transformed this communal practice into an individual one. In a similar vein, while choral music has already been proven to have played a major role in exile Estonian life both in a cultural and political capacity, the thus far less researched but equally compelling realm of popular music can help track recreational practices into a more personal sphere. Since Estonians in the free world had mental and physical access to the global pop music scene, it only stands to reason that they were able to contribute many of the “firsts” to Estonian music history in general — the first rock’n’roll record (Jüri Lipp “Laul Sinule” 1968) and proto hip hop (René Ufer & Lilian Treiberg “Unustuste tilk!” 1977), to name a few. However, in a surprising turn of events, when one compares diaspora music to that of Soviet occupied Estonia (forcibly cut off from global youth culture by the Iron Curtain) the exile’s music can in addition to seeming advanced also be perceived as lagging behind. Various pathways are explored in the effort to establish cause and effect, and the exile Latvian case is evoked for comparison. In general, the realm of ethnic recreation is researched with the agenda of finding reasoning behind the innovations manifested and clashes sustained. It is put forth that there are two modes of ethnicities — one that individuals perceive and one that they perform and that cultural output is strongly influenced by the drive to relate to modernity, the pleasures of basking in nostalgia and the dynamics of obtaining cultural competence with regard to the society at large.

Article IV creates a double-mirror on Cold War Estonian diaspora mentality by zooming in on the evasive subject matter of the interplay between various memory cultures in the United States of America, Finland and Sweden via exploring the implications of academic mobility among Estonian American youth. First, student evocations of ethnicity are investigated on the basis of their scholarship applications. Separate attention is given to how they make their case for eligibility and the context in which they utter the word Estonia/n. What they applied for, was a chance to spend a year in a Finnish university. Because of the linguistic and cultural similarities,<sup>193</sup> experiencing Finland was perceived like experiencing Estonia by proxy. The students’ correspondence with the donor organization is used to portray how they went about their self-enrichment and popular diplomatic mission in Finland as well as their emotional journey underwriting the experience. The notion

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<sup>193</sup> In 1927 the Fenno-Ugria Foundation was created in Estonia in order to sustain and develop ties between Finno-Ugric people: in addition to Estonians and Finns, Hungarians, Khanty, Mansi, Livs, Sami, Maris, Udmurts, Komis and others belong to the group. The organization was shut down during the Soviet era, but reinstated after Estonia regained independence in 1991. Taagepera, R. 1999. *The Finno-Ugric Republics and the Russian State*. London: Hurst & Company. Pp. 82-99. There is no Latvian or Lithuanian equivalent to what independent Finland meant to exiled Estonians during the Cold War. For a recent account on the differences between Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian identity, culture and politics, see: Purs, A. 2012. *Baltic Facades. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania since 1945*. London: Reaktion Books.

of *overlapping diasporic conditions* is coined as a diagnosis for the state of bewilderment brought on by the overload of new discourses experienced by the young academics in their new surroundings. Having been brought up in the Estonian American community and (by virtue of their supplemental education and ethnic recreation) being well versed with the abundance of views, opinions and disputes about Estonia in America, they had thought themselves to be largely aware of the rhetorical “playing field”. However, coming face to face with Finnish and Swedish people as well as Estonians living in those countries, not to mention Estonians from Soviet Estonia, they were bombarded with several new palettes of possibilities for thinking and talking about the homeland and the Estonian nation. This role fragmentation was especially intense during some of their tarriances in Sweden where they had to negotiate the roles of Estonian, American Estonian and (by virtue of their academic mobility they were also perceived as representing the) Finnish Estonian. These overlapping diasporic conditions brought on contested alliances and tracing those is the last stop on the path of the article.

## KOKKUVÕTE

Pärisorjuse kaotamise järel on eestlased läbi elanud ja toime pannud mitmeid suuri rändeid – nii vabatahtlikke kui sunniviisilisi. Nende tulemusel on juba kolmandat sajandit võimalik rääkida globaalsest diasporaast või hajalast, millel on mitmepalgeline ja liigirikas kultuurimaastik. Kõige intensiivsem väljaränd toimus Teise maailmasõja päevil, mil kodumaalt lahkuti nii rindele sõdima, küüditatuna Siberisse asumisele kui pagulasena läände. Just viimasega on seotud käesolev doktoritöö “Eestluse edendamine külma sõja aegses USAs: haridus, rekreatsioon, huumor ja kattuvad diasporaa-seisundid”, mille fookuses on erinevad eestluse kehasused Külma sõja aegses USAs. Raskesti tabatava mentaliteedi avaldumisvormide uurimise eesmärgil on luubi all nii-öelda pehmed teemad nagu huumor, muusika, haridus, rekreatsioon ja akadeemiline mobiilsus. Eestlaste tegevusi tõlgendatakse laiemas Ameerika diasporaa-ühiskonna kontekstis ning asetatakse dialoogi nii läti ja leedu kui teiste rahvaste hajala-kultuuridega.

Suur hulk doktoritöö keskmes olevaid inimesi veetsid osa või kogu oma lapsepõlve ja kujunemise aastatest paguluses ning kuuluvad seega pagulaskonna teise põlvkonda, mistõttu erinevalt täiskasvanuna migreerunudest polnud neil Eestist isiklikke mälestusi ja kodumaa oli seega nende jaoks eelkõige imaginaarne entiteet. Sisustamaks noorte ettekujutust kogukonna jätkusuutlikkuse jaoks vajalike keeleliste ja kultuuriliste atribuutidega, oli formaalne, informaalne ja mitteformaalne noorsootöö pagulaste ringkondades oluline ning järeltulijaile organiseeriti hulgaliselt tegevusi. Nende kaudu püüti nii noorte aega kui tähelepanu – mõlemad on hinnalised ja piiratud ressursid. Väliseestlased investeerisid nii majanduslikku kui sotsiaalset kapitali loomaks näiliselt lõpmatu rahvuslike ärkamiste tsükkel, mille etendamises järeltulevad põlvned pidid üha uuesti osalema. Eesti vabanemise nimel peetava poliitilise välisvõitluse passionaarsus dikteeris, et kõrge rahvuslik eneseteadvus muutus ajapikku ideaalist standardiks ning patriotismist kujunes eksiili vältel midagi ilmaliku religiooni taolist, mis omakorda muutis Eesti Majad justkui templiteks, kus rahvuskeha teenida. Need, kes kirjeldatud sättumusega ei haakunud, jäid järk-järgult kogukonnast eemale. Diskursiivsetest praktikatest nähtub, et sääraseid inimesi ja nende järeltulijaid hakati teisestama ning neid aduti kõrvalseisjatena. Hoolimata kogukonna halvaks panust oli nendel iseseisvatel väliseestlastel siiski õigus rahvuslikule enesemääramisele, mida nad ka julgelt pruukisid, muuhulgas aeg-ajalt oma alternatiivseid kogukondi moodustades.

Väliseesti kasvatustööd ja selle tulemusi vaadeldes ilmneb, et mingit vankumatult tootlikku ideaalretsepti järelkasvu kindlustamiseks ei ole, ent erinevate käitumismustritega seltskondi ühendab veendumus, et peamine etnilise kuuluvuse kasvulava on kodu. Kodule lisaks kasutati kasvatustöös ka kogukondlikke ettevõtmisi, mida võib kujundlikult tõlgendada jõgedena, mida mööda noori inimesi eestluse sadamaisse parvetada püüti. Usuti, et kui osaleda kogukonna pakutavas kasvatus- ja haridustöös läbi täienduskoolide, skautide-gaidide liikumise, ESTO ja teiste suurürituste, on võimalik eestluse nimbusest osa saada ning noorest inimesest

eestlaseks kasvada. Huvitaval kombel polnud see vahetu kokkupuude võitlusliku diasporaaga paljude teise põlvkonna pagulaseestlaste jaoks sugugi mitte ainukene päästik oma juurte otsimise ja leidmise protsessi käivitamiseks. Nimelt toimusid nende küpsemise aegu kogu Ameerika ühiskonda haaranud laiemad protsessid, asendamaks senine ühekülgne nn rahvaste sulatusahju retoorika uue vastu, mis tunnistas rahvastiku etniliste identiteetide mosaiigi rikkalikkust. Muutuste tuul läbis kogu ühiskonda koolisüsteemist valitsuse tasandini välja. Luues rändavaid ja paigalpärsivaid kultuurikohti nii linnas kui maal, pidid endised pagulased ja vastsed immigrandid end suurejoonelise ja kõikehõlmava Ameerika kodanikuühiskonna toimimisloogika ja üksikasjadega kurssi viima. Täienduskoolide rajamine ja käitamine oli seega ka kogukonna liidrite jaoks ühtaegu võimestav ja hariv tegevus, ning seda võib tõlgendada nii üsna eestlasliku reaktsioonina sellele, mis toimus rahvusvahelises poliitikas kui ka eht-ameerikaliku vastusena protsessidele, mis toimusid riigi sees.

Topeltpeegel on tuvastatav ka popmuusika valdkonnas – diasporaa mentaliteet lõi põneva ristlainetuse, mis ühtaegu tõmbas ja tõukas muusika loojaid ja tarbijaid kord modernsuse juurest nostalgia manu ning siis jälle vastupidi. Ekssiili alguses, kui elu pagulaslaagreis või uuel asukohamaal veel võõristust tekitas ning puudus sügavam side kohaliku kultuurimaastikuga, pidi väliseestlaste endi muusika pakkuma moodsat helikeelt. Edukaiks osutusid need tegijad, kes ajaga kaasas käisid. Aastate möödudes omandati aga järjest enam kompetentsi, võimalusi ja vahendeid kohaliku asukohamaa ja ka rahvusvahelise muusikamaastikuga suhestumiseks ning modernsuse ja kaasaegsuse ihalus rahuldati kogukonnast väljaspool. Seega kujunes kogukonna-sisese muusika puhul kõige olulisemaks see ainuke mõde, mida kuskil mujal ei oleks olnud võimalik kogeda – eestlus. Sellest tulenevalt tekkis huvitav paradoks – oli aegu, mil väliseesti muusika tundus Nõukogude Eesti muusikaga võrreldes mahajäänuna, ometi oli just vaba maailma eestlastel juurdepääs popmuusika paremikule, millest raudse eesriide taga olid vaid võisid unistada. Võrreldes koorimuusikaringkondadega, oli popmuusikute vaheline suhtlus ootamatult tihe ja liberaalne.

Juba enne Teise maailmasõja pagulaste saabumist oli Ameerika Ühendriikides olemas mitu eestlaste kogukonda. Mõned olid saabunud vabatahtlikult töö ja eneseteostuse eesmärgil, teised aga poliitiliste vaadete tõttu uut kodumaad otsides. Kui rahumeelsete ja apoliitiliste nn vanaeestlastega suutsid värsked pagulased edukalt suhestuda ja konkurentsi tingimustes end ka kehtestada, siis 1905. aasta revolutsioonikatse ja 1924. aasta riigipöördekatse tagajärgede eest pagenud vasakpoolset meelestatud eestlasi adusid nad endi vastanditena. Koostööd ei üritatud teha ning uued pagulased mitte ainult ei teisesanud neid (nagu mõningate vanaeestlaste või võitlusliku diasporaa ridadest välja langenud uute pagulastega juhtus), vaid nad said omaette retoorilise kategooria – mitte lihtsalt kultuuriline teine, vaid suisa mitte-teine. Vasakpoolsete varjamatult kommunistlik maailmavaade ja sellest kantud tegevused tundusid pagulastele sedavõrd

negatiivsed ja ohtlikud, et nad jäeti nii avalikust kui privaatselt diskursusest suuresti välja ning toimus omapärane sundunustamine.

USA ei olnud ainukene riik, mis Teise maailmasõja järel kodumaalt põgenenud eestlasi võõrustas. Arvestatavad kogukonnad tekkisid ka näiteks Rootsi, Kanadasse ja Ühendkuningriiki. Kõigi asukohamaade eestlaskondadel olid unikaalsed vaated, traumad ja püüdlused, mis olid omavahel pingeseisundis. Sillaehitusega nende vaimsete ruumide vahel pidid rinda pistma eelkõige isikud, kes olid globaalsete organisatsioonide eesotsas ning need, kes tegutsesid ajutiselt või püsivalt mitmes diasporaas korraga. Et kirjeldatud vaimsetele rajajoontele ja nendevahelisele dünaamikale ligi pääseda, uuritakse Ameerika noorte pagulaseestlaste akadeemilist mobiilsust ja huumorit, mis käsitleb eksiili naljaasjana. Vaimsete ja poliitiliste piiride ületamisega kaasneva olukorra kirjeldamisel võetakse kasutusele konstruktsioon “kattuvad diasporaa seisundid”.

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# PUBLICATIONS



I

**Merivoo-Parro, Maarja** (2012). Pagulus kui naljaasi. (Exile as a laughing matter).  
Mäetagused, 50, 159–174.



# Pagulus kui naljaasi<sup>1</sup>

Maarja Merivoo-Parro

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**Teesid:** Teise maailmasõja sündmuste keerises Eestist põgenenud ning Ameerika Ühendriikidesse ümber asunud eestlased on oma pagulaskogemust peegeldanud ka läbi huumori. Artikli fookuses on üks selle tendentsi ilmingutest: 1949. aastal New Yorgis ilmuma hakanud ajalehe *Vaba Eesti Sõna* rubriik "Salme kirjad Ameerikast". Tegemist on põneva ja mitmekihilise narratiiviga, mille lõbusa pealispinna all heiastuvad kogukonna identiteeti puudutavad teemad ja küsimused.

**Märksõnad:** eestlased Ameerikas, huumor, immigrandid, kohanemine, pagulased

## Sissejuhatus

Teise maailmasõja käigus Eestist pagenud inimesed pidid oma teekonnal väga palju kannatama, pikalt põgenikelaagreis elama ning võõras riigis ja ühiskonnas oma elu taas üles ehitama. Vaatamata asjaolule, et paljusid kroonis edu, on paguluse suur narratiiv võrdlemisi traagilise alatooniga. Ometi leidis ka neid eesti soost põgenikke, kes püüdsid oma läbielamiste koorma tõsidust huumori abil kergendada. Lisaks suulisele pärimusele (koomilised väljendid, temaatilised anekdoodid ja muud naljandid), on hulgaliselt säilinud erinevaid kirjalikke allikaid (pilapildid, nalja-artiklid, humoreskid, näidendid, följetonid ja pikemad tekstid).<sup>2</sup>

Üks rikkalikumaid aardelaekaid humoorikate rahvajuttude ja folkloori huvilistele on kõikvõimalikud perioodilised väljaanded, mille veergudel ja sabades säärasele ainesele ikka ruumi leitud on (Krikmann 2002: 835). Käesolev artikkel on pühendatud Ameerika eestlaste häälekandjas *Vaba Eesti Sõna* ilmunud rubriigile "Salme kirjad Ameerikast", milles karikeeritud pagulaseestlanna Salme kasutab kirja vormi edastamiseks enda ja oma lähedaste elamusi Uues Maailmas. Lähema vaatluse alla tulevad kirjad, milles Salme annab edasi vastsaabunud DP-de<sup>3</sup> esimesi kogemusi New Yorgis enne *Connecticutti jobi*<sup>4</sup>

<http://www.folklore.ee/tagused/nr50/merivoo.pdf>

peale sõitmist, millega saab alguse mõneta rutiinsem ja ettearvatavam etapp. Osaliselt muudabki tekstid nauditavaks just viis, kuidas autor(id) on esitanud kultuurilist ebakompetentsust ja sellest välja kasvamist. Tegelased leiavad üha uusi mosaiigikilde, mida tervikpildi huvides rakendada.

## Huumori rollidest

Ehkki huumori kohta fundamentaalse konsensuse saavutanud teooria puudub, on enamik uurijaid siiski ühel nõul selles osas, et tegemist on olemuslikult sotsiaalse nähtusega (Martin 2007: 5; Kuipers 2008: 361). Huumoriuuringute ajaloos olulist rolli mänginud antropoloogid ja folkloristid on välja toonud, et see fenomen esineb väga erinevates kultuurides, mitmekülgses tingimustes ja paljudel kujudel (Oring 2008: 184). Huumorit on tõlgendatud kommunikatsioonivormina (Berger 1977: 403), mille kaudu saab ühiskondlikke suhteid kujundada, kinnistada ja õõnestada (Martin 2007: 122). Samuti on seda käsitletud kultuurikoodina (Berger 1997: 28), mille mõistmiseks on tarvis väga palju eelteadmisi seda pruukiva kogukonna tavade, sümbolite ja kogemuste kohta. Huumori kirjeldustes on seda peetud ka spetsiifiliseks keeleks, mille kaudu kogukond korrastab oma maailmapilti (Boskin 1997: 19–20) ja loob aktiivselt oma sotsiaalset reaalsust.

Huumoriuurijad on avastanud seoseid nalja, naermise ja vaimse tervise vahel (vt Krikmann 2002: 847). Lisaks argitasandilgi ilmselgele konstateeringule, et huumor soodustab positiivseid emotsioone ja pärsib negatiivseid, leidub tõendeid selle kohta, et pikemas perspektiivis mängib see olulist rolli pingelistes olukordades ja inimsuhetes saavutatavas edus (Craik & Ware 2007: 63–64, 75–76). Kuna sageli baseerub huumor teatud ühitamatuse ja selle lahendamise printsiibil (*incongruity-resolution*), on välja toodud, et huumor harjutab inimesi üheaegselt tajuma mitut vaatevinklit ja valima nende seast sobivaimat, mis võimaldab ka väga keerulisi olukordi ümber hinnata, et oleks võimalik konstruktiivselt edasi liikuda. Valmisolek multiperspektiivsuseks võib oluliselt mõjutada saatusi, ekstreemsemates oludes koguni seda, kas inimene elab või sureb. Näiteks on välja toodud, et sõjavangid ja koonduslaagrites ebainimliku kohtlemise osaliseks saanud inimesed kasutasid psühholoogilise toonuse hoidmiseks intuiivselt muuhulgas just huumorit ja nalja (Martin 2007: 269, 287–288).<sup>5</sup>

## Salme kirjade kontekst

Ameerika Ühendriikide idaranniku eestlaskonna kujunemisloos võib eristada mitut sisserännulainet. Kuni 1905. aastani oli eestlastest meremeeste, asunike ja seiklejate sisseränne pigem vabatahtlik, seejärel aga domineerisid mõnda aega poliitilistel põhjustel immigratuurunud vasakpoolsete vaadetega inimesed, kes esindasid tinglikult sunniviisilist rännet. Maailmasõdade vahelisel ajal jõudsid Uude Maailma valdavalt vabatahtlikud sisserändajad, Teise maailmasõja ajal ja järel aga taas poliitilised pagulased. *Vaba Eesti Sõna* saigi alguse just viimatimainitud seltskonna häälekandjana. 1949. aastal ilmumist alustanud väljaanne sai üheks oluliseks platvormiks, millel pagulaskonna<sup>6</sup> avalikkus formeeruda ning areneda sai (Merivoo-Parro 2011: 113).

Kirjad kaugete maade olude kohta on ka Eesti ajakirjanduses juba võrdlemisi pika traditsiooniga žanr.<sup>7</sup> *Vaba Eesti Sõnaski* ilmus hulgaliselt lugejakirju pagulaste uuest elust Ameerikas. Nende ja teiste allikate põhjal võib konstateerida, et paljudel kulges iseseisvumine edukalt, aga leidus ka inimesi, kes sattusid väga keerulistesse olukordadesse. Andmaks lugejaile objektiivset pilti Ameerika olude kohta, ilmus kirjutisi nii asukohamaa tingimuste kiituseks kui ka laituseks. Seega vastab Salme rubriik oma vormilt igati kehtivatele kaanonitele. Ka sisult pole tegemist pingutatult koomilise narratiiviga. Nali on sageli peidetud ridade vahele ja nõuab kommuniqueerumiseks konteksti tundmist. *Vaba Eesti Sõna* lugejaskond oli aga võrdlemisi lai – peale kohaliku pagulaskonna kuulus sinna ka juba varem vabatahtliku migratsiooni käigus sisserännanud nn vanaeestlasi ja teistes riikides asuvaid rahvusaaslasi. Formaalselt ongi Salme kirjad adresseeritud just Saksamaa pagulaslaagrisse jäänud kooliõdedele. Kirjutiste iseloom annab aga alust väita, et tegelikult on need suunatud juba (eeskätt New Yorgi kaudu) Ameerikasse jõudnud põgenikele. Salme halenaljakad lood pagulase kohmakatest esimestest sammudest uuel kodumaal näivad olevat mõeldud pakkumaks mitte ainult meelelahutust, vaid ka koomilist kergendust (*comic relief*) ja leevendust immigrandi pingetele.

On teoreetikuid, kelle kohaselt avab huumor otsetee rahva kollektiivsesse vaimulaadi (Dundes 1987: 37, 168) ning võimaldab leida üles kogukondlikke valupunkte, jälgida sotsiaalseid muutuseid, esilekerkivaid konflikte ja nende lahendusi (Boskin 1997: 20). Sotsioloogilise lähenemise kultuurilis-ajalooline teooria sätestabki, et huumor toimib ühiskonna suhtes peegli või koguni varjatud kaamera funktsioonina (Laineste 2003: 798). Seega võib pealtnäha vähetähtsast Salme-rubriigist järeldada üpris palju lehe väljaandjate, üldisemas plaanis aga kogu Ameerika pagulaseestlaskonna vaimse maailma kohta. Seda enam, et aastate jooksul käsitletakse Salme-rubriigis väga erinevaid lehe lugejaskonnaga seonduvaid teemasid, esineb koguni epistleid ja pragamisi. Etnilise

huumori valdkonda klassifitseeritavaid nalju on peetud üleminekuriitustega seotud muutuste fenomeni ja sellega kaasnevate kahtluste, ebakindluste ja hirmude manifestatsiooniks (Shifman & Katz 2005: 857). Seega võib naljatlemist Salme kirjade kontekstis käsitleda justkui isevärki mentaliteedipurgatooriumina, mille kaudu lugejad said oma pagulaspagasit ümber defineerida ja selle üleliigsetest aspektidest puhastada.

Erinevad uurijad on täheldanud, et dominantrühmade liikmed kalduvad naljatlema pigem teiste kui enda arvel ning seeläbi kehtiva korralduse püsimist enesele kinnitama. Vähemusrühmade või allasurutud rühmade liikmeskond on aga altim enesekohaseks (või enesekeskseks) huumoriloomeks (vt Shifman & Katz 2005: 844). Salme kirjade puhul on mainitud tendents selgesti jälgitav. Valdavalt on naerualusteks Salme ise ja tema perekond, harvemini teised kohalikud eestlased ja kohati ka ameeriklased. Viimaste kui dominantrühma esindajate pihta sihitud huumor näib teooriaga sobivalt olevat justkui vahe tera, millega pagulased alaväärsustundekõidikuist vabastada.<sup>8</sup>

Psüühiline või kehaline piiripealsus teenib sageli etnilise huumori päiskivina (vt Laineste 2003: 799). Salme tekstideski on erinevaid rajajooni enam kui küll. Mustvalge kontuurkaardi asemel joonestub neist aga postmodernistlik Venni diagramm, kus leidub hulgaliselt üksteisega osaliselt kattuvaid kategooriaid, nagu näiteks fluktuuerivad meie *versus* nemad vastandused, millest tuleb juttu edaspidi. Christie Davies on välja toonud, et assimilatsiooniprotsessi käigus võivad tekkida immigrantide endi poolt käibel hoitavad huumorikaanonid, mis naeruvääristavad inimesi, kes pole tahtnud või suutnud teha otsustavat sammu, minetamaks immigrandi staatust ja omandamaks uue ühiskonna liikme rolli (vt Shifman & Katz 2005: 845). Salme kirjade puhul on sellele diskursusele viitav didaktiline moment tajutav, ehkki assimilatsiooni propageerimisest pagulaseestlaskonna aktiivi puhul (mida end *Vaba Eesti Sõnaga* siduv seltskond kahtlemata oli) juttu olla ei saa. Seedri-ameeriklust<sup>9</sup> pigem taunitakse.

Salme kirjade autorluse väljaselgitamine võimaldaks lisada teema avamisele olulise kihistuse. Kahjuks puudub aga vajalik informatsioon, mistõttu polnud võimalik tuvastada, kas Salme kirjade puhul on tegemist mehe või naise, ühe või mitme autori loomingu. Pole ka teada, kas fõljetonlike kirjutiste aluseks on olnud konkreetse isikud ja nendega toimunu või on tegemist abstraheritud koondfiguuride ja fiktiivsete juhtumistega.

Teadmata detaile Salme kirjade looja(te) identiteedist ja ajenditest, saab tekstides sisalduva positiivse programmi tuvastamisel vaid oletada, et huumori kaudu võidi üritada propageerida nähtust, mida on hiljem küll pisut halvustavalt, ent vägagi kujundlikult nimetatud edueestluseks. See seab eesmärgiks aktiivse ja tulemusliku tegutsemise nii asukohamaa kui ka etnilise rahvuskeha kontekstis. Just säärast mõneti võitluslikku diskursust võib pidada üheks *Vaba*

*Eesti Sõna* autoreid ja nende publikut ühendavaks lüliks. Sammukese edasi liikudes võib Salme lugusid ja neis implitsiitselt sisalduvat retoorikat käsitleda ka osana hajala perspektiivide kujunemise üle toimunud globaalsest debatist.

## Salme kirjade tegelased

Kollektiivne identiteet baseerub enamasti vastandusel “meie” *versus* “nemad”. Kes täidavad neid rolle Salme kirjades?

Jutustajapositsioon kuulub eranditult Salmele, mis on kirjutiste iseloomu arvestates igati loogiline. Enesetutvustuseks Salme eriti kirjatähti ei kuluta, mis on samuti põhjendatud – kirjad on ju adresseeritud Saksamaal olevatele kooliõdedele, kes peaksid autorit niigi hästi tundma. Eksplitsiitsset enesetutvustust seega pole, küll aga on lugejal võimalik Salme tegelaskuju erinevatele infokildudele toetudes rekonstrueerida. On ilmne, et tegemist on noore tütarlapselga. Esimesest Eesti Maja külastusest jutustades peab Salme vajalikuks märkida talle kehtestatud käitumisreegleid ja nende põhjendust:

*Onu sosistas mulle siis, et ära sa nüüd midagi oma lapsearuga hakka küsima, sellepärast et neid mehi ei tohi segada. Sest üks Saksamaal ole ju küll ja küll õppinud, et kui kaks eestlast istuvad koos, siis tingimata aetakse väga tähtsat juttu või kui just juttu ei aeta, siis peetakse tähtsate küsimuste üle nõu. Ja need küsimused on enamasti nii tähtsad, et sellest oleneb kogu meie maa ja rahva saatus. Et sellepärast ei tohi eestlasi ilmiski omavahelistel kõnelustel segada (Vaba Eesti Sõna 01.10.1949).*

Ehkki Salme on see, kes sündmuseid rekonstrueerib ja esitab, jätab ta enese rolli võrdlemisi passiivseks. Narratiiv kulgeb enamasti meie-vormis, toonilt on see täiskasvanute (sageli tobedaid) otsuseid ja valikuid õigustav ning arutluskäigud kohati rõhutatult lapsikud ja naiivsed. Salme ei esine sündmuste suunajana, ja kui juhtunu ta siiski sellesse positsiooni asetab, leiab neiu moodused oma rolli juhuslikkust rõhutada, justkui oma tegevuse tulemuslikkust häbenedes. Nõuanded, mida Salme alati koolis õpituga põhjendab, ei pälvi teistelt tegelastelt (kohest) heakskiitu ja tema aktiivne kaasamõtlemine toob teinekord hoopis noomituse. Näiteks enne õigesse Eesti Majja jõudmist astuvad Salme ja onu Karla ekslike lootustega sisse teisel pool linna asuvasse eramusse:

*Lõppeks kui mul jalad juba kippusid tuld lööma, jäi onu äkki seisma ja ütles, et sooh, nüüd oleme lõppeks kohal, et vaata siin ongi see 243. Et Eesti Selts. Minul oli asi natuke imelik, sest ükskord Saksamaal ma nägin Njuu-Jorgi Eesti Maja pilti ja see oli hoopis teistmoodi kui see maja siin. Ütlesin seda ka onule, aga tema sai pahaseks, et ärgu ma ajagu tema*

*pead nii palju sassi, nüüd olevat kolamisest küllalt, tema jalad olevat juba tolli maad lühemaks kulunud ja Eesti Maja on nüüd käes. Astuski siis ühest uksest sisse ning hõikas täiest jõust, et terre suguvennad, et teie vana Karla Säätsuverest on siin! (Vaba Eesti Sõna 17.09.1949).*

On aga ka juhuseid, mil Salme osutub võtmeisikuks – enamasti lükkab onu vastutuse neiu õlgadele siis, kui on tarvis kohalikus keeles asju ajada. Agent-sust kannab aga ka sellistes situatsioonides pigem Karla, kes on kirjade peategelane ja põhiline koomilistesse situatsioonidesse sattuja. Tema odüsseia hargneb peaaegu eranditult äpardustest, milleni viivad kohalike olude vähene tundmine, uhke hoiak ja jäik iseloom ning alati vales vahekorras annustatud kartlikkus ja kuraas. Tõsiasia, et just oma parimais aastais meesterahvas on valitud peamiseks pilkeobjektiks, annab alust erinevatele tõlgendustele. Seda võib näha kui katset sobitada traditsiooniga, mille järgi ajaloo ja elu kesksed tegelased on mehed. Säärane positsioneerimine võimaldab ka äraspidises situatsioonides kõige enam nalja leida – küll kitsamas plaanis, aga siiski kuulub keske meesfiguuri naeruvääristamine alasti kuninga kaanonisse ja võimaldab ka väikesed naljad siduda lugeja teadvuses üldisema narratiiviga ja seeläbi suurendada nii koomilist efekti kui ka süvendada üldist lootunnetust. See aga vallandab lugejas teatud ootuseid, mida huumori looja edaspidi ootuspäraste ja ootamatute naljade loomisel ära kasutada saab.

Laiema meie-rühma moodustab (ka Salmet ennast ja Karlat hõlmav) Ameerika eesti pagulaskond tervikuna, kelle identiteedi, atribuutika ja seisundi küsimused argisemate teemadega looritatult ikka ja jälle pead tõstavad.

*Teisel hommikul sõitsime New Yorgi juba päris külje alla ja siis igapäev muudkui klõpsutas oma fotoaparaati, sest igal dipiil, kes Saksamaalt tuleb, on nüüd fotoaparaat, kellel Leica, kellel Ikonta, kellel muidu mingisugune Baby-box. Aga fotoaparaat peab olema, sest muidu nagu polegi õige dipii. Kui me pärast pikka ootamist saime loa maale minna ja onu Karla jala maale pistis, hõiskas ta suure häälega, et sooh', nüüd ma olen siis sellest neetud dipii-seisusest jäädavalt lahti ja et kes mulle veel dipii ütleb, sellele ma teen niisugust coca-colat, et ta ei tea, kui vana ta on (Vaba Eesti Sõna 30.07.1949).*

Huvitaval kombel võib täheldada, et ka Saksamaal olevatesse kooliõdedesse, kellele kogu jutustus Uuest Maailmast suunatud on, näib Salme suhtuvat justkui meie-rühma liikmetesse, ehkki sisuliselt on tegemist sündmustest väljaspool seisvate isikutega. Selle sättumusega sobival on ka Ameerika vana-eestlaste asend ambivalentne. Sündmuste tasandil on tegemist kamraadidega, kes on pagulastega justkui ühes paadis – võtavad neid lahkelt vastu ja näitavad neile elu. Nende kompetentsus kohaliku olustiku ja kommete tõlkimisel ning olme-

<p>Salme kirjad Ameerikast</p>	<p>Kümmeaast meestri oma alla. Nüüd olime väga rõõmsa olukorras, sest meie et teadnud sugugi, kuhu parki meie omad läksid ja pealgi rüügitü ennem, et kõik parjad on sinu suured, et teadust keegi ei löa selles eluimas-ki üles.</p> <p>Onud tuli siis meelde, et aga meil muud üle ei jään, kui sõidame Eesti. Seltai, et sealt ehk saame teada, kus meie omad elavad, sest meil ei olnud meelde enam ka oma korteri aadressi, et oleks koju sõitnud. Onud oli õnneks rüügitü heas ja niisoodi ta siis sealt üles saadi, et Eesti Seltai aadress 240-dal tänaval number 34. Sinna pidi õige pal-ju maad olema, sest nägime nurga pealt, et sinu oli alles 34-jae tänav. Püüdsime siis sõna, et kui istume süüsiises, aga onu lõppeks arvas, et seda tükkki ka võoras linnas teha ei tohi, et sinu sopp-juu püüdsid nurgasuse äraarvata, et võis-olla enne ei osa naha, kui oled 2334-das on sinu väga olnud. Aga kui böse kütada edasi ja meie tänavanurgal rüügitü naatsime, siis nägime, et meie omi ei ole kuuskil ja samuti ei ole parki, vaid on hoopis täna suure lükkouluute vaate-akna, mis sõitis majanest kohes mitse-</p>	<p>võib kohe levibüroosse. Ja kui ühe noco- tud välisvõidude ehk hotelist ära reas- tud ja alles basis leidnud, et tal on kogemata hoteli võti tasku jäinud ning talhitud seda tagasi võtta, siis oli ühe- ameeriklane sõidud võidude ja vanaud- basis pingi alla, et kui lähtu bussipä- rija võime leada, siis ta näeb sellel hea- raudteesajam, aga sugugi ei õpetatud- hoidaksite kuuskile maru naha ja küt- jutaksite omale Eesti Seltai maaj- numbril kas või saaga taldale alla, et- mis üteldi tänavanurgal kujud leitud meid- ja väidati meid õigesti kohta.</p> <p>Onule see jutt ei meeldinud ja ta läks- juba õige pahaseks, aga me tuletasin- talle meelde, et Ameerikas ei ole inimesed kunagi pahased, vaid naeratavad- ka me, kui kuuskil tänavakeerises jää- vad selkapiidi kaari alla. Ameeriklased- ütlevad alati, et kiip smiling, mis meie- keeles on anna naeru ehk nivereta lõhe, nagu meie sõltokorral Seltamaal kooli- seletati.</p> <p>Onu ütles siis, et väinguisest naeru- tud me ei arva, kui me sinu meelde- Mannatünnist väljas ei ole, sest teada</p>	<p>olevat tunne, et esimest korda Ameerikas hakkab temal hing juba pärsit ta- steelt teis võimena. Ja siis ta tükka-ki- juba pärs kurjalat kiruma, mis ei ole sugugi ära. Aga et peale minu keegi- seletat ära ei saanud, siis ei olnudki asi- pärsi hull. Onu ütles küll, et olevali tu- davalis- lasse keele tunnus õpetati ikka väinguis- saja, et väärtä is statistisahn ehk kus on- raudteesajam, aga sugugi ei õpetatud- väinguisest ära, meida valed väinguis- väinguisest ära tulnud. Lopp- juba ta võiditi sihtki minu nõu kuulda- ja tohi lakema nõu püht. Istusime ühe- matt kippus peale, sõitis ennea kõlku- ning naeratasin. Onu koh naeratati ja- mit me siis muuduti ändiseme naeru ja- ootamane, et ehk tuleb kuuskil mõni hea- nõu pähe.</p> <p>Järgmisel korral ma kirjutasin selles- tundas ma väinguisest inglise keeles aja- sin väinguisest meiega juttu.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Tervitab Säl m i.</p>	<p>KUPURVA naitusi lkult. V toodangi niidid ei valikna nem, mis rikksaan on rikk davalis Sõid tõt lisaanabi kannatit endast i preed i man m kohtis, i onaste endale i suidava juuda. muina üi kannud i kandit ootavad Kugi kestma kuni suu selge, et ole. Jää kunagi i</p>
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Illustratsioon 1. Vaba Eesti Sõna 03.09.1949.

kultuurilised erinevused aga muudavad nad Salme kirjade kontekstis mitte üksnes eestlasi, vaid ka ameeriklasi esindavateks karakteriteks. Vana-eestlaste teisestamine (*othering*) saab alguse kohe esimeses episoodis, kus nappide vahenditega antakse edasi nende ameerikaniseeritus ja enesekindel olek, mis asetavad nad antud olukorras pagulaste suhtes jõupositsioonile:

*Meie pidime algul kah edasi sõitma, aga tädipoeg Jim, kes meile oli jaa- ma vastu tulnud ja kelle nimi kunagi vanal ajal Eestis oli Jakob, laitis selle mõtte maha ja kutsus meid esialgseks enda poole, et ehk leiame kusagil siin meile hea jobi ehk töötasa. Ema oli sellele küll vastu, et tema kardab New Yorki ja et mis veel siis juhtub, kui venelased leiavad üles aatompommi, et siis saab New Yorgi linn kindlasti esimese obaduse. Aga pikapeale andis temagi järele (Vaba Eesti Sõna 06.08.1949).*

Vana-eestlastest konkreetsemalt kannavad “nende” rolli ameeriklased. Kohalikke kombeid ja nende kandjaid esitatakse peaaegu antropoloogilises võtmes. Ameerikalikuks peetavat esitatakse liialdatult ja naeruvääristades.

*...ma tuletasin talle [onule] meelde, et Ameerikas ei ole inimesed kunagi pahased, vaid naeratavad ka siis, kui kuskil tänavakeerises jäävad saba- pidi kaari<sup>10</sup> alla. Ameeriklased ütlevad alati, et kiip smiling, mis meie keeles on anna naeru... (Vaba Eesti Sõna 03.09.1949).*

Palju on viiteid “õige” ameeriklase atribuutikale ja käitumisele. Nii saab lugeja teada, et *pesueht jänki* sööb närimiskummi, viskab kõik üleliigse tänavale maha, vabandab ette ja taha, kõrvetamata (rõstimata) saia ei söö, niksu ei tee ja an- nab kõigile koguaeg palju naeru. Need võrdlemisi süütu loomuga argielulised

torked dominantrühma suhtes sobivad hästi eespool välja toodud käsitlusega, mille kohaselt on huumor instrumentaalse tähtsusega vähemusrühmadele, kes soovivad hinnata ümber tunnetatavat või tegelikku ebasoodsat sotsiaalset stratifikatsiooni. Siinjuures tuleb märkida, et omapärase kommentaari pakuvad Salme kirjad ka rassi temaatikale.<sup>11</sup> Pool kümnendit enne kodanikuõiguste liikumise lahvatamist kirjapandud tekst jutustab (peaaegu sõna otseses mõttes) läbi lillede ameerika mustanahalise elanikkonnaga seotud valupunktidest. Kollektiivsetele traumadele ja segregatsiooni pärandile, mis Ühendriikide elanikkonda koormas, vihjavad nii leksikaalsed täpsustused kui ka ettevaatlikult sõnastatud konstateeringud kultuuri ja identiteedi teemadel:

*Äkisti siis tuli meile vastu üks maailmatutore daam, nii et kõik kahises ja lõhnas, nagu oleks elus lilleaed vastu tulnud. Kui talle otsa vaatasin, siis kokkusin ära ja me kõik nägime, et see oli hoopis niisugune daam, kelle nime ei tohi siin viisakas inimene kõvasti öelda. See nimi hakkab "n" tähega. Jim seletas meile ära, et Ameerikas ei tohi öelda mitte n...i daam, vaid must daam, sest n...id panevad koledasti pahaks, kui neile sedasi öelda, vaid peab ütleva ikka mustad. Siis nad ei pane sugugi pahaks ja naeratavad sulle veel otsagi, kui juhtuvad just heas tujus olema. Need mustad andsid vist mustadele moodi, kuna valged daamid andsid moode jällegi valgetele daamidele ja nõndaviisi on Ameerikas kõik hästi ära korraldatud (Vaba Eesti Sõna 27.08.1949).*

Salme ja tema kaaslased seikleavad New Yorgi linnas, mis täidab ühtaegu nii taustsüsteemi kui ka tegelase rolli. Taustsüsteemina on New York imetusväärne – majad, sillad, tänavavalgustus, metroo, liiklus ja vaated nendele kutsuvad tegelastes esile suuri tundeid. Tegelasena on ta aga mitmepalgelisem – see linn oskab oma vastsaabunud külalisi ka eksitada, hirmutada, jooksutada ja koguni kiusata. Ometi on olukorral ka hea külg: Salme tunnistab isegi, et oma seikluste tulemusena “kogu kolme ja poole aasta jooksul Saksamaal ei saanud pooltki nii palju näha kui siin kolme ja poole päevaga” (Vaba Eesti Sõna 05.11.1949).

New Yorgi linna nime esineb kirjutises mitmel erineval ebakorrektsel kujul, mis lisavad teemakäsitlusele koomilist efekti, ent tähistavad ühtlasi ka teatavat performatiivset akti. Millelegi nime andmist on traditsiooniliselt käsitletud maagilise toiminguna, mis aitab uut keskkonda või nähtust kodustada. Ka New Yorgi ametlik nimetus on elavaks tõestuseks omaaegsete koloniseerijate vastavasisulistest püüdlustest (Dipper 1995: 17, tsiteeritud Jürgenson 2002: 118–119). Vaatlusalusel rubriigis tundub ortograafiline loovus linna nime kirjutamisel kohati suisa jultunud manifestatsioonina: Salme ja need, keda ta esindab justkui peaksid alles läbirääkimisi selle üle, millist hinnangut sellele asulale ja tema kultuurile anda. Huvitav moment saabub seoses tädipoeg Ja-



kobi/Jimi ettepanekuga amerikaniseerida pagulas perekonna nimed, et nende kandjatel oleks hõlpsam uuel maal läbi lüüa. Nii nimetas ta Salme Sälmi, onu Karla Charlie'ks, isa Mihkli Mikiks, ema Marie Mariiks ja vend Alfredi Elfriedeks, allutades nad seeläbi kohalikule olustikule, või vähemalt üritades seda teha. Pagulas perekond aga tundis end piisavalt jõulisena, et omalt poolt uuele keskkonnale kinnas heita ning ristimistalitlus sümmeetriliseks muuta. Ühiselt muudeti ümbruskonna toponüümika hoopis enesele suupäraseks – Manhattanist sai Mannatünn, Seabrookist Seapurk, Connecticutist Konnakuut ja Brooklynist Pruutlinn (Vaba Eesti Sõna 20.08.1949).<sup>12</sup> Selle teoga sai varem vaid “nende” gruppi kuulunud linn otsekui kolmandaks “meie” grupi (ambivalentseks) tegelaseks vana-eestlaste ja teistes riikides olevate pagulaste kõrval.

## Salme kirjade teemad

Salme kirjade sisu ja temaatilist ülesehitust vaadeldes ilmneb, et “meie” rühma tegelaste identiteet toimib mitmekihilisel põhialusel. Aeg-ajalt narratiivis vilksatavatele Eesti-viidetele sekundeerib Saksamaal toimunu ja neile kahele vaimsele konstruktsioonile pakub vastukaalu Ameerika reaalsus. Ajalooline kodumaa esineb Salme kirjades võrdlemisi harva. See oleks justkui saanud täismineviku osaks, millesse on kätketud annus resignatsiooni ja millest (vähemalt vaatluse all oleva huumoritekstide korpuse vältel) kergekäeliselt juttu ei tehta. Üks vähestest viidetest antakse seoses Eesti Maja juurde jõudmisega, mille kohta Salme kirjutab:

*Meil oli mõlemal õige heameel ja mul tikkusid kohe pisarad silmi, sest onu seletas ära, et vaata Salme, siin on tükk Eestimaad, mida ei ole rüvetanud sakslase saabas ega venelase pastal ja et see koht on siin sama hea kui tükk Eestimaad ehk võõrakeelse nimega Eesti territooriumi (Vaba Eesti Sõna 01.10.1949).*

Eestit ameeriklastele tutvustades võetakse appi minevik ja ajalooteadmised. Laulupidu ja eesti viina kiidetakse, venelaste ja sakslaste käitumist Teise maailmasõja ajal aga saajatakse. Lisaks mineviku-suundumuse olemasolule leidub ka tõendeid, et Eestit tajuti “tulevikumuusikana” – kui nominaalne amerikaniseerumine kogu perele tuska tekitas, lohutati end nii:

*...ega me siia Ameerikasse eluks ajaks ka ei jää, sest niipea, kui Eesti on vaba ja mõnituhat dollarit pangas, nagu onu Charlie ütleb, ja kaar istme all, nagu vend Elfriede ütleb, et siis läheme jälle kodumaale tagasi ja peseme Ülemiste järve vees omad amerikaniseeritud nimed maha, nagu*

*sedä on mitmet-setmet korda teinud ka meie esivanemad, kui nendele midagi võõrast peale pandi (Vaba Eesti Sõna 27.08.1949).*

Siinkohal võib märgata peenemat sorti torget rubriigi publiku südametunnistuse pihta. Antud lõigus väljendatud soovunelma kohaselt poleks kodumaale tagasi pöördunud mitte uisapäisa esimesel soodsal võimalusel, nagu pagulasretoorika (Undusk 2008: 2260–2265) üldiselt sätestas, vaid alles siis, kui meie kangelastele apetiitseteks muutunud Ameerika elu-olu viljad (raha ja auto) edukalt nopitud. Ilus ameerika standard, mis pagulastele alguses luksusena näis, hakkas aja möödudes üha kättesaadavamana paistma ja aastate jooksul saigi sellest normaalsuse mõõdupuu.

Salme seikluste ajal on see protsess alles käivitumas, mistõttu viiteid Saksa- maale ja sealsetele oludele leidub sagedasti – võrdluste aluseks on mitte Eesti mälestused, vaid just laagrielu käigus kogetu, ja sealset elu-olu käsitletakse kestva mineviku või koguni olevikuna. *Meil Saksamaal* stiilis teemaarendusi võib põhjendada ka asjaoluga, et kirjade näiline adressaat on Saksamaal asuv sõpruskond. Sammukese edasi astudes aga on ka see tõik Saksamaa-suunitlusest kõneldes väljendusrikas. Saksamaa, kui sõpruskonna formeerumise skeene, on väga paljusid DP-sid ühendav aspekt, mis määratles olulises mahus ka edasised globaalsed suhtlusvõrgustikud (Jürgenson 2011: 135, 158). Rutiin, mida uutes oludes (kohati enesele teadvustamata) taga igatsetakse, pole mitte elu Eestis, vaid elu Saksamaal. Palju leidub aga ka Saksamaa olusid ja sealset põlisrahvast otseselt või kaudselt sarjavaid meenutusi. Näiteks õigustab Salme New Yorgis oma perega väljas süües inglise keele purssimist Saksamaal omandatud kompleksiga:

*...me ei tahtnud näidata, et me oleme välismaalased, sest kartsime, et mõni vaiter<sup>13</sup> võib äkki hakata seletama, et näe, kus tämned voorinerid ehk need neetud välismaalased muudkui õgivad meie toitu (Vaba Eesti Sõna 12.11.1949).*

Erinevalt Ameerikast olid Eesti ja Saksamaa juba kord kogetud entiteetidid, nendega seostus mälestusi ja nendega seotult oli kujunenud mingi kindel tunnetuslik imaginaarium. Võiks koguni väita, et kirjad räägivad ajast, mil Salme ja ta pere olid Ameerikasse pärale jõudnud, ent Ameerika polnud veel neile pärale jõudnud – nad vajasid justkui lisaagea, et välja tulla tunnetuslikust inertsist.

Loomulikult on üks käsitletavaid teemaringe kapitalism ja selle avaldumise vormid: kaubamajad, asjade küllus, võimsad reklaamid, raiskamine. Moraliiseerivaid torkeid leidub siingi. Näiteks toob Salme Ameerika süsteemi eeliseid tutvustades näilise naiivsusega esile, et:

*Onu küsis kõigepealt juua, sest ilmad on siin väga palavad, teinekord isegi 100 kraadi. Meile toodi siis mitu pudelit kaka-koolat, mida sai vahel ka Saksamaal maitseada, kui meie tüdrukud käisid ameeriklastega tantsimas. Ainult et siin võib seda jooki saada ilma tantsimas käimata, mine ainult kioskisse, kus on suur kaka-koola reklaam peal ja sulle antakse juua paljalt raha eest (Vaba Eesti Sõna 20.08.1949).*

Ehkki New Yorgi Eesti Haridusselts ja teised eestlaste ühendused, mis enne ja pärast pagulaste saabumist tegevust alustasid, olid osa Ameerika kodanikuühiskonnast, ei jäänud ameerikalikult aktiivne organisatoorne tegevus iroonilise tähelepanuta:

*...Ameerikas pidi olema igasuguseid klubisid, nii et kui sul on näiteks vistrik sünnimisest saadik nina peal, et siis võid muudkui asutada vistrikus ninadega klubi, sest Ameerika on suu vabaduste maa ja siin võib kõike teha ja asutada (Vaba Eesti Sõna 17.09.1949).*



*Illustratsioonid 2-3. Viikingiteks kutsuti neid pagulasi, kes seilasid aastatel 1945–1951 Ameerikasse ametliku loa, viisade, sageli ka isikuttöendavate dokumentideta. Nad võeti küll DPdega võrreldes meeleolukamalt vastu – viikingi kombel saabunute vastu tundsid huvi nii meedia kui poliitikud. Õiguslik staatus oli aga DP-dega võrreldes tunduvalt ebakindlam ning tõi kaasa komplitseerituma lähituleviku. Sellest realiteedist näib olevat inspiratsiooni saanud ka kunstnik, kes antud karikatuurid lõi. Vaba Eesti Sõna 20. ja 27. augustil 1949.*

New Yorgi piirkonna eesti pagulaste häälekandjana ilmumist alustanud *Vaba Eesti Sõna* oli võrdlemisi politiseeritud välisvõitluslik ajaleht. Võiks arvata, et ka Salme kirjades pälvib vabaduse teema samaväärset tähelepanu, ometi pole see nii. Teadmata rubriigi autorit (või autoreid), on keeruline midagi väita tema (või nende) konkreetsete motivaatorite kohta. Võib vaid oletada, et just nagu üllatuslikult vähe tähelepanu saanud Eesti-teema, on ka vabadus tõsine küsimus, millest kogukond kui tervik polnud veel piisavalt distantseerunud. Kirjeldatud tendentsi kujunemisel võis rolli mängida ka asjaolu, et Salme kirjad hakkasid ilmuma kõigest mõni kuu pärast märtsiküüditamist. Kui väljatoodud oletused peavad paika, võib järeldada, et Eesti ja vabaduse kohta kas ei saanud veel edukalt eksplitsiitset nalja teha või siis ei juletud proovida. Implitsiitset eeldusena on Eesti riigi ja rahva saatus muidugi pidevalt jutustuses olemas.

## Kokkuvõte

Võib arvata, et Teise maailmasõja sündmuste tõttu sunniviisilise migratsiooni subjektiks olnud eestlased, kes pärast aastatepikkust laagrielu said loa rajada endale Ameerikas uus elu, olid objektiivsetel põhjustel võrdlemisi intensiivse ja rahutu vaimse maailmaga. Tahe iseseisvuda oli sageli suurem kui võimalused, mis selleks avanesid. 1949. aastal New Yorgis loodud ajalehes *Vaba Eesti Sõna* ilmuma hakanud rubriik “Salme kirjad Ameerikast” on omapärane narratiiv, milles esitletakse seda pagulaskogemust läbi huumoriprisma.

Käesolevas artiklis vaatluse alla võetud osa sellest kogust käsitleb ühe pagulasperekonna esimesi päevi Ameerikas, mis on kõiki sama staatusega inimesi ühendav kogemus. Saksamaal asunud DP-laagrist New Yorki saabunud neiu Salme ja tema perekonna püüdlikkus uue keskkonna ja kultuuri mõtestamisel ning tahe selles edukalt hakkama saada viivad küll üle kivide ja kändude sihile, ent on silmanähtavalt käpardlikud. See kontrast koos muude huumoritehnikliste võtetega toovad lugejani hulgaliselt koomilisi situatsioone ning annavad ühtlasi võimaluse end peategelastega samastada ja lisaks nende üle naermisele vaadelda oma elu analoogilisi kitsaskohti läbi huumoriprisma.

Huumori sotsiaalne iseloom ja võime inimeste vaatevinkleid modifitseerida teevad temast võimsa relva sotsiaalse reaalsuse kujundamisel. Salme kirjades esinevad tegelased ja teemad on pagulaskogemuse seisukohast krestomaatilised ning nende kujutamiski viis annab hea ülevaate naljade sihtrühma vaimsest maastikust või vähemalt selle mentaalsest representatsioonist autori(te) peas. Sellest tulenevalt on naljadest võimalik välja lugeda teavet kogukonna kollektiivse identiteedi aluspositsiooni omapärade kohta. Nii meie- kui ka nemad-rühma koosseis on mitmekihiline ja osaliselt kattuv. Vastanduvad peamiselt

pagulased ja ameeriklased, kusjuures esimesse rühma kuuluvad kohati ka veel Saksamaal olevad rahvuskaaslased, viimasesse aga enne sõda Ameerikasse saabunud eestlased.

Salme kirjad on mitmetasandiline tekstikorpus, mille poetika kannab pigem representatiivset kui kommunikatiivset funktsiooni. New Yorgi pagulaseestlaskonna spetsiifilisemad teemad ja küsimused vahelduvad üldisemate ja standardsemate huumorikaanonite mugandustega, mis annab esitatud suurele loole omapärase sisemise avanemise ja sulgumise rütmi. Pagulasi ühtaegu trööstiv ja agentsusele innustav narratiiv on kohati ka irooniline ja moraliseeriv, ent kannab põhisõnumina rahvulikuks välisvõitluseks ja privaatsfääris tegusaks toimetamiseks vajalikku lubadust ameerikalikust *happy end*'ist. Kirjade üldine ridadevaheline sõnum kuulutab: olgugi olud rasked ja äpardused juhtumas, pagulane on siiski aktiivne tegutseja, kes isegi tagasihoidliku kohaliku teabe pagasi ja napi vaimse kapitaliga suudab Ameerikamaal lõpuks hakkama saada ning jõuda sinna, kuhu sihi seadis. Vastsaabunud umbkeelse pagulase keerulist olukorda uues hoomamatus süsteemis annab üledukalt edasi allegooria üksikisikust miljonilinnas. Teatud piirini võibki pidada Salme tekste sümbolistlikuks kirjakoguks – ka konkreetse süzee peensustesse takerdumata jääb põhinnarratiiv kandma neis väljendatud ideid.

## Kommentaariid

- <sup>1</sup> Artikkel on seotud Eesti Teadusfondi grandiga ETF9066.
- <sup>2</sup> Kirjeldatud materjal on ilmunud toonastes perioodikaväljaannetes ja trükistes. Täiuslikem selliste teavikute kollektsioon asub Tallinna Ülikooli akadeemilise raamatukogu väliseesti kirjanduse keskuses. Pagulashuumori-alast ainet leidub ka teistes mäluasutustes nii Eestis kui välismaal.
- <sup>3</sup> DP-d, *di(i)piid* – *Displaced Persons*, Saksamaa pagulaslaagrite elanikud.
- <sup>4</sup> *Job* – töö (inglise keeles).
- <sup>5</sup> Huumorist Nõukogude tööpataljonides viibivate eestlaste kohta vt Parve 1972.
- <sup>6</sup> Ameerika eestlaskonna kontekstis nimetatakse 1905. aasta sündmuste tõttu Ameerikasse tulnud eestlasi enamasti mitte pagulasteks, vaid lihtsalt vasakpoolseteks. Nad olid algusest peale hästi organiseerunud ning tegutsesid rööbiti apoliitiliste rahvuskaaslaste ja Eesti Vabariigi taastamise nimel välisvõitlust pidavate eestlastega. Kontaktid vasakpoolsete ja teiste vahel olid sporaadilised ja enamasti konfliktised.
- <sup>7</sup> Juba 19. sajandi teisel poolel hakati avaldama lugejakirju Eesti asundustest võõrsil, Eesti Vabariigi ajal see traditsioon jätkus. Eriti ulatuslikult avaldasid teavet võõrsil olevate eestlaste kohta vastava suunitlusega väljaanded (nt *Eesti Hõim, Väliseestlane*).
- <sup>8</sup> Pagulaskirjanduses on seda nähtust väga kompaktselt narrativeerinud näiteks Ilmar Talve teoses *Juhanson'i reisid* (Talve 1959: 311).
- <sup>9</sup> Kadaka-saksluse ja paju-veneluse ekvivalent Põhja-Ameerika eestlaskonna kontekstis.

<sup>10</sup> *Kaar* – auto (inglise keeles *car*).

<sup>11</sup> Ehkki Salme kirjades sellele tähelepanu ei pöörata, on oluline välja tuua, et rassism ja sellest lähtuv poliitika on mõjutanud ka eesti diasporaa kujunemist. Eestlaste rassilise pertseptsiooni teisenemist ameerika mõtteloos uurinud Bernhard Maegi on välja toonud, et eestlaste liikumine ihaldus- ja põlastusväärse piirjoonel kord ühele kord teisele poole kaldudes on seotud laiemate protsessidega, millest üks käesoleva arutluse juures relevantsemaid on justnimelt mustanahaliste staatuse küsimus (vt Maegi 2008).

<sup>12</sup> Säärast nimekoomikat kohtab pagulashuumori lühivormides sageli (vt nt Trett 1990; Kokk 1984).

<sup>13</sup> *Vaiter* – kelner (inglise keeles *waiter*).

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- Salme kirjad Ameerikast. **Meie seiklused Padavail** ja kuidas me kohtusime ühe suurtsuguse daamiga, kelle õiget nime ei tohi ütelda. 27.08.1949, lk 2.
- Salme kirjad Ameerikast. **Otsime Istonian Taunhooli** ja kuidas onu läks 34. tänava nurgal vihaseks. Salme kirjad Ameerikast. 03.09.1949, lk 2.
- Salme kirjad Ameerikast. **Otsime Istonian Taunhooli II**. 10.09.1949, lk 2.
- Salme kirjad Ameerikast. **Otsime Istonian Taunhooli III** Ja kuidas me imestame Ameerika eestlaste orientatsiooni pärast. 17.09.1949, lk 2.
- Salme kirjad Ameerikast. **Otsime Istonian Taunhooli IV** Ja teeme imelikus klubis oma rahva kasuks propagandat. 24.09.1949, lk 2.
- Salme kirjad Ameerikast. **Njuu Jorgi Eesti vallamajas.** Meie esimesi muljeid: natuke headmeelt ja natuke pettumusi. 01.10.1949, lk 2.

*Maarja Merivoo-Parro*

Salme kirjad Ameerikast. **Tutvume istonian göörliga.** Eestlanna, kellel on väga pisi ja kes oma poifrendi kaariga draivis muuvisse. 08.10.1949, lk 2.

Salme kirjad Ameerikast. **Meie kõnelused istonian göörliga.** 15.10.1949, lk 2.

Salme kirjad Ameerikast. **Mis me veel Nju Jorgis nägime.** 05.11.1949, lk 2.

Salme kirjad Ameerikast. **Mis me veel Nju Jorgis nägime.** 12.11.1949, lk 2.

## ***Summary***

### **Exile as a laughing matter**

Maarja Merivoo-Parro

**Key words:** Estonians in America, humour, adaptation, immigrants, refugees

Most researchers agree that the essence of humour lies in its social nature. Thus it is only reasonable to assume that there is a link between laughter and success in relationships with other people and circumstances. Indeed, such conclusions have been drawn. Humour is said to develop the capacity to foster a multi-perspective comprehension of life, which can in extreme situations determine the difference between surviving and perishing.

The people who fled Estonia during World War II and did not want to return for fear of being repressed by the Soviet regime, were generally allowed to apply for immigration in Western countries as refugees. This article pertains to some aspects of humour used in the written press by the New York Estonian refugee community in 1949. The character of a young lady called Salme is narrating her family's first clumsy steps in their new homeland.

The body of the text is in the form of letters addressed to former schoolmates who have not yet immigrated to their new permanent countries of residence, but are presumably still living in a displaced persons' camp in Germany.

It is argued that Salme's letters were designed to provide comic relief from tensions common to new immigrants and old refugees. By showcasing the problems, concerns and actions that most (if not all) New York refugee Estonians could relate to, they promoted a light-hearted view of the difficulties of this particular type of existence. This set of texts is also used to make observations regarding the collective identity of the writers and their perceived audience, the intra-group relationships and connections with the outer world, Americans, the City and the array of cultural differences that they entail.





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# Estonian by Education: Estonian Supplemental Schools in Cold War America

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BY MAARJA MERIVOO-PARRO

## *Introduction*

The Cold War American Estonian refugee diaspora “project” has primarily been seen as an anti-communist battle for human rights and national independence. That is one way of putting it. Another would be to say it is about love, or rather about the pursuit of streamlining human emotions into the ebb and flow of ethnicity maintenance as part of a search for posterity. This is partly why throughout the post-war years until the re-establishment of independent Estonia in 1991, there was feverish action in the realm of supplemental schools for young Estonians abroad. Even though these voluntary associations were *de facto* spreading knowledge about Estonian language and culture, upon engaging with their archival traces it becomes obvious that *de jure* they aimed more at educating the spirit than the mind. One impetus being that the romantic love most individuals seek might end up sharing a place with love for the lost homeland.

Thus, supplemental schools were meant as a portal to an unalienable *patria*. Since linguistic nationalism has long been a pillar of Estonian identity, it was often perceived not merely as a code of communication but also as a mode of existence or even as an actual territory. As years went on and the end of exile was nowhere to be found, this ethereal linguistic promised land of sorts, however, began to lose its appeal. Somewhere along the way, the pursuit of Estonianness began to resemble a secular religion and with that a certain instrumentalism arose – the tool of Estonian supplemental education took precedence over the task and populace at hand, as schools were transformed from facilitators of tradition to tradition in and of themselves.

This article explores the infrastructure of “Estonian by education” through a close reading of archives pertaining to the adventure of setting up and running supplemental schools in Cold War America. In an effort to ground the Estonian supplemental school experience as well as allude to its intellectual silhouette, reference will also be made to the pivotal Displaced Persons’ camps’ schools in Germany and the Estonian refugee teens who were instructed there. To provide a more nuanced context for

the portrayal of the interplay between ethnicity and adolescence in Cold War America, the topics of heritage education, public school reform and juvenile delinquency are recruited as backdrops.

### *Adolescence in Cold War America*

The whole notion of adolescence being an inherently and inevitably traumatic personal experience was arguably a twentieth century invention due to changes in labour and production in industrialized nations. Granted, age groups and rhetoric regarding their social roles has a long intellectual, practical and legal history, but never before had there been wide-scale movements towards letting all children have a childhood instead of capitalizing on them as a work force. By giving young ones more education and free time they became divorced from everyday interaction with people outside of their age bracket except for in-service situations. Young people were in fact turned from producers to consumers. Having this new set of freedom and responsibility brought about a new set of risks and hazards, which in turn bled into the habit of perceiving adolescence as a perilous transitory period.<sup>1</sup> The ratio of American teenagers who attended high school has been steadily expanding – from less than one out of ten in 1900 to 62.3% of 17-year-olds graduating in 1956<sup>2</sup> and almost nine out of ten in the age group of 14-17 being enrolled in high school by 1960.<sup>3</sup> This, along with various other social processes and product marketing, paved the way for a distinct youth culture that embraced novelties in the music business, performing arts and print media<sup>4</sup> so much so, that in time it began to fuel innovation in these departments as well as establish new codes of conduct and social interaction.

One of the perceived downsides to this rise of awareness and agency on the part of young people was juvenile delinquency. It was interpreted as a sub-culture (or a cluster thereof),<sup>5</sup> which came to be a feared umbrella term embracing a plethora of phenomena from organized crime in youth gangs to rather innocent deviations from what was considered the norm in clothing, hair styles and recreational activities. World War II certainly

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<sup>1</sup> JOSEPH K. KETT: *Rites of Passage. Adolescence in America 1790 to the Present*, New York 1977, pp. 3-12, 143, 172, 215-272. LIZABETH COHEN: *A Consumer's Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America*, New York 2004, pp. 112-165. ANDREA CAROSSO: *Cold War Narratives: American Culture in the 1950*, Bern 2013, pp. 15-58, 129-158.

<sup>2</sup> KETT, *Rites of Passage* (fn. 1), p. 254.

<sup>3</sup> WILLIAM GRAEBNER: *Coming of Age in Buffalo. Youth and authority in the Postwar Era*, Philadelphia 1990, p. 14.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5; CAROSSO, *Cold War Narratives* (fn. 1), pp. 129-190.

<sup>5</sup> KIRSE GRANAT MAY: *Golden State, Golden Youth: The California Image in Popular Culture, 1955-1966*, Chapel Hill 2002, pp. 67-94; KETT, *Rites of Passage* (fn. 1), p. 254.

contributed to creating issues on this frontier. Even though the continental US itself did not suffer large-scale damage from war activities, the social climate the conflict created had an impact on family relations. As more men were missing from everyday family-life due to service, more women took up working as breadwinners and more young people found themselves unsupervised,<sup>6</sup> giving way to accusations voiced over “losing [the war; M. M.-P.] on the home front”.<sup>7</sup> Even though many families remained broken after the end of the war, teenage life in post-war America with all its vices and pitfalls was still exceptionally rich in providing ways of empowerment for young people when compared to other countries in the Western world at the time. In fact, Joseph F. Kett even has gone so far as to name leisure, affluence and education as the main components that distinguish the social position of youth in America since 1945.<sup>8</sup>

How do these changes reflect on the area of public education? As is with many large-scale structures, so too were the Cold War era reforms in the American public school system a far cry from notions such as clarity and completeness. On the contrary, the process of evaluating their legacy is ongoing and just as contested today as it ever was.<sup>9</sup> Against the backdrop of the large-scale confrontation of capitalism *versus* communism, American educators and policy makers were struggling to strike a balance between training their young both for democracy and for war.<sup>10</sup> The launch of the Soviet satellite *Sputnik* in 1957 led to many people calling the conjuncture a crisis. They believed that public schools were giving insufficient attention to science and related subjects that would facilitate the creation of a populace capable of keeping the country and its citizens safe. At the same time, there were those who feared that limiting the freedom offered by the curricula in favour of a more structured emphasis on certain areas, would infringe upon the very values that needed protection in the first place.<sup>11</sup> Interestingly, the debate was linked to the topic of juvenile delinquency. Soviet propaganda made certain that all information about their educational system and youth really seemed both positive and (therefore) threatening. At the same time, the American press was never shy about exposing any vices and shortcomings of American schools and young people. The corollary was that for the most gullible of minds, Soviet youth seemed to be personified by a zealous math whizz who also just happened to be a great

<sup>6</sup> ANDREW HARTMAN: *Education and the Cold War. The Battle for the American School*, New York 2008, p. 56.

<sup>7</sup> GRAEBNER, *Coming of Age* (fn. 3), p. 87.

<sup>8</sup> KETT, *Rites of Passage* (fn. 1), p. 4.

<sup>9</sup> In this article, only some of the more immediately relevant aspects will be touched upon that pertain to social engineering within the struggle of the American school. The criteria for relevance being the level of engagement or impact it had among the constituents of the American Estonian case study. This is why there are numerous significant reforms that will not be touched upon.

<sup>10</sup> HARTMAN, *Education* (fn. 6), p. 178.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

pioneer with potential for growing capable of almost anything.<sup>12</sup> American youth, on the other hand, can be argued to have been perceived (by that very same exaggerated abstraction of the most gullible of minds) as a delinquent or potential delinquent from a street corner gang who was neither bright nor useful and lacked any impetus to rise above the low expectations that the wider society placed upon him.

Reality of course was not as clear-cut or extreme, but this line of reasoning is present in many utterances pertaining to the public school debate. One of the most evocative examples of this comes from Senator (and later Kennedy successor) Lyndon B. Johnson: “Soon, the Russians will be dropping bombs on us from space like kids dropping rocks onto cars from freeway overpasses,”<sup>13</sup> thus capturing both the grand narrative of confrontation as well as that of delinquency in one sweeping dystopic statement. A far-reaching issue that transcends curriculum debates was the overall secularization of the public school system – yet another item that was highly contested by various conservative constituencies on the grounds that it was destroying what they knew to be the traditional family and American creed. This was one of the many reasons why home-schooling gained traction as a means of protest against governmental politics. Some of the other arguments voiced against public schools included (but were not limited to) accusing them of teaching children socialism, homosexuality and situational ethics. In mainstream Cold War America, all of the above were considered subversive.<sup>14</sup>

The Estonians picked up on these general concerns and started exhibiting growing distrust towards the American public school system. They found it to be not only lacking in terms of academic quality, but also perceived it as posing a threat to the mental and physical wellbeing of students. For example, the social experiment of busing children to schools not in the immediate vicinity of their home with a goal to desegregate and eliminate the effects of prior racial discrimination brought about a wave of protests.<sup>15</sup> Albeit the origins of busing with this purpose can be dated back to a 1954 Supreme Court ruling, it did not become a major national issue until the 1970s. That is when the focus of mandatory busing went from Southern

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<sup>12</sup> See for example “Life” magazine, March 1958. For this and other examples of the debate see HARTMAN, *Education* (fn. 6), pp. 55-202.

<sup>13</sup> Quot. in *ibid.*, p. 176.

<sup>14</sup> See for example JACKIE M. BLOUNT: *From Isolation to Imagined Communities of LGBT School Workers: Activism in the 1970s*, in: *Schools as Imagined Communities: The Creation of Identity, Meaning, and Conflict in U.S. History*, ed. by DEIRDRE COBB-ROBERTS, SHERMAN DORN, and BARBARA J. SHIRCLIFFE, New York 2006, pp. 109-124; MICHAEL J. DAVIS: *Religion, Democracy and the Public Schools*, in: *Journal of Law and Religion* 25 (2009), pp. 33-56; ROBERT J. CORBER: *Homosexuality in Cold War America: Resistance and the Crisis of Masculinity*, Durham 1997, pp. 21-54.

<sup>15</sup> MATTHEW F. DELMOT: *Why Busing Failed: Race, Media and the National Resistance to School Desegregation*, Oakland 2016, pp. 23-53, *et passim*.

states with *de jure* segregation to Northern states with *de facto* segregation.<sup>16</sup> Arguments against busing were numerous and sometimes unexpected from seeing it as a measure to silently eliminate black culture to something of a conspiracy to keep mothers and children apart in the event that nuclear war should suddenly begin.<sup>17</sup>

There was a decent amount of anger and resentment towards this project among the American Estonians as well. They opposed the notion of state dictated school affiliations that they perceived as unpredictable and thus unwelcome. Instead, they favoured autonomy with regard to raising and schooling their children. The vocabulary used for lamenting the negative consequences of busing even included the verb *küüditama* which was mainly used to refer to the tragedy of deportations from Estonia to Siberia organized and carried out by the Soviet occupational regime. Difficult learning and teaching conditions, confrontations between students, extensive policing, drug dealing and drug abuse were the main focal points in the anti-busing rhetoric among Estonians.<sup>18</sup>

During the Cold War, schools had become melting pots in their own right – or more poignantly – social pressure cookers, with races and classes “rubbing shoulders, exchanging notes, and sharing their lives and subcultures” more than ever before.<sup>19</sup> Through both content and methodology, children and youth were increasingly provoked to think for themselves, see more than one side of a story and keep an open mind. Naturally this was a gradual and complex process with very diverse manifestations, but it did have at least one overarching result – even with all its controversies and flaws, the United States was slowly but surely becoming one of the countries most concerned with giving a voice to everyone who wanted it and catering to everyone who asked for it. For new immigrants, this new turn for greater inclusion and focus on minorities, however insignificant in numbers, meant a renewed sense of pride and accomplishment. In the Estonian case, this societal tendency was exceptionally well timed as it largely coincided with the second generation coming of age, thus contributing to the rationale that they should be brought up as Estonians.<sup>20</sup> By the time this came to pass, the network of Estonian Supplemental schools was already up and running, ready to cater to the diverse populace.

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<sup>16</sup> JUDITH BENTLEY: *Busing. The Continuing Controversy*, New York 1982, pp. 1, 14-17, 60.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> See for example R. HUNT: *Mis saab Ühendriikide koolist?* [What will happen to the American school?], in: *Vaba Eesti Sõna*, 18 January 1979.

<sup>19</sup> GRAEBNER, *Coming of Age* (fn. 3), p. 88.

<sup>20</sup> M. ANN WALKO: *Rejecting the Second Generation Hypothesis: Maintaining Estonian Ethnicity in Lakewood*, New Jersey, New York 1989, pp. 1, 33-37.

*Establishing Estonian Supplemental Schools,  
Organizing Faculty and Finances*

In the aftermath of the Second World War approximately one sixth of Estonian refugees had managed to make their way to the United States during the four years of major migration immediately following the Displaced Persons (DP) Act of 1948. This 12,000 person strong community made them the third largest new Estonian diaspora in the free world after Sweden and Canada. In the US, it was the East coast populace who were quickest in creating several schools already before the end of the DP-immigration in 1952 – the schools in Seabrook and Lakewood trace their history back to as early as 1949. Others soon followed suit.<sup>21</sup>

It was a common denominator for many schools to have a good working relationship with the (mostly Lutheran, but also other forms of Christian) church. Some schools were established within the congregation, some through collaboration between religious and secular leaders, others merely shared space with one another. It was generally considered important to have religious instruction as part and parcel of the curriculum.<sup>22</sup> This seemingly natural and easy connection with the church stemmed from two overarching causes. First, organizing schools took a lot of energy, determination, time and material resources that members of the clergy were more likely to have access to and churches often became sponsors for the schools.<sup>23</sup> Second, it was generally considered important to bring up the new generation as Christians.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, the combination of faith and language skills was believed to be empowering on a communal level as well – one of the

<sup>21</sup> A geographically more detailed sequence of events as well as an explanation of the different forms embryonic supplemental schools could and did take can be found in my article about American Estonians' academic mobility. See MAARJA MERIVOO-PARRO: Claiming Ethnicity in Overlapping Diasporic Conditions: Estonian Americans and Academic Mobility During the Cold War, in: Acta Historica Tallinnensia 21 (2015), pp. 106-124.

<sup>22</sup> However, if there was a separate Sunday school in the vicinity, the church was responsible for organizing and conducting that. Sometimes parents requested that it be tied in with the school, so that Sundays would remain free from educational activities. New Yorgi Eesti Haridusseltsi Täienduskooli õppenõukogu protokollid (3. Raamat) [The New York Estonian Educational Society Supplemental School Board meeting minutes (Book 3)], p. 2, in: Immigration History Research Center Archives, Minneapolis (IHRC), New Yorgi Eesti Haridusseltsi Eesti Kool (New York Estonian Educational Society) Records, Box 1.

<sup>23</sup> This is not to say that as individuals they were richer than the average immigrant was. Rather that since their mission was catering to the spiritual needs of their parishioners and often they did not need to take on full time jobs outside of their community-focused religious endeavor, but could in fact extend this mission to include aspects of supplemental Estonian education.

<sup>24</sup> Õppe- ja kasvatustöö alused Saksamaa täienduskoolis [The foundations of teaching and education in (Estonian) German supplemental schools], p. 25, in: IHRC, The Eesti Koolide Keskus (Coordinating Center for Estonian Supplemental Schools) Records.



goals of the Supplemental School was to give children the skills to speak with God using the Estonian language. Although everyday life in school, university and the job market was inevitably in English, ideally playtime, prayer and family life were to be experienced in Estonian. And indeed, according to the results of a youth survey published in 1960, 68% of boys and 72% of girls claimed to pray in Estonian.<sup>25</sup>

These percentages would inevitably change, as did the composition of the faculty. At first, the teachers in supplemental schools were mostly professionals who had received their pedagogical preparation in independent Estonia and had taught there as well as in Displaced Person's camps in Germany. As years went by, things changed and it was professional teachers who had received their pedagogical education in exile, as well as parents and youth group leaders without formal pedagogical education who came to dominate the faculty.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, the Supplemental Schools recruited their alumni to teach what it is they had learned there to the new generation thus creating not only a community, but also a cycle of knowledge acquisition and distribution. For all intents and purposes, the definition of a teacher among the Estonians in America was very inclusive and applied to everyone who was in one way or another engaged with exerting knowledge and experience in a diaspora school.<sup>27</sup>

Contemporaries noted<sup>28</sup> that the diaspora teachers were somewhat similar to those who made a difference during the national awakening at the end of the nineteenth century. In both cases, substantial personal zeal was

<sup>25</sup> All statistics presented here only reflect the trends for the Estonians in America who were not only eager to make an effort to maintain ethnicity but also able and willing to sacrifice money and time to have their kids educated at the supplemental schools. There were those who for logistical, financial, personal or other reasons were not able to get involved with supplemental schools as well as those who did not want to. It is very difficult to ascertain the exact number of these people and their ratio within the Estonian populace. There were educated guesses deeming them to comprise of approximately one thousand or slightly more persons with half of them involved with structured Estonian activities one way or another. *Väliseestlase Kalender/Vaba Eesti Sõna* 1960, New York 1960, p. 55; KERSTI LUHAÄÄR LINASK: *An Historical Study of Selected Estonian Supplementary Schools in the United States and Canada from 1950 to the Present*, PhD University of Connecticut 1978, p. 79.

<sup>26</sup> In the academic year 1968/69, only 30% of the faculty had a pedagogical education. GASTON RANDVEE: *Meie täienduskoolid USA-s* [Our Supplemental Schools in the US], p. 2, in: IHRC, *The Eesti Koolide Keskus* (Coordinating Center for Estonian Supplemental Schools) Records. Box 1, Folder 2. According to Luhaäär Linask's sample, in the academic year 1950/51 80% of the faculty had a teachers' certificate from Estonia, in the academic year 1975/76, that percentage was merely 29. Interestingly, the number of such teachers was the same for both years – 20. LUHAÄÄR LINASK, *Supplemental Schools* (fn. 25), p. 82.

<sup>27</sup> *Eesti Õpetajate Koondis USA-s Põhikirj*, in: IHRC, *The Albany-Schenectady Eesti Ühing* (Estonian Association in Albany and Schenectady, New York) Records, Box 1, Folder 6.

<sup>28</sup> See for example Johannes Ungerson in the bulletin *Õpperaamatute kirjastamisest* [Regarding the publication of textbooks], n. p. 1977, quot. in LUHAÄÄR LINASK, *Supplemental Schools* (fn. 25), p. 137.

required and exercised in similarly challenging conditions against all odds. Since supplemental schools were in a formative stage<sup>29</sup> and rather underdeveloped, the teachers often needed to explain the significance of an Estonian education to parents, and to convince them to have their children attend school as well as foster their efforts in mastering the Estonian language. The teachers were the ones who were ultimately responsible for creating the study-materials, writing the books and making sure that education happens even in the scarcity of space, commodities and resources.<sup>30</sup> All the while, they themselves had no choice but to donate their time and effort. The teachers' workload added to the strains of their day-job, other societal activities and family life,<sup>31</sup> without yielding substantial economic rewards.

The underlying reason for this reality was that financial support only came from within the Estonian community. Some teachers received nothing in return for their services; others got small monetary gifts on holidays or a tiny compensation for each school day. In any case, none of the schools reimbursed its faculty enough for their activities so that they would cease to be volunteers.<sup>32</sup> This is something that stunned renowned educational expert Herman Rajamaa on his tour of Estonian schools in the US.<sup>33</sup> Being a part of the Estonian diaspora in Sweden, Rajamaa was used to much more favourable terms of funding. Whereas the Nordic country offered money and benefits to their new immigrants, in America, people were left to enjoy freedom of association on their own account. This trained the volunteers to be resourceful in raising money<sup>34</sup> and depending on the situation, schools were able to switch back and forth between requesting tuition or not. Free education was generally considered a better fit for the Estonian spirit. Some opined that considering the significance of schools they ought to be more or less fully funded by organizations and churches, requiring only minor donations from the parents, effectively leaving them with the crucial tasks

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<sup>29</sup> Some argue that to be one of their quintessential attributes. LUHAÄÄR LINASK, Supplemental Schools (fn. 25), p. 3.

<sup>30</sup> JOHANNES UNGERSON: Oopperaamatute probleem paguluses [The problem with textbooks in exile], in: Vaba Eesti Sõna, 9 September 1976; LUHAÄÄR LINASK, Supplemental Schools (fn. 25), pp. 3, 137.

<sup>31</sup> OLEV PARLO: USA-s asuvate Eesti Täienduskoolide aruanne 1950/51 õ.-a. kohta, p. 4, in: IHRC, The Eesti Koolide Keskus (Coordinating Center for Estonian Supplemental Schools) Records, Box 1, Folder 1.

<sup>32</sup> LUHAÄÄR LINASK, Supplemental Schools (fn. 25), pp. 106-108.

<sup>33</sup> HERMAN RAJAMAA: Teine külastusreis USA ja Kanada eesti koolidesse. 1973, pp. 12-14, in: IHRC, The Eesti Koolide Keskus (Coordinating Center for Estonian Supplemental Schools) Records, Box 2, Folder 19.

<sup>34</sup> Schools raised funds with the help of local societies, associations and churches as well as through festivals, donations or foundations set up with that purpose in mind. In some instances, this proved to be enough to run the schools completely free of charge. In other cases, schools needed to raise extra funds through tuition, which was to be paid either per child or per family and was also generally quite modest.

of moral support and lending a helping hand at events and outings.<sup>35</sup> In both cases, the parents were turned from consumers to providers.

Another element that made the American Estonian supplemental school experience stand out was the long distances that both faculty and students needed to cover in order to reach school, stretching as far as a 360 mile round trip.<sup>36</sup> Curiously, in a time and place where busing was such a debated issue, this “caring” was not perceived as detrimental in any way, confirming the view that the busing controversy was more about destination than anything else. In other words, the Estonian school was like a light at the end of the tunnel and, as such, deserved to be reached at all cost for those who were serious about providing their children with an Estonian education. In this aspect, compared to other diasporas, including the Estonian community in Sweden, America prevails. In fact, it would have been inconceivable as a wide spread *modus operandi* for Estonian exile communities in Europe to be that mobile on a regular basis since they lacked the relative affluence and (quite literally) car-driven lifestyle so commonplace among many Estonians in America after the initial period of settling in. One might even go so far as to ascertain the notion of regular mobility as an inherently American Estonian characteristic. The relative scale of proximity and distance was arguably looser in the US than in any other country harbouring an Estonian exile community. Desiring to climb the socio-economic ladder and reach new heights on a personal level was in some cases a push-factor leading entire families away from Estonian centres, yet the distance that would have brought about complete ethnic isolation, was much more extended in the US than anywhere else. A famous example of openness to what can be tagged individual nomadism brought on by the diasporic condition comes from the New York Educational Society’s Men’s Chorus. Reportedly the members covered enough miles combined whilst coming to rehearsal each week that, had circumstances been different, they could have met up in Tallinn, gotten on a bus together, driven to Berlin, rehearsed there and driven back.<sup>37</sup> That being said, there were also those for whom the distances did seem too great. In fact, difficulties reaching schools are often among the concerns listed by people who wish to help supplemental schools advance.<sup>38</sup>

Another frequent cause for distress was the unsuitability of the spaces used for schoolwork. Many supplemental schools started out using private

<sup>35</sup> RANDVEE, Meie täienduskoolid (fn. 26), pp. 2-3.

<sup>36</sup> Andmed eesti koolide kohta USA-s 1975/76. õppeaastal [Data about Estonian Schools in the US], p. 1, in: IHRC, The Eesti Koolide Keskus (Coordinating Center for Estonian Supplemental Schools) Records, Box 1, Folder 1.

<sup>37</sup> MAARJA MERIVOO-PARRO: New Yorgi Eesti Haridusselts ja pagulased [The New York Estonian Educational Society and Refugees], MA-Thesis, Tallinn University 2010, p. 41.

<sup>38</sup> Numerous instances can be found in IHRC, The Eesti Koolide Keskus (Coordinating Center for Estonian Supplemental Schools) Records.

residences (e.g. Minneapolis), rooms in churches (e.g. Long Island), Young Men's Christian Associations (e.g. Willimantic) and Young Women's Christian Associations (e.g. Albany-Schenectady<sup>39</sup>). Only some were able to move to an Estonian House<sup>40</sup> or similarly intended space (e.g. Baltimore). This last scenario might seem like a successful stress-free solution but in fact, few ethnically owned and operated spaces (e.g. the Estonian Houses in Baltimore and Lakewood) had suitable facilities with smaller separate classrooms and larger open halls for dancing or exercise. Most did not. For example in the Long Island school, several groups made use of the same large hall simultaneously.<sup>41</sup> In addition, Estonian Houses had constant problems with furniture that was unsuitable for schooling children; there was also a deficit of blackboards and other supplies. Another problem with having the school at an Estonian House was that in addition to posing as an academic environment, the House was also home to other ethnic endeavours. Having unrelated activities take place during school hours disturbed the children's concentration and distracted the teachers.<sup>42</sup>

With that in mind, not having an Estonian House nearby sometimes proved to be a blessing in disguise because teaching children and holding events at affordable rental spaces, such as YMCAs and YWCAs, International Institutes (which were specifically targeted for immigrants) as well as other similar establishments had its unexpected perks. Firstly, there is no denying that the venues were chosen with both financial and practical aspects in mind – meaning that contrary to when schooling took place in Estonian-owned spaces, there was no incentive to settle on unsuitable rooms. As paying customers, it was possible to choose and negotiate. Moreover, becoming members of these organizations such as the YWCA or International Institute in order to receive certain rights and discounts was instrumental in creating tangible and intangible bonds between the DPs and the wider society. This connects with perhaps one of the most significant dimensions of the supplemental school experience for the organizers – it was an immersion course into the realm of American voluntary associations and empowering enough to facilitate the desire for an umbrella-organization institutionally housing these grass-root initiatives. On par with creating schools and teaching children, efforts were made by the

<sup>39</sup> Albany-Schenectady Eesti Ühingu Protokoll Raamat 1954–1973 [The meeting minutes of the Estonian Association in Albany-Schenectady 1954–1973], p. 33, in: IHRC, The Albany-Schenectady Eesti Ühing (Estonian Association in Albany and Schenectady, New York) Records, Box 1, Folder 1.

<sup>40</sup> Similarly to other ethnic groups, diaspora Estonians also felt the urge to communally acquire properties to call their own and use for societal activities. These buildings became known as Estonian Houses.

<sup>41</sup> LUHAÄÄR LINASK, Supplemental Schools (fn. 25), pp. 104-105.

<sup>42</sup> USA-s asuvate Eesti Täienduskoolide aruanne 1950/51 õ.-a. kohta [Report on Estonian Supplemental Schools in the US during the school year 1950/1951], in: IHRC, The Eesti Koolide Keskus (Coordinating Center for Estonian Supplemental Schools) Records, Box 1, Folder 1.

supplemental school enthusiasts to create a system out of what could at the time loosely be described as an amorphous constellation of activities. In 1950 the *Eesti Koolitoimkond* – Estonian School Committee was formed which assumed leadership in its field and was considered important enough to have three members appointed through the Estonian American National Council.<sup>43</sup> It was rather active until the mid-1960s, but then faded away<sup>44</sup> and in 1970 resurfaced as the Coordinating Centre for Estonian Supplemental Schools,<sup>45</sup> thus becoming the organization one could turn to for help and guidance. They made excellent headway in collecting statistics about school attendance, suggesting procedures and also facilitating and strengthening the communal spirit of those involved in educational activities by providing them with a platform to speak their mind and network to implement change. The Centre coordinated meetings, training-days, and get-togethers for teachers, listened to their concerns and had colleagues share their expertise through oral and written presentations. Much of this conversation was fuelled by discussions around the essence of the education that Supplemental Schools were providing – the input and projected output of classes.<sup>46</sup>

### *Goals, Curriculums, Study Aids*

As might be expected, math or sciences were not among the core subjects in the Estonian Supplemental Schools. Rather, the focus was on “soft” topics that were culturally bound and enabled students to distinguish and emphasize Estonia, its language, history and identity. In essence, the supplemental schools were striving to convey the information that would surely be left untouched by American schools. This was not merely an idealistic endeavour, but also a practical one: even after years away from the homeland, many people were hopeful of returning and keen on making sure their children’s bright future in Estonia would not be compromised by spending their formative years in a foreign country.<sup>47</sup> The first curriculum

<sup>43</sup> The Estonian American National Council, Inc. is a non-profit organization with electable membership created in 1952 to represent American Estonians, support their cultural and political aims as well as raise awareness about Estonian and American Estonian issues among Congress and the US Administration. <http://www.estosite.org/about-eanc> (last access 14 January 2017).

<sup>44</sup> RANDVEE, Meie täienduskoolid (fn. 26), p. 3.

<sup>45</sup> Letter from the Coordinating Center for Estonian Supplemental Schools to managers and patrons of Estonian schools, n.d., in: IHRC, The Albany-Schenectady Eesti Ühing (Estonian Association in Albany and Schenectady, New York) Records, Box 1, Folder 6.

<sup>46</sup> A plethora of correspondence, meeting minutes, evaluation reports and other related documents can be found in: IHRC, The Eesti Koolide Keskus (Coordinating Center for Estonian Supplemental Schools) Records.

<sup>47</sup> Letter by Märt Raud to Olev Parlo, 7 November 1952, in: IHRC, The Parlo, Olev Papers.

specifically targeting American Estonian supplemental schools was created in 1951. It outlined instruction of religion, Estonian language, literature, history, geography and singing. The latter was to provide a unifying repertoire for gatherings and has been self-evaluated as successful. When there was a possibility to teach arts and crafts, it was advised to focus on drawing and creating national patterns and ornaments.<sup>48</sup> The explanatory material on history was very intricately mapped out in this curriculum and considered too detailed in the context of supplemental education. In contrast, contemporaries felt like the explanations about what and how to teach the Estonian language and literature were too scant.<sup>49</sup>

In 1964, Estonians in Sweden completed a new curriculum and tried to distribute it in North America. It reportedly paved the way for Canadian Estonians to develop their own curriculum, but was itself not eagerly adopted, used or even consulted.<sup>50</sup> In 1976, Estonians in Sweden created yet another Estonian language curriculum which was again something that people expressed the need for all over the diaspora, but alas ended up not serving its purpose either.<sup>51</sup> All in all, it can be said that despite these efforts for planning to unify the educational experience of diaspora youth, eventually it was the availability of specific individual teachers that conditioned and determined what the school experience would be like. Classes and curriculum were easily altered from one academic year to the next,<sup>52</sup> again confirming the pivotal role of the individuals who had assumed the role of educator. Just like the teacher's role bore resemblance to that in the times of yore, so too the way in which skills were taught brought to mind the olden days before and during independence. As Kersti Luhaäär Linask wrote in her 1978 doctoral thesis, there is a significant similarity between supplemental schools' activities and the teachings of Johannes Käis (1885–1950, one of the leaders of the school reform movement in pre-WWII

<sup>48</sup> Eesti Täienduskooli õppekavad [Curricula for the Estonian Supplemental Schools], in: IHRC, The Eesti Koolide Keskus (Coordinating Center for Estonian Supplemental Schools) Records, Box 2, Folder 16.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., passim. See LUHAÄÄR LINASK, Supplemental Schools (fn. 25), pp. 82–93; Ülemaailmne Eesti Õpetajate Päev 1972: Ettekanded, läbirääkimised ja resolutsioonid [Global Estonian Teachers Day 1972: Presentations, discussions and resolutions], pp. 3–36, in: IHRC, The Eesti Koolide Keskus (Coordinating Center for Estonian Supplemental Schools) Records, Box 2, Folder 18.

<sup>50</sup> LUHAÄÄR LINASK, Supplemental Schools (fn. 25), pp. 92–94.

<sup>51</sup> As can be deduced by the lack of significant impact to the day-to-day running of the schools. See for example in: IHRC, New Yorgi Eesti Haridusseltsi Eesti Kool [New York Estonian Educational Society Estonian School], Albany-Schenectady Eesti Ühing [Albany-Schenectady Estonian Association], Los Angelese Eesti Täienduskoool [Los Angeles Estonian Supplemental School].

<sup>52</sup> See for example Albany-Schenectady Eesti Ühingu Protokoll Raamat 1954–1973 [The meeting minutes of the Estonian Association in Albany-Schenectady 1954–1973], pp. 85–107, in: IHRC, The Albany-Schenectady Eesti Ühing (Estonian Association in Albany and Schenectady, New York) Records, Box 1, Folder 1.

Estonia) about *Üldõpetus* – an approach that was focused on teaching a theme or topic simultaneously through several subjects.<sup>53</sup>

In Supplemental Schools the teaching of language, music, singing, history, culture, literature and poetry were often clustered together – choosing the material consciously with an integrative approach in mind made it possible to encompass many of these in one single session. It was also somewhat of a tradition to hold celebrations at schools and have the children perform for their parents and the wider community, thus giving the younger generation an outlet for showcasing their achievements. Moreover, school-based choirs, music and folkdance groups, gymnastics and sports teams gave youngsters the opportunity to be at large-scale Estonian events as active participants in their own right. Those experiences were expected to be beneficial for building their sense of accomplishment as Estonians. It also gave them a clearer vision of what it meant to be part of the global Estonian diaspora. In their own localities, the Estonian communities were relatively small and scattered, but when they all came together for important events, the experience was sometimes described as overwhelming.<sup>54</sup> It was during these occasions that the Estonian language gained prestige and momentum because kids realized that it really was not just the mother-tongue – jokingly sometimes referred to as the language that (only) one's mother speaks – but a true *lingua franca* that facilitates communication with large groups of people living all over the world in different countries.<sup>55</sup> In fact, this expected variety of context and experience was one of the reasons behind the global thrust to consolidate curricula and develop commonly used study materials as part of an effort to minimize the threat of factions emerging among the young generation, born and raised in different countries and continents. It explains why the history curricula were detailed and debated to the point of redundancy, as was mentioned earlier. School activists recognized that a person's knowledge of history often informs and sometimes determines their opinion on contemporary political issues and plays a huge role in shaping their personal view on the world.<sup>56</sup> After all, the supplemental schools were not just an educational alternative or a form of community engagement, but also a political project part and parcel of the ongoing *välisvõitlus* – the “outside battle” for re-establishing Estonia as an independent country. Thus, teaching history provided an opportunity for fine-tuning the students' imagination about the homeland, its people, culture, friends and foes. Interestingly, in some schools young Estonians

<sup>53</sup> LUHAÄÄR LINASK, Supplemental Schools (fn. 25), pp. 85.

<sup>54</sup> This has proven to be a spontaneously recurring topic in my oral history work among the American Estonians. See the speech by GASTON O. RÄNDVEE during the West Coast Estonian Days in Oakland, 1975, in: IHRC, The Eesti Koolide Keskus (Coordinating Center for Estonian Supplemental Schools) Records.

<sup>55</sup> LUHAÄÄR LINASK, Supplemental Schools (fn. 25), pp. 85-87.

<sup>56</sup> Argumentation based on the bulk of documents to be found in: IHRC, The Eesti Koolide Keskus (Coordinating Center for Estonian Supplemental Schools) Records.

were encouraged to read up on the “Communist Manifesto”, writings by Lenin and the Constitution of USSR,<sup>57</sup> whereas in others pupils were taught the narrative of imprisonment, murder, deportation, enslavement and the enemy destroying Estonianness<sup>58</sup> in more general terms.<sup>59</sup> In both cases, prescriptive literature on this subject was usually framed around the discourse of objectivity and “setting the record straight”.<sup>60</sup>

That being said, what often happened was the passing of normative value judgments while being oblivious to the myths and prejudices that informed them. This goal of creating a belief in a one-sided absolute truth became more understandable when looking at the larger picture – one of the reasons for the schools to exist in the first place was to provide an alternative explanation to the education that the young people received and were taught by mainstream America. It is not unfathomable to argue that the supplemental schools did not search for dialogue, since they believed themselves to be creating one just by being there and providing children with their specific politically and culturally conditioned viewpoints on reality.

Some schools had separate libraries to do this; others shared theirs with larger organizations. In the 1973 report on his second tour of Estonian schools in the US and Canada, educational expert Herman Rajamaa was openly critical about what he perceived as a backlog in study materials. He found the readers to be inexcusably out of date and teachers unaware of newer developments or simply unconcerned about innovation in this area. He also expressed surprise over the scarcity of textbooks – kids from different families had to share and teachers borrowed theirs from the already undersupplied class.<sup>61</sup> Since fresh textbooks were constantly in print in Soviet Estonia, some exile educators became curious about them and even advocated that they be used with a necessary amount of criticism and censorship in order to outplay the communist propaganda. And indeed, Soviet Estonian textbooks were reported to have been used at this time.<sup>62</sup> However, there was also vehement antagonism to this path for two reasons. First, the obvious fear of communist propaganda and second the fact that these books never provided any positive recognition for the achievements of diaspora

<sup>57</sup> Baltimore'i Eesti Täienduskooli ajaloo töövihik [Baltimore Estonian Supplemental School History work-book], in: IHRC, The Eesti Koolide Keskus (Coordinating Center for Estonian Supplemental Schools) Records, Box 3, Folder 24.

<sup>58</sup> Tänapäeva Eesti ja lähiajaloo õpetamise juhised [The Guide for Teaching Contemporary Estonian History], in: IHRC, The Eesti Koolide Keskus (Coordinating Center for Estonian Supplemental Schools) Records, Box 1, Folder 1.

<sup>59</sup> A tendency to reinforce the image of Estonia as a European and Nordic entity is also discernable, albeit sometimes it is advocated as a simple means of providing context for Estonian history not as a discourse-building device.

<sup>60</sup> EVALD RINK: Eesti ajaloo õpetamisest eesti koolides [Regarding teaching Estonian history at Estonian Schools], p. 1, in: IHRC, The Eesti Koolide Keskus (Coordinating Center for Estonian Supplemental Schools) Records, Box 1, Folder 1.

<sup>61</sup> RAJAMAA, Teine külastusreis (fn. 33), pp. 3-5.

<sup>62</sup> LUHAÄÄR LINASK, Supplemental Schools (fn. 25), p. 101.



Estonians<sup>63</sup> in either culture or politics.<sup>64</sup> Three main arguments surfaced for protecting the freedom to use Soviet Estonian publications. To start with, there was the simple reality that these texts provided opportunities for enrichment because they were new. Others saw them as necessary aids in order to help keep up with the development of the Estonian language. Lastly, it was noted that since the vast majority of texts used at supplemental schools to teach about Estonia focused on the interwar period, there was a real threat that children would inherently come to the conclusion that Estonian history ended in 1944 even though that would be an erroneous assumption. Thus, it would make sense to give them evidence of the fact that Estonia is still a reality and by doing so perhaps even make the Soviet peril more tangible.<sup>65</sup> The easiest way to do all of that that would be via Soviet Estonian books.

As for the younger children who were only just learning to read, teachers in Toronto came up with a clever solution replicated in the United States as well. Since the small Estonian population was in any case not able to produce colourful children's books on their own devices, they instead bought English language books that had beautiful illustrations and then translated and pasted the new Estonian texts on top of the original lines. This effectively solved the issue as far as the youngest children were involved and, in fact, they became the most adamant readers of the whole student body. Apparently they enjoyed these "self-made" books as well as the relative ease of learning to read a phonetic language.<sup>66</sup> The teens, on the other hand, were increasingly drawn to publications that were not only in English, but considered counter-productive and clashing against the values perceived as inherent to Estonianness. Comic books, romance novels and crime fiction

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<sup>63</sup> JOHANNES UNGERSON: Õpperaamatute probleem (fn. 30).

<sup>64</sup> It seems that literature from Soviet Estonia was less controversial than textbooks. There is evidence that it was openly read and discussed in schools and societies. LUHAÄÄR LINASK, Supplemental Schools (fn. 25), p. 101. Writings and artwork by students about their impressions of Soviet Estonian author Eno Raud's work, in: IHRC, The Albany-Schenectady Eesti Ühing (Estonian Association in Albany and Schenectady, New York) Records, Box 1, Folder 8. Audiomaterial of Walter Rand giving a lecture about his theories regarding estology, in: IHCR, The Veedam, Voldemar Papers, Box 1.

<sup>65</sup> Interestingly, this debate on what to teach about history proved to be an evergreen one lasting all the way up until the eve of the end of exile. The Coordinating Center for Estonian Supplemental Schools held a meeting in Lakewood on August 18th 1990 and the new chairman is reported to have asserted that "Estonian history for Supplemental Schools ought to begin with the (National) Awakening and end with the occupation of the Estonian State during the Second World War," and summarize everything that happened before and after on just a few text book pages. See Coordinating Center for Estonian Supplemental Schools meeting minutes, 18 August 1990, in: IHRC, The Eesti Koolide Keskus (Coordinating Center for Estonian Supplemental Schools) Records, Box 1, Folder 1; LUHAÄÄR LINASK, Supplemental Schools (fn. 25), p. 143.

<sup>66</sup> LUHAÄÄR, LINASK, Supplemental Schools (fn. 25), pp. 101-104.

comprised the core of what became known as inferior literature.<sup>67</sup> American parents were thought to have been in a better position to neutralize the detrimental effects stemming from these texts, whereas Estonian parents with poorer language skills were sometimes left in the dark about the contents of the books that their teenagers were reading. Moreover, since these type of issues had not been an everyday reality in interwar Estonia, the parents had little experience with how to deal with it,<sup>68</sup> which is why this hazy underbelly of the printing press was considered as a threat to the *Bildung* or *kasvatatus* (education) implemented at home and school.

In order to help parents navigate the stormy waters of raising children, several books were published in the diaspora. One of the more prominent ones in this category of prescriptive literature was Rajamaa's "Käsiraamat eesti koolide õpetajaile ja noortejuhtidele" (Handbook for Estonian school teachers and youth leaders), printed in 1973. In the book, Rajamaa elaborated on psychological issues and thus provided a significant contribution to literature in Estonian about the contemporary issue of how to raise children. There is no doubt that he saw himself as a mediator between this information produced and distributed in foreign languages and the Estonian parents who needed more knowledge about theory and methodology in order to be successful both at teaching their children to be a part of Estonian culture and informed on modern challenges. However, such aspirations underestimated the level of the audience's previous contact with prescriptive literature and overestimated their level of competence with the Estonian language. At least some American Estonian parents indicated that they had already found such information in English and upon comparison considered the latter easier to comprehend and hence more useful.<sup>69</sup> The complex topics and sophisticated language made it a difficult read. Hence, in a way, this was just one more book that was lost in translation and that did not communicate with its audience in the way that the author intended. Manoeuvring ethnicity and adolescence in the diaspora was a layered conundrum that challenged Estonian parents all over America. It was every bit as demanding on the children as well.

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<sup>67</sup> JOHN SPRINGHALL: *Youth, Popular Culture and Moral Panics. Penny Gaffs to Gangsta-Rap, 1830–1997*, London 1998, p. 121–146.

<sup>68</sup> Tõsine oht [Grave danger], in: Meie Noored, 26 January 1955, in: IHRC, Eesti Koolide Keskus (Coordinating Center for Estonian Schools) Records, Box 3, Folder 25.

<sup>69</sup> Correspondence between Leena Aare, Herman Rajamaa and Lilian Esop, in: IHRC, The Albany-Schenectady Eesti Ühing (Estonian Association in Albany and Schenectady, New York) Records, Box 1, Folder 6.

### *Experiencing the Supplemental Schools*

Usually the Estonian Supplemental School came in concert with extra-curricular activities, such as scouts and guides, dance-classes and singing. Organizing all activities on one day meant that the kids would only have to come in once a week, or put in another way – the parents would only have to bring them in once a week. Also, since subsequent activities take up more time than separate ones, parents and chaperones were able to use that time for running errands or engaging in some recreation of their own. This was also at least in part the underlying reason behind allowing parents to drop off not only their school-aged children, but also toddlers and pre-schoolers.<sup>70</sup> As Luhaäär Linask wrote in 1978, the kids who came to school with their older sisters and brothers were allowed to stay and be acquainted with other kids and the Estonian space “while the parents were free to go shopping”.<sup>71</sup> On occasion, the adults’ desire to have an enjoyable social experience gave them the willpower to resist bouts of laziness and opposition to supplemental education from their offspring. A New York mother reveals: “It didn’t matter whether my kids liked it or not – us moms were having a great time.”<sup>72</sup> It was common knowledge that kids were not always eager to be a part of the Supplemental School. After surviving a long week at their American school, they would have preferred to sleep in, play with friends, read (some of that anathemized inferior literature in the form of) comic books and watch TV instead of engaging with more learning.<sup>73</sup> Since the active Estonian parents found themselves in a constant overloaded of tasks, the importance of this opportunity to relax and mingle under the auspices of school can hardly be overrated. It provided a chance to be among people with similar hopes, dreams, fears and obstacles. There is even evidence to suggest that on occasion this quasi support group for adults overshadowed the activities of the school itself. Director of the Albany-Schenectady School, Leena Aare confessed to her colleague Lilian Esop in Baltimore that she is “having the toughest time with moms who gather in the Estonian school as if for a café-night. Granted, there is no coffee involved, but the conversation flows for hours, children are running around on their own devices and precious time goes to waste.”<sup>74</sup> She also expressed her desire to find a way to shake them up and make them

<sup>70</sup> New Yorgi Eesti Haridusseltsi Täienduskooli õppenõukogu protokollid (2. raamat) [The New York Estonian Educational Society Supplemental School Board meeting minutes (Book 2)], p. 73 overleaf, in: IHRC, New Yorgi Eesti Haridusseltsi Eesti Kool (New York Estonian Educational Society) Records, Box 1.

<sup>71</sup> LUHAÄÄR LINASK, Supplemental schools (fn. 25), pp. 115.

<sup>72</sup> MERIVOO-PARRO, New Yorgi Eesti Haridusselts (fn. 37), p. 76.

<sup>73</sup> See fn. 89. This has proven to be a spontaneously recurring topic in my oral history work among the American Estonians.

<sup>74</sup> LEENA AARE: Letter to Lilian Esop, 27 February 1977, in: IHRC, The Albany-Schenectady Eesti Ühing (Estonian Association in Albany and Schenectady, New York) Records, Box 1, Folder 6.

realize that time could be spent much better, but feared disciplining the parents might incite them to simply stop bringing their kids to school.<sup>75</sup> Overall, the window of opportunity on me-time was not always counter-productive, but could be confusing because of the ever-changing roles people had on the spectrum of student-parent-volunteer-teacher.

Another aspect that set the Supplemental School experience aside from a regular one was the habit of administrators to divide the student body into two or three groups instead of having separate grades. A prosaic reason behind having fewer student-collectives to work with was the scarcity of space suitable for educational activities as has already been discussed. Nevertheless, even without such restrictions, there was usually not enough pupils and faculty to justify a traditional grade-based division. At first the groups were drawn up primarily using the age-principle, later language proficiency and knowledge of Estonia came to play a bigger role in assigning prospective pupils to these “development-groups”.<sup>76</sup> Thus, when local Estonian Hillar Paju’s American sweetheart Bonnie Riaz wanted to learn the Estonian language, she attended classes with toddlers at the Los Angeles Estonian Supplemental School.<sup>77</sup> In the Baltimore School, an American woman Lori Lutser, who was married to an Estonian man in Pennsylvania made a point of bringing their three kids across state lines to study at the supplemental school with them.<sup>78</sup>

As years went on, the language competency among pupils demonstrated a decline to the point where schools were obliged to create separate groups for non-toddler non-speakers. In order to attract as many young minds as possible, bilingualism was avidly encouraged by faculty and other protagonists who were arguing in its favour and highlighting the benefits. Having two languages was equated with having two eyes and two ears – it enriches ones experience of the world.<sup>79</sup>

On a principal level though, especially outside the school system, moods were far less favourable. The people voicing their negative opinions on bilingualism seemed to be equally annoyed and distraught by the threats of bilingualism in Estonia and in the United States. Whereas in the former, Russian was imposed by Soviet politics, in the case of latter, giving the English language precedence over Estonian seemed to be perceived as voluntary action. At times, a certain naivety is detectable in not recognizing the volume of work and effort it takes to resist linguistic assimilation. What many failed to realize was that in the case of American Estonians, bilingualism really was not about whether one ought to become fluent in

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> RANDVEE, Meie täienduskoolid USA-s (fn. 26), p. 1.

<sup>77</sup> Los Angelesest, in: Vaba Eesti Sõna, 27 June 1974.

<sup>78</sup> A.J.L.: Ka Ameeriklased õpivad Baltimore Eesti koolis [Americans also study at the Baltimore Estonian School], in: Vaba Eesti Sõna, 28 May 1970.

<sup>79</sup> Felix Oinas about bilingualism, in: IHRC, The Eesti Koolide Keskus (Coordinating Center for Estonian Supplemental Schools) Records, Box 1, Folder 5.

English and use it on an everyday basis, but whether or not the Estonian language was to receive the same privilege. Overall though it was obvious that the slim pickings on offer for those suffering under the diasporic condition meant that bilingualism was ultimately not perceived as a virtuous opportunity, but rather a lesser of many evils. The main goal was posterity. Sociologist Tõnu Parming even went so far as to do the math and suggest each American Estonian family have at least 6.67 offspring. He estimated that since Estonian immigrants have been extraordinarily successful in coming to terms with the American way of life and quickly climbing the socio-economic ladder, reaching the same heights with one generation as others have in several, mixed marriages will have a more sudden and overwhelming effect than what has usually been predicted for newcomers. This why he advocated a narrower focus on the Estonian language, radically restructuring all organizations to benefit the younger generation and incite them to get more involved. Since ethnic intermarriage was dwindling, he not only argued for all-Estonian families to have as many children as possible, but considered adoption from Finland or the Finnish diaspora in America to be a viable option for growing the populace.<sup>80</sup>

Being inclusive towards Americanized Estonians as well as members of other nations and ethnicities was also propagated by the estology<sup>81</sup> theoretician Walter Rand. He deplored the differentiation between exiles harbouring dissimilar language skills and/or cultural competence. Instead Rand promoted considering the intentions and interest exhibited by a person as the true indicator of their potential in furthering the Estonian cause. For him there was much to lose when a mixed couple and their offspring were pushed away from societal life and much to gain when they were drawn in. He even went so far as to assert that mixed marriage should be seen as an empowerment for the community since it brings with it fresh blood and otherwise unobtainable advocates for the Estonian cause, winning them over in a way.<sup>82</sup> Having the aforementioned classes for non-speakers increased the accessibility of Estonian education. Indeed, there were students who had no Estonian heritage, just Estonian friends or loved-ones who sat side by side with young Estonians, learning to say things like *Isa, palun raha* and *Kus on sinu uus jalgratas?*<sup>83</sup> Albeit the number of people with

<sup>80</sup> TÕNU PARMING: Eestluse säilitamisest paguluses [Regarding the maintenance of Estonianness in exile], in: IHRC, The Eesti Koolide Keskus (Coordinating Center for Estonian Supplemental Schools) Records, Box 3, Folder 23.

<sup>81</sup> Estology (in Estonian: *estoloogia*) is a constellation of ideas regarding the implications of being Estonian, which Walter Rand tagged the philosophy of Estonianness (in Estonian: *eestluse filosoofia*). See WALTER RAND: Eestlus on looming [Estonianness is a creative venture], Tallinn 1994.

<sup>82</sup> Audiomaterial of Walter Rand giving a lecture about his theories regarding estology, in: IHCR, The Veedam, Voldemar Papers, Box 1.

<sup>83</sup> Rough translation: Father, money please. Where is your new bicycle. See Eesti keelt mittevaldajate klass 1973/74. – 1977/78. õppeaastani Connecticuti Eesti Koolis [Connecticut Estonian School – class for students who don't speak Estonian,

a claim to Estonianness was thus constantly increasing, another somewhat surprising parallel with Soviet Estonia gained momentum in the context of this posterity debate. Value judgments about the growing presence of Soviet immigrants in Estonia and the volume of diaspora Estonians in the free world were both perceived as tragedies.<sup>84</sup>

At times the pursuit of Estonianness in exile bears resemblance to a secular religion in which case the observances taking place at Estonian Houses can also be said to have been held in temples erected in the shared mentality with one purpose – to serve the national body. Despite vigorous efforts by the parents, community and the young ones themselves, many people who had gone through the extensive program of education and recreation – *kasvatust* and thus had all the tools and knew how to be an American Estonian and carry on the tradition and culture of their group chose not to and instead strayed from the establishment. Interestingly, others who had not been involved by their parents were looking for a way in after they had missed out on all the activities that were supposed to instil in them that very same need to connect which they had developed spontaneously on their own. Thus, it can be said that there was no one magic recipe for creating posterity. Naturally this made many people wonder whether it was in fact worthwhile to donate countless hours and hard earned dollars for a system that could only declare their goals, but never truly achieve them. In response to these concerns, a certain instrumentalism can be detected to have arisen – the tool of Estonian education and recreation took precedence over the task and populace at hand, as schools, organizations and events were somehow transformed from carriers and facilitators of traditions to traditions in and of themselves.

Thus, young generations were expected to fit the mould cut out for them decades before they were born. The reason behind this development was not inadequacy or laziness on the part of the older generation. If anything, they can be diagnosed with extreme stamina: in the face of a changing youth culture, the establishment was able to remain largely static and that in itself was an exercise in fortitude. Behind this somewhat irrational situation was the anxiety over validity. Change in any direction was feared to be a result of Americanization. There was a constant tension between the desire to innovate and the desire to maintain tradition. Given that the DP-generation, who had lived in Estonia was the one who set up the social reality of the Estonian refugee diaspora in America, what they chose to do and the way in which they chose to go about things, carried a great deal of authority. With this in mind, educator Aire Salmre exhorted the need to constantly critically rethink organized activities so that they “wouldn’t turn into a Pyrrhic victory where battles are won, but wars are lost. Estonianes,

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1973/74–1977/78], in: IHRC, The Albany-Schenectady Eesti Ühing (Estonian Association in Albany and Schenectady, New York) Records, Box 1, Folder 7.

<sup>84</sup> See for example ÜNGERSON, *Õpperaamatute probleem* (fn. 30).

just like any other culture, only perseveres if it has something valuable to offer to its environment.”<sup>85</sup> It stands to reason that in order to survive, even the most perfect establishments need to evolve and meet new challenges with new solutions. In rhetoric, the young generation was put on the pedestal as heirs to the culture and carriers of the diasporic condition from the very beginning. Indeed, that is what justified the allocation of social and material capital to their communal upbringing through societal activities, supplemental schools, camps and scholarships. In his analysis, Rajamaa admits that the challenges Estonian teachers in the US and Canada are constantly faced with, cannot even be conceived by those who never left Europe. Notwithstanding the obvious obstacles that might hinder success, he nevertheless doesn't shy away from predicting that North America will remain the focal point of exile youth work because of the sheer portion of young people in the diaspora society.<sup>86</sup>

All in all, it can be said that even with all their flaws and shortcomings, the Supplemental Schools also “have some accomplishments, among them the publication of several dozen books (texts and reading books) for young people, and most probably also some effect in instilling an awareness of being Estonian and of its worth to its students.”<sup>87</sup> A common narrative in student writings is that of the lazy kid who at the time was not able to appreciate his/her parents' efforts in making her participate in the Estonian school only to realize years later how worthwhile the whole enterprise was.<sup>88</sup> Before that narrative could become lived reality, the narrative

<sup>85</sup> AIRE SALMRE: Eesti kool, keel ja noored, in: Vaba Eesti Sõna, 28 March 1974.

<sup>86</sup> RAJAMAA, Teine külastusreis (fn. 33), p. 14.

<sup>87</sup> LUHAÄÄR LINASK, Supplemental Schools (fn. 25), p. 3.

<sup>88</sup> Linda E. wrote: “Aeg möödus ja pühapäeval instinktiivselt läksid eesti kooli. Küll me punnisime vastu midagi hirmsat, aga see ei aidanud. Pistime pea kuuma vette, et tekiks palavik, mida ei olnud ja oigasime emale. Aga kui juba said peale selle haiseva sõidu läbi Baltimore linna kooli, siis polnud asi enam nii hull. Kui pr. Esop luges meile jutte loomadest eesti metsades ja meie joonistasime ettekujutuse järgi. Ma arvan, et peaaegu kõige meeldivam tund oli vahetund, kus mängisime ja sõime prahti nagu närimiskumm, Coca-Cola ja rasvaseid kartulilõike. Nagu kõigil on kord lõpp, nii on sündinud see viimane produkt – kõik nende pikkade aastate õppimine eesti kultuurist, mis annab mulle täielikult erineva tunde, et olen rikastatud teadmistega, mida keegi ei või röövida ja mina mitte kaotada.” [Time went on and on Sundays we instinctively went to the Estonian school. We tried so hard not to, but to no avail. We stuck our heads in hot water to forge a fever and moaned to mother. But when you got to school after that stinky drive through Baltimore, things weren't so bad anymore. Mrs. Esop read us stories about animals in Estonian forests and we drew what was in our imagination. I think that my favorite part was recess when we played and ate garbage like chewing gum, Coca-Cola and greasy potato chips. As everything comes to an end, so has this all concluded in the final product – after all of these long years of learning about Estonian culture I feel special, as if I have been enriched with knowledge which nobody can rob me of and I can never lose]. See Baltimore Bülletään no. 91, September 1974. In addition to periodicals, such narratives can be found in the vast collection of scholarship applications to the Eesti Üliõpilaste Toetusfond USAs [Estonian Students Fund in the US], in: IHRC, Lellep, Jüri Papers.

logically proceeding it was embraced – the narrative of the lazy kid herself. Apparently, there were many dissenting views from the student body and nobody can blame the schools of censorship. On the contrary, children often expressed their distress and had their feelings conveyed to more than just their immediate surroundings – some were even published in periodicals. Furthermore, this was often done without much editing. There was apparently no shame about having an independent and, to an extent, Americanized student body who was not completely literate in Estonian. It was a shame not to have one at all. The mission was to be alert and aware of dangers as well as potential pitfalls, thus good solid and valid information was crucial.

This freedom of opinion and overall liberalism within students writings was not something that was simply tolerated, it seems to at least occasionally been a source of pride.

As was already stated, the age of enrolment varied from community to community – in some places only school-aged kids would attend, in others there were separate kindergarten-groups and yet elsewhere, children of different age groups were educated together. Thus, it only stands to reason that when it came to graduation, the same kind of autonomy was exercised. Some schools held elaborate ceremonies in recognition of the diligence of the students and thus provided them with an experience of a rite of passage so that they could feel the impetus to step up and engage with other activities in the wider ethno-societal life. Some schools did no such thing due to an effort to consciously refrain from giving youngsters any feeling of closure or completeness in order to keep them tightly knit to the school for years on end without an excuse or justification to stray away.<sup>89</sup> This seemingly infinite perpetuation set at least some of the supplemental schools apart<sup>90</sup> from their American counterparts.

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<sup>89</sup> Supplemental schools tried to pave the path for young ones to be included in official observances of the Independence Day, Victory Day etc. as speakers. It was considered an honor and a privilege to have the opportunity to address the whole community on these somewhat sacred days. Many believed that this would increase social cohesion. Gaston O. Randvee emphasized the importance of this practice when addressing those gathered at the West Coast Estonian Days in Oakland (1975). He quotes an anonymous youngster stating that taking part in Estonian festivities is uplifting, singing the anthem is moving but listening to political speeches is unpleasant to support his opinion about the importance of engaging the young generation as performers. However, some young ones believed that this practice of using theme tokens was actually limiting their input and placing them in a box instead of giving them wings. LUHAÄÄR LINASK, Supplemental Schools (fn. 25), p. 86; Speech by Gaston O. Randvee at the West Coast Estonian Days in Oakland, 1975, p. 2, in: IHRC, The Eesti Koolide Keskus (Coordinating Center for Estonian Supplemental Schools) Records, Box 1, Folder 1.

<sup>90</sup> Another characteristic that set the Estonian school aside from the American one was recess as a time when students could exercise their creativity and social skills through spontaneous unstructured activities and play as well as apparently eat chewing gum (see fn. 88).



*Private Ponderings in a Public School:  
Exploring DP-Teens*

However, the Estonian community and the opportunities it presented did not constitute the only scene of ethnic reflection for second generation American Estonians. In fact, by chance their coming of age happened during a time where searching and finding rootedness in ethnicity was gaining momentum in the mainstream. While many American ethnics became to experience a revival of interest and activity on this front, Estonians – similarly to other post World War II arrivals – were able to gain from a continuation of this disposition.<sup>91</sup>

One *locus* of large-scale social engineering that influenced young people to acknowledge and explore their ethnic make-up was the very same public school system, which was touched upon in the beginning of this article. The Minnesota Historical Society houses an archive, which resembles a small time-capsule in this respect – a collection of essays written to convey a sort of ethnic self-portrait of a group of students at the Minneapolis Edison High School. These texts are not only a fascinating read, but also help make allusions as to where one might begin to contextualize the American Estonian experience in the wider palette of US diasporas.<sup>92</sup>

University of Minnesota and Columbia University educated Birdella M. Ross was a teacher at the Minneapolis Edison High School for 35 years and became something of a legend with countless stories about her told and retold by former students. In the early sixties, she had her pupils tell their story by writing about their family history to explore their ethnicity and roots. These narratives were written by teenagers of European descent with Czechoslovakian, Danish, Estonian, French-Canadian, German, Irish, Italian, Norwegian, Polish, Russian, Swedish and Ukrainian ancestry. For the overwhelming majority, intercontinental migration was not something that the writers themselves had experienced. Young Gunnar Viljaste, representing Estonia, belongs to a minority that had. Perhaps this is why teacher has scribbled the words “You should have so much to tell!” on one of his papers. This remark might have been used as a provocation for Gunnar to elaborate more since his narratives tended to be scant.<sup>93</sup> His classmates, however, are candid and an interesting dichotomy arises in terms of how the young writers in Ms Birdella’s class understand and relate to the term “teenager”. When writing about their ancestor’s life, it seems that they were among other things required to address that certain age that they were in themselves – not a child anymore, not yet an adult. This

<sup>91</sup> WALKO, Rejecting the Second Generation Hypothesis (fn. 20).

<sup>92</sup> If not otherwise noted, all references and citations are from the collection: Family Histories, 1961, 1963, compiled by BIRDELLA M. ROSS, in: The Minnesota Historical Society Library.

<sup>93</sup> This could be attributable to his still evolving language skills, personal or student character.

could have been something that the teacher might have asked her pupils to involve as a separate section in order to give them the tools to relate and make a connection between themselves and those before them. However, as has been established, the post-war American teenager experience was rather unique in that it provided more freedom and entitlement at a massive scale than ever before. Thus, the writers who were in the midst of this experience, became aware that this was not a universal epoch in the lives of everybody and that in fact their own ancestors had led quite a different existence altogether.<sup>94</sup>

As was already mentioned, the Estonian representative Gunnar was not the wordiest writer in the bunch, but he did occasionally share more than just the bare minimum. For instance, when writing about his mother's life during the fifteen years that he himself had been alive, he wasn't shy about voicing his opinion that "the lives of our family are more interesting than the lives of most other families". He goes on to describe life in German Displaced Person's camps with their food shortages, shared living space, winter cold and constant moving around. In connection to the latter he confesses that a certain negotiation between personal and collective memory has altered the way that he evaluates what happened. As a child he had considered moving interesting, but now found it must have been a difficult time for his parents who had to make do and keep their family going in tough conditions and without any help. Gunnar concludes his narrative by stating "People in Europe at this time had to make the most of anything that they had".

To get a better understanding of the generational fractions within the Estonian diaspora and begin to fathom who the active parents on the Supplemental school scene were, reference must be made to their own teenage experience. The coming of age in wartime and post-war Europe among

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<sup>94</sup> Marilyn Anderson addressed her German and Irish roots and stumbled upon this discrepancy when writing about her mother, whose difficult adolescence was anything but what Marilyn knew to be the proper teenage experience (in her own words a rapid and all-consuming personal change with a high need for security). In order to sooth this conflict, she first gives information on what she has learned and seems to believe to be true about teen years and then yields the floor to her mother's difficult and perplexing past with the bridge-building words: "My mother reveals her teen-age years with a sigh." A seemingly opposite approach, but one that is actually carrying the same emotion can be found in Nadia Bryn's discussion of her Ukrainian mother's politically engaged and complicated coming of age. In order to escape the paradox that Marilyn had tried to rationalize, Nadia decides to reject the term teenager right from the start. She goes on to explain her own philosophy on the topic and concludes that as far as she is concerned, what some people call teenage years, for her is "just a time of youth without a name." She elaborates that researching her mother's past and writing the paper at hand was what made her initial distrust towards the term into the vehement dismissal that it is now: "You see, I cannot apply the word teenager to the life of my mother (...). It doesn't seem to fit. Another thing about this word is that it seems to imply that the person called a teen-ager is immature. My mother never was. She didn't have the time."

the Estonian Displaced Persons in the US governed zone of Germany was rather different from that in the continental US as far as life-style, specific activities and manifestations were involved. In Europe, the war had an even more destructive effect on everyday life and family stability. Even the “lucky” DP-kids, who had both parents with them, were forced to share a cramped living space with dozens of other people and either rely on the camp management for sustenance and see their parents self-esteem whither or hardly see them at all, when they did find work. There were also many orphans and children separated from their parents as well as those who had fought in the war ahead of their time. Even though then and there juvenile delinquency was not the umbrella term used, there were many youngsters who presented major problems for camp schools – from simple issues of disregard towards discipline to acts of petty crime and even murder. Initial lenience regarding habits of smoking or alcohol abuse gradually hardened to a lower level of tolerance for any transgressions, meaning those who would not change their ways, were indeed thrown out of school. There were also rare cases where parents discouraged their children from attending schools in camp for different reasons varying from logistical problems to the conviction that new countries of residence would not value education, but expect refugees to commit to manual labour.<sup>95</sup>

As for the ones who did attend camp schools during the DP-years, they were often able to benefit from highly qualified instruction and, by one report, even had a stronger sense of being Estonian than the people who only went to school in Estonia. This was attributed to the fact that the totality of societal, educational and everyday life centred on the lived reality of being a refugee. Thus, it is no wonder that camp-school graduation essays often contained strong ethnic manifestations.<sup>96</sup> The original writings are unobtainable, but bits and pieces can be found in the print media. In 1949 educator Olev Parlo took up the task of summarizing, analysing and thankfully also quoting essays dealing with individual and collective national identity written by Estonian students in US-governed Geislingen, Baden-Württemberg.<sup>97</sup>

The segments Parlo has chosen to quote are worded in a way that can be said to be personal and general at the same time. Words such as Estonia, Estonian and Estonianism almost seem to be too raw for this type of narrative and more often than not, they are replaced by constructs that can be interpreted as euphemisms. For instance, in lieu of “Estonian language”, students write “mother tongue”, instead of “Estonians”, they jot down

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<sup>95</sup> USA-ala Eestlaste Keskesinduse Haridusosakonna tegevuse aruanne [Report on the Educational Activities among the Estonians in the American zone], 1.3.1948–30.4.1949, pp. 6-7, in: IHRC, The Parlo, Olev Papers.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> OLEV PARLO: Noored võitluses vaba Eesti idee eest [Youth in Battle For the Idea of Free Estonia], in: Eesti Post, 29 April 1949, and 6 May 1949.

“compatriots”, in place of “Estonia” there is “homeland”.<sup>98</sup> Some essays expose great disillusionment with life on a personal, social and political level. One writer laments the absolute lack of justice in international affairs; another confesses to having been reshaped by the atrocities of war; a third one decries young women who marry foreigners and let their children grow up without learning their real mother tongue. Parlo seconds all of these motions in their variety. When elaborating on the issue of intermarriage, Parlo explains that the underlying reason for this is the fact that it is extremely challenging for an exile community to raise young ones in a way that would make them naturally inclined to seek romantic love that harmonizes well with love for the homeland and all that it entails.<sup>99</sup>

For one young woman, all the love in the world was not enough to make her confident that her generation would not be the last one to “carry the spirit of the Kalevs”. She raises the question whether children, who are born and raised without any tangible contact with the homeland, could even be expected to share the exact same sense of nationality as those who have that experience: “for the ones who are born Estonian without seeing the meadows and forests, without hearing how the cuckoo calls in Mary’s Land, cannot bring their children up in the same spirit as us who have drank it in with mother’s milk”.<sup>100</sup> She is not alone in her reflections. In fact, Parlo recognizes that many address it, but at least according to his estimation, in a more positive and constructive way. A poetic dialogue emerges when Jyri Kork makes his point about perseverance: “even the seven hundred year night of slavery could not break our people. We must plant into the very soul of our descendants the indelible calling of the breathing earth of Nordic springtime and white summer nights”.<sup>101</sup> According to Parlo, all who express concern on this subject also emphasize the power of language – school instruction, literature and journalism in Estonia are perceived both a means and an end in the maintenance of national identity. One youngster even goes so far as to define written language as a territory shared by the increasingly global exile diaspora.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> One should be careful with drawing conclusions since Parlo’s role in picking, choosing and possibly editing the quotes in this set of articles is a given and thus these texts lack the handwritten immediacy that could be found in the scholarship applications. That being said, the information they provide is still quite trustworthy mainly because of two reasons. Firstly, Parlo was very engaged with young people during this difficult time and can be thought to have quite a good know-how in both dealing with them and having insight into the way that they viewed the world. Secondly, the set of articles was published in an Estonian-language newspaper read by the local Estonian DP-population. There was no reason not to give as truthful of an image as possible as the aim was to be informed and alert about young people and indeed, Parlo walks the reader through several touchy subjects.

<sup>99</sup> PARLO, Noored võitluses (fn. 97).

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

There are instances where graduates explicitly deal with the implications of being members of their generation. However, at least in the quotes Parlo has chosen to share there is no talk of the condition of being a teenager or anything that could be labelled as very personal in that sense. Albeit from a very formal point of view, not everything they write always seems undisputable and by no means can it be said that these young people are hesitant to declare and profess. In one way or another, most of their rhetoric is somehow connected with a concern for posterity. When listing the challenges and dissecting them, many bridge the gap between perceived reality and hopes for the future with pledges on both a collective and an individual level. With respect to the present and future, Parlo has chosen to share the youngster's combatant rhetoric about being in a sort of a holy war with a mountain of responsibility towards their nation in terms of creating a set of leaders in all realms to carry on the core values of Estonian culture. That culture is perceived as not only the goal but also the weapon in the struggle to achieve the goal, and exile becomes a sort of a probationary period, especially in the face of global remigration and further displacement.

As far as the DP-youths overall political mores and beliefs go, Parlo believes them to have collectively made a case for individualism. According to him, the graduates sense that they perceive the role of the state and society to be a guard dog against mass culture that potentially infringes on individual culture. This somewhat vague and confusing statement could perhaps be one occasion where Parlo goes out on a limb with his conclusions and ceases the opportunity to ground his own moral values in a twisted *argumentum ad verecundiam*. However, as was shown earlier, there is no denying that a deep-seated passion for Estonian education in the Displaced Persons' camps transformed into a passion for Estonian supplemental education in the United States and elsewhere in free world.

### *Conclusion*

Creating and sustaining the Estonian supplemental school scene in the US served many purposes. It created a cycle of knowledge acquisition and distribution wherein people moved around on the spectrum of student-parent-volunteer-teacher. These categories were not mutually exclusive, depending on the situation, one person could be both a consumer and a provider. Organizing supplemental schools was an empowering education in and of itself because it provided the impetus and means for gaining first-hand knowledge and experience within the vibrant scene of American voluntary associations.

In post-war America, various social movements, subtle tendencies and not so subtle ruptures had been paving the way for a more inclusive mentality,

which was oriented at exploring culture outside and beyond the thus far prevalent WASP<sup>103</sup> persuasion. The negotiations on this front are ever-green, but there is no denying that what started as a cabinet of curiosities filled with little tokens of ethnicity slowly but surely gained momentum so much so that in 1972, it made its way into legislation with Congress passing the Ethnic Heritage Studies Act. According to the bill, it sought to recognize America as a multi-ethnic society and provide the heterogeneous populace with the means to express their cultural identities.<sup>104</sup> One of the measures delineated by the act was to support the creation of educational resources for helping teachers tap into the variety of culture and heritage in their classrooms and using it in their teaching.<sup>105</sup> The Estonians for one welcomed the chance to build a platform for themselves and their cause while capturing the hearts and minds of young people. They prepared publications<sup>106</sup> and gave speeches<sup>107</sup> specifically for that purpose, thus in a way extending the mission of the supplemental schools far beyond their default subjects – the young Estonians.

In connection with this, it is important to mention that although there is very little information about voting habits among the Estonian refugee-diaspora, the community members are generally thought to have tended to respond well to Republican anti-communist rhetoric and can be said to have chosen their political affiliations more based on issues of foreign than domestic policy. However, in the case of bringing the multi-ethnic American experience in to the limelight, it was the liberal populace and

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<sup>103</sup> “White Anglo-Saxon Protestant.”

<sup>104</sup> H.R. 994 – 93<sup>rd</sup> Congress: Ethnic Heritage Studies Act. See the URL <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/93/hr994> (last access 5 October 2016).

<sup>105</sup> BENTLEY, Busing (fn. 16), p. 64.

<sup>106</sup> In 1979 a curriculum guidebook was published with the title “Using Estonian/American Based Culture Models for Multicultural Studies. An Innovative Approach to Studying the Multi-cultural, Multi-ethnic Experience” – 174 pages edited by Enn Kõiva and supported by the United States Office of Education, Ethnic Heritage Branch. In it, detailed historical narratives and numerous visual aids strove to convey general cultural comprehension of Estonia, while case studies of Connecticut Estonians and exercises in multicultural connection were utilized to give a more personal and global vista, respectively. The chronology concluding the book is a reflection of these aspirations. It lists large-scale events alongside smaller ones: occupations, purges, deportations, collectivization and exile stand next to such items as “1950 – Connecticut Estonian Society Founded in Willimantic”. Curiously, the authors saw it fitting to draw elaborate analogies between Estonian and Native-Americans history, thus by default excluding themselves from white guilt connected to colonization and slavery. On a similar vein, the curriculum’s prospective outcomes were declared as a list with twelve items, only three of which can be said to be more about universal skill than Esto-specific knowledge. Unfortunately there is no viable information regarding the extent to which this curriculum was used in public schools. See *Using Estonian/American Based Culture Models for Multicultural Studies. An Innovative Approach To Studying the Multi-cultural, Multi-ethnic Experience*, ed. by ENN O. KOIVA, Andover 1979.

<sup>107</sup> MERIVOO-PARRO, *New Yorgi Eesti Haridusselts* (fn. 37), pp. 66-67.

politicians, who paved the way for the social need for self-expressions such as the Estonian ethnic experience curriculum. Thus, it can be argued that the two most important examples of American leadership for the Estonian refugee diaspora came from opposing camps of the political spectrum.

Overall, it can be said that the Estonians' struggle for recognition and activism on the supplemental school front was met with a social climate of support and understanding, at least on a superficial level. The Scylla and Charybdis making the winds of change favourable in this context were the Cold War, which kept the US on a more or less rigid anti-communist stance in par with Estonian refugees; and on the other hand, the growing concern and debate over education and delinquency. The former harmonized well with the political motivation behind supplemental schools – *välisvõitlus*, or the battle for Estonia's independence. The latter fuelled adults' engagement with and interest in providing and supervising educational and recreational activities for young people. Unlike public school faculties, the teachers at the supplemental schools did not need to deal with juvenile delinquency because of two overarching causes. First off, the parents and community were very proactive and involved with the younger generations. The Estonian kids' free time included supplemental school, camps and communal events, which when combined left less opportunity for idleness. The other, perhaps equally important reason was that since there was no legal requirement for kids to attend the supplemental school, there was also no obligation to make space for everyone. The youngsters who either because of their adamant adherence to a subculture or other personal reasons were not considered suitable for the Estonian establishment, simply did not attend.<sup>108</sup>

As part of their efforts to secure the maintenance and development of the Estonian nation and culture in exile, intramural youth work was given the utmost importance. The long distances and scarce network of supplemental schools brought about the emergence of individual nomadism, where families would regularly migrate for a chance to give their children an Estonian education. In addition to supplemental schools, also communal events, camps and religious endeavours were part of the system designed to attract new generations who had little or no exposure to Estonia-proper and instruct them in learning enough to sport a subjectively valid imagination of their own Estonian ethnicity. In the long run, it was hoped this would persuade them to eat, pray and love within the ambiance of Estonianness. All in all, the landscape of Estonian supplemental education in Cold War America can be interpreted as representing both an Estonian

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<sup>108</sup> Further investigation into young Estonians in America who are left unaccounted for within the context of the supplemental schools would undoubtedly yield fascinating results and help locate the mental borderline at which the mechanism of othering comes to place which converts a youth into a rebel.

response to what was going on in the world and an American one to what was going on within the boundaries of the US society.

#### ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

### *Estonian by Education: Estnische Exilschulen in den USA während des Kalten Krieges*

Dieser Artikel untersucht die Infrastruktur des estnischen Exilschulwesens in den Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika während des Kalten Krieges mit Hilfe von Archivmaterialien, die sich mit dem Abenteuer des *Estonian by education* sowie dem Aufbau und der Erhaltung solcher Schulen beschäftigen. Um dem Kern dieser Erfahrung mit dem ergänzenden Schulsystem auf die Spur zu kommen, wird auch kurz auf die wichtigen Schulen in den Lagern der *Displaced Persons* in den westdeutschen Besatzungszonen und einige der dort unterrichteten Jugendlichen eingegangen. Um einen nuancierteren Kontext für das Portrait des Zusammenhangs zwischen Ethnizität und Jugend in den USA während des Kalten Krieges zu erarbeiten, werden auch die Themen der Kulturerbe-Pädagogik (*heritage education*), der Reform der öffentlichen Schulen und der Jugendkriminalität erörtert.

Die estnischen Exilschulen in den USA zu gründen und zu unterhalten hatte viele Gründe. Durch diese Schulen wurde ein Zirkel des Wissenserwerbs und der -verbreitung geschaffen, in dem sich Menschen als Schüler, Eltern, Freiwillige und Lehrer begegneten, wobei diese Kategorien fließend und situationsbedingt waren, man konnte sowohl Konsument als auch Anbieter sein. Die Organisation der Schulen war ein Lernprozess eigener Art, denn er vermittelte aus erster Hand Wissen über und Erfahrung in der lebendigen Szene des amerikanischen Vereinswesens. Insgesamt kann man sagen, dass die Anstrengungen der Esten, um für ihre Aktivitäten im Bereich des eigenen Schulwesens Anerkennung zu erfahren, auf ein grundsätzlich unterstützendes und verständnisvolles Klima trafen, zumindest auf einer oberflächlichen Ebene. Hier ist auf der einen Seite der Kalte Krieg zu nennen, der die USA auf einem mehr oder weniger strikt anti-kommunistischen Kurs hielt, was den estnischen Flüchtlingen durchaus entgegenkam; auf der anderen Seite debattierte eine besorgte US-Gesellschaft in der Nachkriegszeit intensiv über den Zusammenhang von mangelnder Bildung und Jugendkriminalität. Während der erste Aspekt gut mit der politischen Motivation hinter den estnischen Schulen – der „äußere Kampf“ (*välisvõitlus*) für die Unabhängigkeit Estlands –, in Einklang zu bringen war, ließ der zweite das Engagement der Erwachsenen für und



deren Interesse an zielgerichteten Erziehungs- und Erholungsaktivitäten für Jugendliche nur wachsen.

Als Teil der Bemühungen um die Bewahrung der estnischen Nation und deren kultureller Weiterentwicklung im Exil war die interne Jugendarbeit von größter Bedeutung. Die großen Distanzen Nordamerikas und das dünne Netzwerk an schulischen Einrichtungen führten zu einem individuellen Nomadentum, wenn Familien regelmäßig (meist an den Wochenenden) weite Strecken überwand, um ihren Kindern eine estnisch grundierte Zusatzausbildung zu ermöglichen. Neben diesen schulischen Einrichtungen organisierten die Exilgemeinden ein umfängliches System von Angeboten, das aus lokalen Veranstaltungen, Jugendlagern und religiösen Initiativen bestand, um jüngere Generationen, die Estland kaum oder gar nicht kennengelernt hatten, insoweit zu instruieren, dass sie genug lernten, um sich eine eigene, individuell gültige Vorstellung vor ihrer estnischen Ethnizität zu machen. Auf lange Sicht, so die Hoffnung, würden die Jugendlichen auf diese Weise zu überzeugen sein, im Ambiente des Estentums zu essen, zu beten und zu lieben.

Insgesamt repräsentierte die estnische Exilchullandschaft in den USA während des Kalten Krieges sowohl eine estnische Antwort auf das, was in der Welt vor sich ging, als auch eine amerikanische Antwort auf das, was innerhalb der US-Gesellschaft passierte. Beide Welten kamen auf diese Weise zusammen.





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## Estonian by Recreation: Forging Ethnic Imagination through Communal Experience in Urban, Rural and Musical Spaces

Maarja Merivoo-Parro\*

### ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

In der Freizeit zum Esten: Der Aufbau ethnischer Vorstellungskraft durch gemeinschaftliche Erfahrung im städtischen, ländlichen und musikalischen Umfeld

Der Artikel befasst sich mit den gemeinschaftlichen Freizeitaktivitäten von Angehörigen des estnischen Exils im Amerika des Kalten Krieges und beruht auf dem Gedanken, dass diese Gemeinschaften bei dem Bemühen darum, dass ihnen die jungen Leute Zeit und Aufmerksamkeit widmen, nach Bereichen und Orten suchten, um gemeinsam ihr Estnisch-Sein auszuleben. Städtische Orte waren zum einen ständige Einrichtungen wie Estnische Häuser, zum anderen große Kulturveranstaltungen an wechselnden Orten wie z. B. die Estnischen Westküsten-Tage (West Coast Estonian Days) oder das Festival ESTO mit Teilnehmern aus aller Welt. Die ländlichen Gegenden blieben Pfadfindern und Pfadfinderinnen vorbehalten. Obgleich sie auch größeren Zusammenschlüssen angehörten, war bei der Tätigkeit der amerikanisch-estnischen Pfadfinder eine spezielle estnische Ausrichtung spürbar. Da außerdem die Esten in den USA nicht in Enklaven, sondern über das Land verstreut lebten, führten sie eine neuartige Form des Pfadfindertums ein, bei dem sich die gemeinschaftliche Praxis zu einer individuellen veränderte. Während die wichtige Rolle der Chormusik im exil-estnischen Leben sowohl in kultureller als auch in politischer Hinsicht bereits nachgewiesen wurde, kann die bislang deutlich weniger erforschte Populärmusik in ähnlicher Weise dazu beitragen, die Freizeitgestaltung auf einer stärker persönlichen Ebene nachzuvollziehen. Da die Esten in den USA geistigen und praktischen Zugriff auf die globale Popmusikszene hatten, liegt die Vermutung nahe, dass sie in mancherlei Hinsicht in der estnischen Musikgeschichte eine Vorreiterrolle eingenommen haben. Wenn man aber die Musik aus der Diaspora mit der Musik im sowjetisch besetzten Estland vergleicht, gelangt man zu der überraschenden Erkenntnis, dass die Exilmusik teilweise auch als rückständig empfunden wurde. Der Aufsatz folgt verschiedenen Spuren, um Ursache und Wirkung dieses Phänomens festzustellen, und als Vergleichsbeispiel werden die Exil-Letten herangezogen. Anhand der gemeinschaftlichen Freizeitgestaltung einer ethnischen Gruppe unter den Bedingungen der Diaspora wird erforscht, welche Gedankengänge den dabei umgesetzten Neuerungen und den in diesem Zusammenhang ausgetragenen Konflikten zu Grunde lagen.

KEYWORDS: exile, diasporas, recreation, music, Estonia, America

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There is an intellectual tradition, one might also call it a force of habit, to find means for making typologies that clearly differentiate between the good, the bad and the ugly when it comes to the palette of feelings an individual or a collective entity may possess regarding their mutually recognized heritage, ethnic makeup or national allegiance. When looking at the views expressed in the printed press, literature and organizational archives of Estonians who fled their country during the Second World War<sup>1</sup> and ended up in the United States (US), one picks up on what seems to have been a widely shared notion that there can be no harm in pursuing “Estonianness”<sup>2</sup> in every aspect of one’s life. These former refugees who had often spent years in Displaced Persons’ (DP) camps before getting an opportunity to settle in a new country were not only afraid they themselves might perish upon return to Soviet-occupied Estonia, but were also pessimistic about the chances of Estonian culture surviving under that regime. That is why they made an effort to ensure that even if Estonia as a country was never liberated, Estonia as a culture would survive outside of it. The question of how to create posterity became paramount and an effort for communally performing “Estonianness” was what can be said to have been the defining experience for the second generation of exile Estonian-Americans who had no personal memories of the homeland. When it came to informing the minds of the young people who had been born into exile, it was not so much a competition for their time as it was a struggle to win their attention, which is without a doubt an exclusive and limited resource.

There is an abundance of literature on the generational conflict between first and second generation migrants who, depending on the level of culture clash between the values of the home country and host society, can experience generational dissonance and need to negotiate the art of compromise.<sup>3</sup> In the context of migrant ethnicity maintenance in the US, a mass of research is engaged with the large Italian, Irish, Chinese, Korean and various Latinx diasporas as well as other politically noteworthy cases such as that of the Cubans or Hmong. There is scarcely any research on small protestant minorities who never formed enclaves, but instead became scattered and very well integrated into American life, such as the Estonians or Latvians, and their ways of coping with the specific challenges of a diasporic existence and the search for

<sup>1</sup> Albeit having been an independent republic during the interwar period, Estonia was swept off the map by a Soviet annexation in 1940 and subsequent Nazi German occupation in 1941; another Soviet occupation began in 1944 but did not end with the war, lasting instead until 1991.

<sup>2</sup> Within the scope of this article “Estonianness” is used as an umbrella term encompassing the amalgam of cultural artefacts and imagination manifested in both tangible and intangible heritage perceived as unique for Estonians by Estonians.

<sup>3</sup> See for example NANCY FONER (ed.): *Across Generations: Immigrant Families in America*, New York 2009; MATTHIAS WINGENS, MICHAEL WINDZIO, HELGA DE VALK, CAN AYBEK: *A Life-Course Perspective on Migration and Integration*, New York 2011.

posterity. The article is based on extensive archival research as well as oral histories and addresses this gap in research literature by focusing on exile Estonian history of mentality in Cold War America. Other, not just Baltic, diaspora cultures will occasionally be used for comparison.

Instead of taking a formalistic approach by investigating the scene of organizations created and run by Estonian-Americans, this article will shed light on the hidden underbelly of performing “Estonianness” in exile via recreational activities, the urban and rural landscapes claimed, the traveling spaces and places created and the process of othering which took place at the same time as consolidation. First, the most formal realm of ethnic youth recreation will be dealt with—that of Scouting and Guiding with a focus on the innovations and modifications brought on by the diasporic condition. Second, attention will be focused on local and global Estonian events which not only sought to consolidate the existing core group of organizers but also forge new meaningful ties between people of different generations and varying levels of interest and competence in Estonian culture. Third, as one of the shared realms where diaspora-mentality created an interesting push-pull undulation for young creators and consumers of culture, popular music will also be looked into in order to further dissect the fascinating relationship between tradition and change in the exile-Estonian search for posterity.

Before diving into the topic of forging ethnic imagination via communal activities among exile Estonians in Cold War America, some relevant aspects of space and place in the wider Estonian-American community need to be historicized in order to better contextualize the exile Estonian experience at the heart of the article. Unlike most immigrant groups, different micro waves of Estonians arrived in America from both the Atlantic and the Pacific seacoast. The emergence of an actual Estonian diaspora as such can be dated back to the second part of the 19th century, when sailors who had defected from czarist vessels, manifold colonists from all corners of the Russian empire and random adventurers started to make their way to the New World. These people began to be organizationally active during the last years of the century.<sup>4</sup> 1905 marked a cataclysmic change in the dynamics of the Estonian diasporas. This was the year of the failed revolution in the Russian empire which made many people fear persecution and consequently look for a new homeland. Thus, the Estonians who can be tagged voluntary migrants were now joined by those who had undergone forced migration. The bulk of this new group of people can be described as belonging to the political left. They were active and well organized—already in 1906 the Socialist Party of America officially

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<sup>4</sup> The first mutual welfare association “The Ameerika Eesti Heategew Selts” [The American Estonian Aid Society] was created in 1898. See: *Ameerika Eestlaste Album 2* (1919).

welcomed an Estonian Department.<sup>5</sup> Some competition over resources and social capital is observable, but it was not until Estonia's proclamation of independence in 1918 that the divide between and within communities became prominent. The pro- and anti-sovereignty groups were largely based on political affiliation—the leftists were against the whole idea of an independent Estonian state in a situation where Russia had undergone a successful revolution.<sup>6</sup>

Nowhere was this conflict more visible than in New York<sup>7</sup> where it is obvious from archival sources<sup>8</sup> and periodicals<sup>9</sup> that in spite of many thrusts to consolidate people belonging to different regions of the political spectrum, the repercussions of the communist threat to the new Estonian republic on the one hand and the way the republic went about neutralizing said threat on the other<sup>10</sup>, made large scale cooperation in the diaspora difficult. Thus, New York Estonians ended up having several ethnically owned or rented spaces in New York which were in simultaneous use by different factions. The one on 34th street, just a few blocks from the Empire State Building, became an improvised refugee-center/job fair/post-office etc. in 1948 for incoming Estonian DPs. It had been bought by the New York Estonian Educational Society a few years before the influx began and was a good fit at the time of purchase but was ill-equipped for its new multi-purpose nature as well as lacking in capacity. Despite good will on both the oldtimer and newcomer sides, the first postwar decade together was challenging and wrought with petty squabbles resulting in refugees gaining an upper hand and the other Estonian community centers in New York waning away.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Later this was turned into the Estonian Social-Democratic Association. JAAN PENNAR, Tõnu Parming, Peeter Rebane: *The Estonians in America 1627-1975: A Chronology and Fact Book*, New York 1975, p. 8.

<sup>6</sup> Maarja Merivoo-Parro: *New Yorgi Eesti Haridusselts ja pagulased* [New York Estonian Educational Society and Refugees], in: *Acta Historica* 17 (2011), pp. 110-123.

<sup>7</sup> New York had become the hub for left-wing American Estonians after the San Francisco earthquake of 1906 destroyed not only the city, but also put a halt on societal activities and left one member of the Estonian community dead and another one injured. Eduard Vallaste: *Eesti elu ja laulu alged Ameerikas* [The Beginnings of Estonian Life and Song in America], in: *Eesti Päevad New York 1960* [Estonian Days in New York 1960, brochure], in: *The Michelson, Herbert Papers (MHP)*, Estonian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota, box 1.

<sup>8</sup> See for example: *Amerika Eesti Ühisuse aruanne Asutavale Kogule* [Report by American Estonian Association to the Estonian Constituent Assembly], 1919-08-20, in: *Eesti Riigiarhiiv*, fund 957, list 11, document 104, pages 17-18.

<sup>9</sup> Almost every interwar edition of New York left-wing Estonian newspaper *Uus Ilm* (1909-1989) deals with these issues.

<sup>10</sup> Mai Krikk: *Eesti Poliitiline Politsei 1920-1940* [Estonian Political Police 1920-1940], Tallinn 2002.

<sup>11</sup> The New York Estonian House located 243 East 34th Street is still operating, but now relies heavily on yet another wave of voluntary (labor and adventure) migration—people who came to the US after the end of the Cold War. According to the 2000 cen-



The following is largely an account of how the refugees chose to go about things. Their numbers may not seem impressive in the big picture—around 12,000 Estonians were granted entry under the Displaced Persons Act which helped pave a path for 400,000 people altogether—but they did flood the American Estonian diaspora with their energy and passion to the point where they became the ones to define the key metaphors through which community dialogue functions. Their efforts to imagine and establish a number of tangible and intangible, temporary and permanent, ethereal and brick-and-mortar type of “little Estonias” in the form of Estonian Houses, camps and camping grounds, events, festivals, get-togethers and music constituted a coping mechanism to help compensate for the loss of their homeland as well as a way of finding authentic means of self-expression and self-importance. It can be said that the discourse they created and maintained with the help of these urban, rural and musical spaces provided them with the means to hold on to a sense of dignity in spite of their status as lowly refugee immigrants. This in turn liberated them for the pursuit of extra-group achievements in search of their very own personal American dream and perhaps somewhat contributed to them becoming one of the more successful immigrant groups in the Cold War US in terms of upward socioeconomic mobility and education.<sup>12</sup>

### Claiming Rural Landscapes

The exile Estonians in America made a point of creating rural landscapes for ethnic endeavors where children could be sent to for summer camps and a certain quasi Estonian culture context. Kiusuküla on Long Island started forming in 1950 and reached its first camp five years later<sup>13</sup>; Järvemetsa in Lakewood, New Jersey traces its inception back to 1956<sup>14</sup>, after which it quickly became the center for Estonian Boy Scouts and Girl Guides, both

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sus, there were approximately 25,000 people with Estonian ancestry in the US. Albeit an unremarkable number for America, it is a large number both in the context of the Estonian diaspora and the nation as a whole with its total of less than a million representatives; URL: <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2000/dec/phc-t-43.html> (13.09.2017).

<sup>12</sup> PRIIT VESILIND: *Estonians in America, 1945-1995: Exiles in a Land of Promise*, s. l. 2016, pp. 126-127.

<sup>13</sup> For the history of the Long Island Estonian compound, see [http://www.estonianhousenewyork.com/long\\_island.html](http://www.estonianhousenewyork.com/long_island.html) (2017-09-15).

<sup>14</sup> The land was bought in 1953, which was also the year when Canadian Estonians purchased Kotkajärve near lake Muskoka (Ontario) and Estonians in Sweden established Metsakodu near Jönköping. MERVI RAUDSAAR: *Võõrsil tehtud noorsootöö kui eestluse hoidja ja kandja* [Youth Work in Exile as a Preserver and Carrier of Estonianness], Master's thesis Tartu Ülikool, 2004, pp. 79-83; GUSTAV LVES: *Metsakodu: Eesti pesapaik Rootsis* [Home in the Forest: Estonian Nest in Sweden], Tallinn 2001; JAAN LEPP, EGBERT RUNGE: *Eesti skautlus 50 aastat võõrsil* [50 Years of Estonian Scouting in Exile], Toronto 2003.

movements which were a prominent form of ethnic engagement for young people. Scouting was, of course, not limited to the Estonians in America, but became a part of the exile experience in other receiving countries as well.<sup>15</sup> Consolidation and cooperation between these different communities was considered vital and in 1949 Estonian Scouting leaders met in London to sign the charter of Estonian Scouts in Exile (Eesti skaudid paguluses põhikiri) at the Estonian Embassy (functioning in cooperation with the Estonian government-in-exile).<sup>16</sup> England was very fitting as a location, since it was the birthplace of Scouting. Curiously, however, regardless of this double legacy, no Estonian branch came into existence in England because ethnically-based and run Scouting units were not allowed there. The conditions were more favorable in the US: in 1949, the headquarters of American Boy Scouts and Girl Guides gave the Estonians permission to form their own units. The first ones were brought to life in Seabrook, New Jersey and New York City. By 1952 there were 350 Boy Scouts in 13 units<sup>17</sup> and at the advent of the new decade, the number of Estonian Scouts in the diaspora totaled 1,500 persons.<sup>18</sup>

Mervi Raudsaar, who has researched youth work in exile, finds it to have been an emotionally charged endeavor, which helps explain why there was communal support for the activities and why special Scout and/or Guide Friends Associations were often set up to ensure economic sustainability.<sup>19</sup> As was the case with supplemental Estonian schooling<sup>20</sup>, there is evidence that children's participation in the Scouting enterprise was not always voluntary, but rather they were often coerced into participation by their parents over posterity concerns.<sup>21</sup> How was being a member of the Scouting movement

<sup>15</sup> Scouting was also important for Latvian exiles and other former DPs. MARUTA KARKLIS, LIGA K. STREIPA, LAIMONIS STREIPS: *The Latvians in America: 1640-1973*, New York 1974, p. 67.

<sup>16</sup> Eesti Skaudijuhid Londonis [Estonian Scoutmasters in London], in: *Eesti Post* from 12.08.1949.

<sup>17</sup> RAUDSAAR (as in footnote 14), pp. 52-53; VELLO SOOTS (ed.): *Estonian Scouting 1912-1962: Estonian Boy Scout Associations in Exile*, Stockholm 1962, pp. 40-43.

<sup>18</sup> 1500 eesti skauti vabas maailmas [1500 Estonian Scouts in the Free World], in: *Vaba Eesti Sõna* from 22.12.1960. To consolidate and coordinate activities in different countries and continents, the Eesti Gaidid Paguluses was formed in 1949 and renamed Eesti Gaidide Liit in 1960. The analogous organization for scouts was also established a few months earlier in 1949 by the name Eesti Skaudid Paguluses (Estonian Scouts in Exile). In 1954 the name was changed to Eesti Skautide Liit (Union of Estonian Scouts). RAUDSAAR (as in footnote 14), p. 54.

<sup>19</sup> RAUDSAAR (as in footnote 14), pp. 54, 84.

<sup>20</sup> For a detailed account on Estonian American Cold War era educational activities, see MAARJA MERIVOO-PARRO: *Estonian by Education: Estonian Supplemental Schools in Cold War America*, in: *Forschungen zur baltischen Geschichte* (2017), pp. 220-250.

<sup>21</sup> In 1956 the ten commandments for "Estonianism" were forged in Canada. For example, these mottos or watchwords urged people to marry Estonians, educate their children, belong to Estonian organizations, support compatriots, be wary when communi-

supposed to help? For instance, the Estonian language was the preferred language for communication, there was an Estonian merit badge to be earned and the Saint George's Day celebration marking the peasant uprising of 1343 was among the most important events of the year.<sup>22</sup> Global gatherings of Estonian Scouts took place on a regular basis in different countries and often featured prominent patriotic elements such as standing face to Estonia and creating a mental bridge to the homeland by reciting poetry. This practice has formal similarities with Muslims praying in the direction of Mecca and can be interpreted in the context of exile Estonian patriotism as a secular religion. It can also be seen as a mode of embodiment: according to Dylan Trigg, "Just as memory is inherently spatial, so spatiality is inherently temporal, occupying a place in the present but stretching back into the past."<sup>23</sup> These entanglements play on people's expectations for the future as well and fuel the natural and artificial creation of mental maps that imbue locations with meaningful relationships to the observer. In terms of ethnic identity and national commemoration, another layer of exile youth consciousness was prompted to emerge by commemorating young Estonians who had lost their lives while serving in the US army in Korea and Vietnam. The underlying rhetoric was that had Estonia never been annexed, these young lives would not have ended in those wars and moreover, had communism not been allowed to prevail, perhaps these conflicts would not have come to pass.

Since not all eligible youngsters lived in areas with a substantial Estonian presence, there was an initiative for establishing a tradition for solitary Scouts via activities coordinated through correspondence. Contrary to regular units that organized elaborate events and published information about their activities in the media, solitary Scouts were a rather obscure entity even during their heyday. This was partly because of the very individual nature of their scouting culture and partly because they were largely excluded from PR friendly institutions such as awards, tests and ranks. Critics even raised the question whether the solitary Scouting experience had anything to do with what the real Scouts were about. Whereas regular Scouting aspired to resemble a big game comprised of smaller games through which knowledge and competence were taught playfully, there was a fear that solitary Scouting with its endless letters to strangers and alone-time would in fact cool children's fascination and deter them from Scouting altogether. In order to cure at least some of these maladies it was advised that solitary Scouts ought to be formally encompassed as units even though they rarely functioned as such. By

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cating with the homeland, support the fight for freedom and respect the country of residence. RAUDSAAR (as in footnote 14), p. 49.

<sup>22</sup> Ibidem, pp. 56-61.

<sup>23</sup> DYLAN TRIGG: *The Memory of a Place: A Phenomenology of the Uncanny*, Ohio 2015, p. 16.

providing them with a sense of collective, a name and other symbols, it was believed they would regain some of what they had been denied.<sup>24</sup>

In a similar effort, solitary Scouts were advised to join local American Scouts as a main activity and be a part of their Estonian “unit” on the side, treating the latter as a “supplemental school” and joining in on camps and jamborees as Estonian Scouts whenever they could. It was also considered important that regular Scouts be supportive of their efforts, engage in a buddy-system and write letters both as individuals and as units.<sup>25</sup> Obviously, the activities of Estonian solitary Scouts were not officially allowed by the US Scouting rules, precisely because they deviated significantly from what were considered norms and goals. The archival material also hints that when solitary Scouts showed up at Estonian Scouting events they were stigmatized and bullied because of their experience and the differences resulting from that.<sup>26</sup> This leads one to deduce that despite the seemingly shared rhetoric and mental maps created and conveyed by the Scouting establishment, there was still room for othering to take place within its ranks.

As previously mentioned, the British-born global phenomenon of Scouting and Guiding had also managed to find solid footing among many exile Estonian diasporas outside of the US; so much so, that at the height of the Cold War, exile Estonians found a way to come together and create transnational exile Estonian Scout and Guide camps. These events took place twice in the Järvemetsa Campground (Lakewoodi Laager) territory in Jackson, New Jersey—first in 1967 and then again in 1978 with more than 700 Estonian youngsters.<sup>27</sup> The world camp proved to be helpful for getting them to exercise and develop their Estonian language skills: just as American Estonian youth did not speak German, so the Estonian scouts and guides from Sweden were not fluent in English, thus it was reported that participants from different

<sup>24</sup> Overview of solitary Scouting, in: MHP, box 1.

<sup>25</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>26</sup> For instance, this happened in 1952 during the celebrations of the 40th anniversary of Estonian Scouting, see: METSAVANA: Üksikskautluse probleeme [Problems with Solitary Scouting], in: MHP, box 2.

<sup>27</sup> The first world camp for Estonian Scouts and Guides that took place in the US was called “Koguja” (Gatherer), referencing not only the fact that the event would bring together dispersed people, but also the Old Testament Ecclesiastes. Second time around, the ten-day camp was comprised of the following: Adjusting Day, Working Day, Holy Day, Youth Day, Camping Day, Estonian Day, Forest Day, Sports Day, Peace Day, Departing Day. Second time around, title nominations stretched from historic-mythological and culturally-grounded suggestions such as Taara, Kalev and Tammsaare and politically-engaged suggestions such as Exile 78, Estonia 60 and Esto-future to more generic ones such as Rainbow, Land of Friendship and Cedar Forest, with Koguja II getting the overwhelming majority of votes. Maailmalaager Lakewoodis üle 700 noore [Over 700 Youth in Lakewood World Camp], in: Vaba Eesti Sõna from 1978-07-13; Kümme päeva “Koguja II” noortelaager [Ten Days in “Gatherer II” Youth Camp], in: Vaba Eestlane from 1978-06-15; Maailmalaager 1978 nimed [World Camp 1978 Names], in: MHP, box 1.

countries disciplined each other—since nobody enjoyed not being able to understand what was being spoken, when a conversation slipped into another language some peer pressure was exerted to switch back to Estonian. At those times, Estonian really was the only language that they shared. Moreover, it was promoted by the rhetoric and activities of the camp.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, the Estonian language diet was never all-encompassing: among issues documented in the collection of letters, poems and feedback, there was the aspect of boys and girls mingling. One female participant from the US laments that other Girl Guides just want to talk about boys in English and call her a square for not going along with it.<sup>29</sup> Interestingly, it seems that parents and chaperones were quite relaxed about letting boys and girls socialize. There is even evidence that when supervisors were under the impression that their wards were asking for permission to leave camp in order to pursue romantic interests with an Estonian, they were more likely to let them do so than they were for those who “just wanted to run around.”<sup>30</sup> Just like with Latvians and other recent immigrant groups, endogamy was seen as both a goal and a virtue.

Despite the *de facto* rigor of scouting and the conflicts based on that—when American Estonian youngsters asked for a smoking area or when Estonian girls from Sweden showed up in short skirts and Estonian boys from Sweden made an impression with their long hair<sup>31</sup>—there was also advocacy for general leniency. After taking a hard stance in his official letter, in his personal correspondence scoutmaster Linold Milles pleads with colleague Herbert Michelson to have all applicants in pursuit of a higher rank in fact receive it. He writes that it is not possible to have the exact same demands for youth as were in place back in Estonia before the Second World War when they did not have to deal with the cultural implications of exile.<sup>32</sup>

It is important to note that not all young people were involved with scouts and guides and there were also Estonian American summer camps and camping grounds that had no organizational affiliation. Also, these camps inevitably shared at least some of their constituency with the Scouts and Guides. For example, the young representatives of Estonian scouts from Sweden did not return to their country of residence immediately after “Koguja II” was over, but instead ventured on another American-Estonian (this time non-

<sup>28</sup> Kilde “Kogujast” [Fragments from “Gatherer”], in: *Vaba Eesti Sõna* from 1978-08-03.

<sup>29</sup> Feedback from participants, in: MHP, box 11.

<sup>30</sup> RAUDSAAR (as in footnote 14), p. 62.

<sup>31</sup> American Estonian conservatism and double standards are discussed for example in: *Noorte Sõna* (1967), 3 (124), and *Noorte Leht* (*Eesti Päevaleht*) from 1967-08-28.

<sup>32</sup> In a letter to Herbert Michels from 11.04.1954, in: MHP, box 2, Milles stresses that the real victory is having these young men interested in Scouting activities at an age where they are already quite autonomous in their thinking and cannot be seduced by rhetoric as easily as younger children can be. Milles also brings out the need to have an active interest in how young Estonians think—he believes that a good way to get to know them better is to read what they write.

scout) camp experience, namely at the aforementioned ethnically-owned rural Kiusuküla landscape on Long Island.<sup>33</sup>

### Creating Urban Spaces

The former Baltic DPs were able to create anti-communist organizations and clusters thereof<sup>34</sup> to fight for the liberation of their countries. This at first seemed to deliver tremendous results as individual members succeeded in reaching high state officials as well as getting Senators and Congressmen to speak on behalf of their cause. However, in the light of America's weak response to the 1956 events in Hungary and the Prague Spring of 1968 it became obvious that immigrants' foreign relations (even when ideologically compatible with America's own) were not something the US would risk entering war over.<sup>35</sup> The exile Estonians' political struggle never ceased and preparations were made to ensure Estonian culture would not only survive in the free world if the country itself never regained independence, but that it could also have representation among other nations. That was the impetus behind staging elaborate global celebrations to showcase some of the more attracting and relatable aspects of the culture via the Estonian World Festival ESTO which traces its inception back to 1972 and has taken place once every four years in different major urban centers (Toronto, Baltimore, New York, Stockholm, Melbourne etc.) ever since.

The ESTO festival brought together Estonian exiles from all over the world and offered a wide variety of cultural events and public performances in addition to providing networking opportunities, (co-)hosting seminars and conferences and organizing social events ranging from formal dinners to speakeasy-style parties. A parade and choral song festival<sup>36</sup> were also part of the ESTO tradition. Since it began as an exile event seeking to provide exposure to the culture of a nation under political occupation and unable to represent itself in the international cultural sphere, one might assume that the tradition would have ceased as the country regained independence. Interestingly, that was not the case—it seems as though the symbolic value of a global Estonian festival proved high enough to keep diaspora communities interested in hosting them even after Estonia re-established itself as an independent country in 1991. Ever since, there has been a movement to end the tradition

<sup>33</sup> Kilde "Kogujast" (as in footnote 28).

<sup>34</sup> For example, the Estonian-American National Council (1952), Joint Baltic American National Committee (1961) and Baltic Appeal to the United Nations (1966).

<sup>35</sup> DONNA GABACCIA: *Foreign Relations: American Immigration in Global Perspective*, Princeton 2012, p. 170.

<sup>36</sup> Organizing choirs and song festivals is a tradition that stretches back to the age of the national awakening in 19th century Estonia and can be said to have provided not only a means for cultural expression, but also an education in how to run voluntary associations both in Estonia proper as well as in the diaspora. See also footnote 51.

while it's still viable, and the 2013 ESTO in San Francisco was at the time generally regarded as the last one.<sup>37</sup> However, there are concrete plans to hold yet another in Tallinn, Tartu and Helsinki in the summer of 2019 and thus put an end to the festival by “returning it home.”<sup>38</sup>

In addition to the global ESTO festival and its (similar in ethos, smaller in size) siblings West Coast Estonian Days (Lääneranniku Eesti Päevad, LEP) and East Coast Estonian Days (Idaranniku Eesti Päevad, IEP), there were other forms of regional urban festivals. Among them was the Midwestern Estonian Youth Association's (Kesk-Lääne Eesti Noorte Koondis, KLENK) conference series. The Midwest did not boast a dense Estonian settlement and neither did it exhaust youth with various activities, so this made some of them hungry for contact and cooperation. KLENK began as a cutting-edge gathering which welcomed bold presentations and alternative views on diaspora and global Estonian politics.<sup>39</sup> These get-togethers mainly attracted people of the second generation who had no personal recollection of Estonia and for whom the homeland can be argued to have been an imaginary *lieu de memoire*. That being said, KLENK youth also lobbied for bridging the generational gap between themselves and the ones before them<sup>40</sup> who had a somewhat more tangible bond to Estonia. Curiously, the impetus for coming together to create their own traveling space and place for Estonian American youth did undoubtedly shape a new generation of leaders, but failed to attract the new generation that came after it. This is why even though KLENK began as a youth organization, over the years it has aged alongside its initiators, gradually morphing into a senior citizen's cruise on the Caribbean.<sup>41</sup> The only youthful aspect about it is its name—the activists still gather under the title Midwestern Estonian Youth Association.

The generational issue of posterity outlined in the case of KLENK is semantically dramatic, but in principle it is rather commonplace among diaspora organizations. Admittedly, linking new members into an existing organization always has its challenges, but for the exile Estonians in Cold War America, contesting views on what constituted “Estonianness” brought about a significant drain of people who had lost their connection to the establishment<sup>42</sup> over the years and in the process of doing so, began to be othered in

<sup>37</sup> Conclusion based on my personal field work and interviews conducted at the festival.

<sup>38</sup> <https://esto2019.com/et> (2017-09-29).

<sup>39</sup> Various documents. Folder 1: Overview of activities 1958-1959; folder 2: Materials about the youth congress 1960-1965, in: KLENK/Midwest Estonian Youth Congress Records, Estonian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

<sup>40</sup> Resolution, *ibidem*, folder 2.

<sup>41</sup> About the event: <http://klenk-iep.com/et/kruiis/kruiisi-programm/> (2017-09-29).

<sup>42</sup> Here, the notion of establishment refers to the people who were, for example, elected officials or active members in organizations, who participated in holding events, or who were responsible for keeping up the Estonian Houses or maintaining ethnic land-

intragroup discourse. This was especially true if they had, in addition to losing touch with the group, also lost touch with the Estonian language. From oral histories<sup>43</sup> it is clear that those who had limited or nonexistent Estonian language skills felt unduly disregarded. Even though they often claim to have a personal relationship with their heritage and don't declare a constant need for external validation or guidance, they still occasionally lapse into a narrative of disappointment. In fact, both the establishment and "rogue" individuals themselves often perceive this distance between community, language and the individual as a failure on some level. However, the culprit is different in each case.

DP-born Los Angeles Estonian T. L. explains:

"it wasn't like I intended to lose the language, it just kind of got lost along the way [...] there's always a consciousness of being Estonian and I don't think it's ever going away because you've lost your language or you don't do it on somebody else's terms. I think you can have your cultural identity on your own terms and it doesn't have to be like the way somebody else wants it to be [...]"<sup>44</sup>

Just like it is commonplace in present day Estonia to be Christian without any church-affiliation, it is not rare for people in the diaspora to find themselves bowling alone in the alley of "Estonianness," if one were to borrow Robert Putnam's analogy.<sup>45</sup> A striking feature of these indie or alternative diasporans is how they swing back and forth while analyzing the implications of their situation. At one point in their narrative they might express a feeling of being rejected, while at another point they feel that they are not the ones who are being isolated, but rather it's the community that is isolating itself.<sup>46</sup> Some blame themselves, others delicately point to their parents' difficult choices in the busy time of creating a new life for the family and yet others blame the establishment for keeping a rigid language policy for too long and thus successfully alienating people who would have wanted to belong.<sup>47</sup> As

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scapes; they were leaders of choirs or teachers at the supplemental school or people who were consistently active in voicing their opinions in the community newspapers and thus reflecting and shaping communal discourse etc.

<sup>43</sup> Conclusion based on the bulk of interviews I conducted in 2012/13 with the help of the Fulbright grant and in 2015 with the help of the Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies grant.

<sup>44</sup> T. L., interview by Maarja Merivoo-Parro (2013-06-22, digital recording).

<sup>45</sup> ROBERT PUTNAM: *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, New York 2000.

<sup>46</sup> L. (as in footnote 44): "[...] these people who tell you in order to be Estonian you have to do this and this and this, you have to fill these requirements and [...] I feel bad for them because they've kind of isolated themselves in a lot of respects but maybe that's just a natural process [...]"

<sup>47</sup> As the share of former refugees among the Estonian population of American is decreasing, there has been real effort to do away with the language issue altogether by having an inclusive stance on the use of English. However, nowadays, that can become a source of tension because of new constituents. Since Estonia regained independence



communicative acts between these parties dwindled, the process of othering gained traction. Using Pille Petersoo's matrix of possible others in identity formation<sup>48</sup> as a model, it can be said the Estonians who for whatever reason strayed from the exile establishment, began to inhabit the category of the internal negative other in rhetoric, despite the fact that objectively, their unique versions of "Estonianness" can be argued to have been equally valid.<sup>49</sup>

### DIY music

For historic reasons<sup>50</sup> choral music has been proven to have played an integral part in exile-Estonian life<sup>51</sup>, not only as a cultural practice, but also as a mode of political agitation.<sup>52</sup> In order to shift the focus from collective recreational practices into a more personal sphere, we turn our attention to the less researched but equally compelling case of popular music. Up until recently, the hundreds of records and cassettes containing popular music from the diaspora had managed to evade the investigative gaze.<sup>53</sup> Yet, it is the (in an ideal world) democratic and individualistic nature of popular music which allowed

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in 1991, her citizens have had a chance to travel extensively as well as migrate within the European Union but also outside of it and many have chosen the US as their new temporary or permanent home. These recent additions to the communities are very competent in both the language and culture of Estonia since they have only recently departed from there. Thus, oftentimes their demands on supplemental schools and community events are far less tolerant about the *laissez-faire* style of communication that has only in recent decades become a reality. These newcomers aren't interested in spending money and resources to bring their children to school and donating their time to the community if what they get back from it all is not what they perceive as an authentic Estonian experience but just another version of an American context.

<sup>48</sup> PILLE PETERSOO: Reconsidering Otherness: Constructing Estonian Identity, in: Nations and Nationalism 13 (2007), 1, pp. 117-133.

<sup>49</sup> I believe that in a diaspora setting a person can possess not only competence but creativity in harboring and sustaining identification with several ethnic and national identities and does not need to choose which one to actualize at any given moment because they are simultaneously present as both cultural matter and energy.

<sup>50</sup> Estonians' self-image is connected to the notion of belonging to a singing nation. This idea has been shaped and formed by different thinkers and has historic roots stretching back to the reformation, the legacy of the Moravian Brethren and Baltic-German cultural influence as well as the Estonian Song Festival tradition established in 1869 and reinforced during the interwar republic.

<sup>51</sup> VESILIND (as in footnote 12); TRIINU OJAMAA: 60 aastast eesti koorilaulu multikul-tuurses Torontos / 60 Years of Estonian Choral Singing in Multicultural Toronto, Tartu 2011. ALFRED KURLENTS, RICHARD ANTIK et al. (eds.): Eestlased Kanadas. Ajalooline koguteos, Toronto 1975.

<sup>52</sup> ROMAN TOI, interview by Maarja Merivoo-Parro (2006-08-13, digital recording).

<sup>53</sup> The first comprehensive overview was published and compiled by Maarja Merivoo-Parro as a companion of the three CD box-set edited by VAIKO EPLIK: Esto-muusika: Ulgu-Eesti leviplaadid 1958-1988, 2015.

it to become a shared realm where diaspora-mentality created something of a push-pull undulation for young creators and consumers alike.

When comparing Cold War era popular music productions from Soviet Estonia to those from the Estonian refugee diaspora, a fascinating tendency appears. Paradoxically, the refugees' music can at different times seem both ahead of the curve as well as lagging behind it. The reasons why it might seem more progressive and contemporary than the pop music created in Soviet Estonia can very easily be taken back to the closed nature of the Soviet system. The Iron Curtain certainly limited not only the free movement of people and ideas, but also put a cap on people's ability to tap into the global music scene. Moreover, the Soviet Union's generally declared social mores were not only anti-capitalist, but were also very negative towards the ever evolving youth culture of the free world with its plethora of divisions. Granted, some of these subcultures as well as their music (for example, punk and hardcore) were also perceived as being subversive by the Western societies themselves.<sup>54</sup> Mainstream bemoaning, however, seldom had veto-power over an individual's more or less conscious decision to become either a producer or consumer of a type of alternative music in the Western world. Thus, Estonians born into the diaspora not only had the privilege of engulfing themselves with the very best of the very latest pop and alternative music, but had they wanted, they could have even physically "joined the scene" in New York, Los Angeles, London, Berlin or elsewhere. In other words, the exiles being ahead of the curve can be seen as a rather natural condition because the people living in Soviet Estonia lacked not only information and awareness, but also the means for being at the forefront of global pop.

Before diving into the other end of the spectrum and exploring the reasons why exile pop can paradoxically be found to be not only leading the way but also lagging behind its Soviet counterpart, some light needs to be shed on the nature and development of the scene in general. As was stated, until recently the story of Estonian refugee pop music of the Cold War era was relatively unknown and kept in the dark. A closer look has not only delivered fascinating results, but has also brought about the need to rewrite the key facts of Estonian music history in general because it was in the diaspora that so many of the "firsts" were able to appear. For a long time, it was assumed that the first Estonian language record to have allusions to rock 'n' roll was published in Soviet Estonia in the late seventies<sup>55</sup> when in fact this had already happened a full decade earlier in 1968, when Canadian-Estonian Jüri Lipp released his album *Laul Simule ... (A Song For You ...)* which is full of beats

<sup>54</sup> See for example: WILLIAM OSGERBY (ed.): *Subcultures, Popular Music and Social Change*, Newcastle-upon-Tyne 2014; RYAN MOORE: *Sells like Teen Spirit: Music, Youth Culture, and Social Crisis*, New York 2009; ROGER SABIN (ed.): *Punk Rock: So What?*, London 1999.

<sup>55</sup> FIX: *Värviline maailm* (LP), 1978.

and psychedelia.<sup>56</sup> A year later in 1969 the first Estonian folk song recording with a jazzy twist was released by the Alex Miilits group in Sweden.<sup>57</sup> At the same time, Fulbrighter Reet Hendrikson opened up the folk scene with her LP full of unique versions of well-known old Estonian songs.<sup>58</sup>

One of the most prolific Estonian diaspora musicians in the US was self-taught René Ufer, who began composing in the 1960s, and released his first album in 1972. He created dozens of original songs as well as published them, first on vinyl and later on cassette.<sup>59</sup> Ufer was completely unrecognized within the history of Estonian music up until recently when it became evident that he was a pioneer of Estonian electronica.<sup>60</sup> During the day, Ufer worked for NASA, as did his main partner—poet and engineer Jyri Kork from Baltimore. Ufer put together a home studio in Los Angeles with the first synthesizers and drum-machines which made him a self-sufficient composer who was just as productive as he was undervalued. He tried his luck both within and beyond the diaspora community but did not gain much traction until his path crossed with that of a recent addition to the California Estonians, Lilian Treiberg. Her story is quite unique and includes a period where her family was shunned from the local Estonian diaspora society because they had managed to emigrate from Soviet Estonia to the US in 1966 when migration to and from the Soviet Union was extremely complicated and often impossible. Their peaceful transition at the height of the Cold War seemed suspect to many exiles, but in fact it had been the result of a long and arduous legal process whereby Lilian's father appealed to his Swedish ancestry and submitted application after application for years before finally getting permission to leave. This backstory was lost on the wider California Estonian community and Lilian remembers the overall attitude towards her family as being unwelcoming.<sup>61</sup> Needless to say, in this atmosphere of distrust the Treibergs didn't develop a habit of frequenting the Los Angeles Estonian House very often and so it took a few years before Lilian's singing talent was "discovered" by local Estonians who invited her to perform in the Estonian House. She went

<sup>56</sup> JÜRI LIPP: *Laul Sinule* (LP), 1968. He mostly relies on covers, but does manage to provide them with his individual touch. Albeit rock 'n' roll did not have the best reputation in the refugee community, this mono record was nevertheless quite well received. His next and last (stereo) release before his untimely demise was a collaboration with grade III a of the Toronto Estonian Supplemental School singing Christmas songs. IDEM: *Rõõmsaid jõulupühi!* (LP), 1969.

<sup>57</sup> Track 21 on CD 1 of EPLIK, *Esto-muusika* (as in footnote 53).

<sup>58</sup> REET HENDRIKSON: *Valik rahvalaule* (LP), 1969. The sincerity of these renditions as well as her signature guitar style has put this LP in high demand on the global acid folk scene with three official vinyl pressings of vinyl and one CD as well as some bootleg versions, making it the most successful diaspora record of all time.

<sup>59</sup> Because he was very prolific, the full extent of his discography is still not known.

<sup>60</sup> Vaiko Eplik, with whom I partnered for the exile-Estonian pop music box set (see footnote 53) was the one to bring this to my attention.

<sup>61</sup> LILIAN TREIBERG, interview by Maarja Merivoo-Parro (2015-05-09, digital recording).

and sang<sup>62</sup>, upon which her paths crossed with René Ufer and they embarked on a musical journey that would lead to fascinating results such as pairing early West Coast hip hop with Soviet Estonian estrada<sup>63</sup>, which can be seen as not only a musical, but also a political statement.

In the choral world, the exile communities were quite strict and did not allow choirs to perform pieces that had ties to Soviet Estonia. Only composers from before the Second World War or composers of the diaspora were allowed.<sup>64</sup> But in pop music, the rules seem to have been less strict. In fact, there is evidence, that during the late seventies and early eighties, covering songs from Soviet Estonia became increasingly popular, especially for bands comprising of youth, such as “Positiivsed Mehed”<sup>65</sup> (Positive Men) from Montreal or “Kaja”<sup>66</sup> (Echo) from Portland. And here is where they stumbled upon a transnational worm-hole of sorts: as mentioned earlier, it was difficult for people in Soviet Estonia to keep up with developments in global pop. Even though musicians tried hard to listen, it was very difficult to hear through the Iron Curtain, which is why the influences and inspirations they managed to get were haphazard and random. For some reason, country and bluegrass music was able to penetrate the Iron Curtain. Since both came from the West they began to be perceived as alternative and progressive by default and a number of bands arose in Estonia (such as “Kukerpillid” or “Justament”) that had chosen said vein of music as their inspiration. This aesthetic trend in Estonia can also be associated with a wider “rustic turn” in Baltic culture which Violeta Davoliute perceives to have begun in the 1970s, first as nostalgia for a long gone rural way of life, later morphing into a political narrative of collective trauma and thus paving the path for communal consolidation *contra* Soviet rule.<sup>67</sup> In any case, when exile Estonian hobby bands like “Kaja” were looking for new material, they turned to music (by “Kukerpillid” or “Justament”) that they thought was Estonian, but had instead been adopted from North America. Through this musical telephone game they became familiar with American music that they had not considered valuable or interesting, but that had now become relevant because it had made an impact in Soviet Estonia.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Curiously enough, her repertoire at the time also contained some pioneer songs which she had picked up as a child in Soviet Estonia whilst taking part in the activities of the all-union communist youth movement. Singing the pioneer-songs to the exiles who used to think her family were spies, proved to be without repercussions. *Ibidem*.

<sup>63</sup> RENÉ UFER, LILIAN TREIBERG: *Unustuste tilk* (LP), 1977.

<sup>64</sup> TOI (as in footnote 52).

<sup>65</sup> “Positiivsed mehed” was a live band that never made it to recording status. ERIK TEOSE, LIINA TEOSE, interview by Maarja Merivoo-Parro (2015-04-29, digital recording).

<sup>66</sup> KAJA: *Kuldsest Läänest* (LP), 1981. “Kaja” drew inspiration for their music, stage presence and touring from the American-Latvian group Dzintars. *Ibidem*.

<sup>67</sup> VIOLETA DAVOLIUTE: *The Making and Breaking of Soviet Lithuania: Memory and Modernity in the Wake of War*, New York 2013, pp. 125-172.

<sup>68</sup> TEOSE/TEOSE (as in footnote 65).

This brings us to the curious case of diaspora musicians' occasional lagging behind global trends and sometimes even their lagging behind their Soviet counterparts which at first glance seems counterintuitive in the light of what was stated earlier regarding Westerners free access to not only the music but the hubs where it was created. When listening to Estonian refugee pop in bulk, it becomes obvious that as the years go by, the aural experiences that recordings are able to provide become increasingly detached from the musical eras they chronologically seem to stem from. With a few noteworthy exceptions most exile Estonians' music flirts with nostalgia and archaism in either topic, execution or sometimes both. Other Cold War era refugee diaspora music scenes have also been diagnosed with a complicated relationship between tradition and change. For example, Adelaida Reyes Schramm perceived the Vietnamese in New Jersey to have exhibited a similarly fascinating interplay between conservative content and innovative expression to the point where tradition and change not only coexist but also co-occur.<sup>69</sup>

Embarking from Jocelyne Guilbault's notion of audible entanglements that play into the notions of longing, belonging and exclusion<sup>70</sup>, perhaps one of the reasons behind the somewhat F. Scott Fitzgerald's Benjamin Button-like aural trajectory in exile-Estonian pop was the indisputable role of community self-regulation that played a noteworthy part in most if not all major processes within the global Estonian refugee diaspora. As was mentioned earlier, some musical genres like rock 'n' roll or punk were initially treated with mistrust in the wider society and that attitude was adopted by the conservative Estonian diasporans. This meant that if an artist wished to be accepted and have an audience, she or he was obliged to handpick her or his means of communication from the palette jointly deemed "safe" for musical expression. Needless to say this kind of palette tended not to be very progressive. It is important to add that the value-judgements placed upon different kinds of music within a diaspora have been linked to generational affiliation. Often it is possible to outline a palette of semantic associations by which an individual can link an aural experience to the notion of an imagined homeland. Hae-Kyung Um demonstrates this with regards to the post-Soviet Korean diaspora<sup>71</sup>, Jehoash Hirschberg alludes to it when discussing the role of music among Ka-

<sup>69</sup> ADELAIDA REYES SCHRAMM: Tradition in the Guise of Innovation: Music among a Refugee Population, in: Yearbook for Traditional Music 18 (1986), pp. 91-101.

<sup>70</sup> Her research in the early 2000s was engaged with the Calypso music scene of Trinidad and is quoted in KAY KAUFMAN SHELEMAY: Musical Communities: Rethinking the Collective in Music, in: Journal of the American Musicological Society 64 (2011), 2, pp. 349-390.

<sup>71</sup> HAE-KYUNG UM: Listening Patterns and Identity of the Korean Diaspora in the Former USSR, in: British Journal of Ethnomusicology 9 (2000), pp. 121-142, here pp. 135-137.

raite Jews in the US<sup>72</sup> and John Baily makes a similar point during his investigation into Afghan music in exile<sup>73</sup>, to name but a few.

Another explanation why older American-Estonian refugee diaspora pop seems more progressive than newer American-Estonian refugee diaspora pop might have something to do with the retrospective observer's lack of valid understanding of what constituted mainstream and alternative for the people creating music in the Cold War Estonian diaspora. In fact, one might go so far as to state that any and all Estonian-language music in exile was predestined to evade the lure of mainstream simply because it was a niche artifact deemed for a very select audience. Hence, it was alternative by default and did not need to adhere to what was going on in the big picture but instead demanded so much creativity and courage from its makers that it can and should inhabit a category of its own outside the sometimes strict and thus arguable borders of "pop or not." Yet another important aspect is the fact that the majority of these musicians spent most of their productive power engaged with their "real" careers, which more often than not had nothing whatsoever to do with music. Thus, the at times peculiar aesthetic choices and overall nostalgia are attributable to the artists' lack of natural contact with the latest developments in popular music.

Tied into this equation is the vast share of self-releases, some of which are still unaccounted for because of the unofficial nature of their birth and subsequent decay into obscurity. Even the numerous record labels<sup>74</sup> of the Estonian diaspora are not free from the sin of inadequate archiving and surprise discoveries are still possible. Another quite prominent characteristic is the lack of any real physical means for producing music. The labels were usually labels only by name. They did not have employees, they did not have proper studios or marketing schemes; in fact, they resembled voluntary associations held together by a belief in common values and in the necessity of walking a certain path in life. But even so, at this time there is evidence that the Cold War era Estonian diaspora was responsible for around 400 records. Most were released in very small quantities (ranging anywhere from 300-1,000 copies per edition) and have become rarities. Only a few records were ever re-issued.<sup>75</sup>

In order to contextualize the Estonian diaspora pop scene, it is useful to look into the musical heritage of exile Latvians. Upon doing so, it quickly be-

<sup>72</sup> JEHOASH HIRSHBERG: The Role of Music in the Renewed Self-Identity of Karaite Jewish Refugee Communities from Cairo, in: *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 21 (1989), pp. 36-56.

<sup>73</sup> JOHN BAILY: So Near, so Far: Kabul's Music in Exile, in: *Ethnomusicology Forum* 14 (2005), 2, pp. 213-233.

<sup>74</sup> Exile Estonian record labels include: EMP Records (Estonian Voice/Eesti Hääl), Belacord, Reindeer Records, Merit Records, Rekalla Records, Kapa Kalja Records, Rakvere Records and others.

<sup>75</sup> EPLIK, Esto-muusika (as in footnote 53).

comes clear that diaspora Latvians' productions tended to be even less prone to experiments and more influenced by *schlager*. However, despite the variety in exile-Estonian popular music, it is undeniable that the diaspora Latvians' stylistically more coherent body of productions did additionally share space and attention with something that Estonians did not have—an underground. One of the surprising spaces where it proved fertile was the conservative Latvian Lutheran children's summer camp in the Catskills (New York) which is partially responsible for the impulse behind two hardcore bands—"The Inflatable Children" and "Citizens Arrest."<sup>76</sup> The latter ended up being part of the late eighties new no sexism-no racism-no homophobia wave of New York hardcore which made its debut at Lower East Side's independent art and social center's (then improvised and now legendary concert venue) ABC No Rio. Even though the band mostly sang in English, they also had a Latvian element episodically rearing its head in the lyrics, visual identity and performances. Founding guitarist Janis Chakars remembers that the American members of the band "just somehow identified Latvia with rebellion and people that are carving out a small part of the Earth for their special project which is like something that's easy to identify with if you're into punk rock and into hardcore."<sup>77</sup> A similar vein was struck in his other ABC No Rio affiliated group "Animal Crackers" which featured Ted Leo<sup>78</sup> on vocals.<sup>79</sup> Another

<sup>76</sup> Janis Chakars of "Citizens Arrest" remembers Derek Stukuls of "The Inflatable Children" as being the mastermind behind the tiny but remarkable wave: "Derek had already advanced to this world of punk rock and he had a little walkman and he would listen to it and one day let me listen and there was this band *DOA* singing this song 'Fuck You' and I just thought that was the craziest, greatest thing in the whole world. [...] A summer later he had converted his brother too and they had this band *The Inflatable Children* and I went to this basement where they were rehearsing and I had had like a couple of guitar lessons, but like a little kid who thinks they're into something and then gives it up before they get very good at it, but they were playing and they really only needed like two fingers to play their songs, but they were great songs. They were like, hey Janis, you wanna play? And I was like, I never really play guitar and they were like, it doesn't matter, we never really learned how to play either, so I did. I learned some of their songs and I went back to NY and then I was like I could do this, I could have a band." JANIS CHAKARS, interview by Maarja Merivoo-Parro (2016-05-28, digital recording).

<sup>77</sup> "One of the most attractive things about hardcore is that it's true folk music and not folk music like you hear on records, anybody can do it, anybody should do it, everybody does in that scene." *Ibidem*.

<sup>78</sup> Ted Leo is now an established musician, currently part of a duo with Aimee Mann called "The Both" and serving as front man and lead guitarist in the punk rock band "Ted Leo and the Pharmacists".

<sup>79</sup> "Animal Crackers" did a cover version of "Sweet Home Alabama", where the lyrics had been changed to "Sweet Home Latvia", which ended with drum-enriched chant "Nyet, Nyet Soviet! Ja, Ja, Latvija!". Janis Chakars: "It is hard to say how much these young kids really sat and thought about the political issues associated with late 1980s Latvia, although I tried to make a comparison with Native Americans as an aid to understanding, but I certainly think they recognized Latvia could stand for the small

er space that acted as midwife for fresh Latvian acts was the Munster Latvian Gymnasium in Germany, which catered to the global Latvian diaspora by hosting an additional 13th grade for Latvian studies. Kristaps Kreslinš of the Washington D.C. born punk rock group “Macitajs on Acid” recalls, it “was like living in a dormitory, just really, really far away from your parents. I got more life experience out of it than grade experience.” He also got a lot of band experience from it and his first visit to Latvia as the drummer for “Gūzma” in 1989.<sup>80</sup>

Thus far there is no information about similar examples from Estonian-Americans. It is safe to assume that apart from the transnational dynamics of covering songs from Soviet Estonia which had previously been “borrowed” from America, the realm of Estonian-American diaspora popular music never managed to bear the fruit of an underground scene. However, in Australia one second generation youngster, Estonian Olev Muska, did manage to make ripples in the wider alternative music scene. Among his musical ventures, Muska created the group “Kiri-Uu” and released their self-titled album<sup>81</sup> in 1988 to rave reviews from specialty publications like *Rolling Stone* magazine, as well as from mainstream media.<sup>82</sup>

## Conclusion

While exploring the notions of space and memory Dylan Trigg writes about how finding ourselves locked out of our home changes our relationship with the home, not just because it is inaccessible, but because our attempts to resolve the situation create a lag in time: “the drawn temporality of waiting has

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and disregarded and the unequal balance of powers in the world. I remember that I used to make double-sided flyers for shows sometimes too that would have editorial cartoons about the Baltics taken from newspapers on the back, especially during and after January 1991. However, I have to consider that, on some level, audiences may have also simply gotten a kick out of Latvia as something exotic and weird, which are also qualities embraced in that community.” E-mail from Janis Chakars to Maarja Merivoo-Parro, 2017-09-08.

<sup>80</sup> Footage of “Gūzma” performing in Latvia 1989: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F0E0LHRj8DM> (2018-02-21).

<sup>81</sup> KIRI UU: Kiri Uu (LP?), 1988.

<sup>82</sup> These ethnotronic renditions presented an original way for a diaspora youth to connect with Estonian roots by using his visual thinking to recontextualize our shared sonic heritage. What Olev Muska did was not entirely kosher and some of it goes directly against the grain of Estonian folksong logic. He never saw eye to eye with the more conservative circles of the Australian Estonian establishment and professes to have always kept a provocative stance in his creative life. He believes this to have been one of the factors that kept his ambition of opening a studio in the Sydney Estonian House from meeting the necessary approval. He never got his studio and “Kiri-Uu” ceased to exist in the beginning of the nineties. OLEV MUSKA, interview by Maarja Merivoo-Parro (2015-04-27, digital recording).



less to do with the objective status of the environment, and more to do with a projection toward the future. The projection has its basis in a composite of how we anticipate place and time to interact.”<sup>83</sup> This quotidian example is very telling when used in the context of diasporas. The Estonians who fled during the Second World War were also in a way locked out of their home and became increasingly engaged with questions of how to ensure a future for the nation and its culture in the diaspora. However, try as one might, there is no one ideal recipe to be found for creating posterity. The exile Estonians in Cold War America learned this alongside their fellow refugees from Latvia, Lithuania and elsewhere in Central and Eastern Europe with whom they shared long-distance nationalism and ethnic anticommunism. As previously demonstrated, they also shared some tactics when it came to dealing with the challenge of the second generation’s coming of age in a diasporic setting.

In postwar America, adolescence was a time of personal exploration, unprecedented freedom and relative affluence, which meant that the ethnic community needed special measures to stake a claim on the youths’ time and attention. Both of these were needed to create and sustain an imagination of the homeland, its culture and its people under Soviet occupation, all of which were unreachable and as such, were linked to the grand narrative of exile itself. Raising awareness on these issues was a task which was often tucked away in the background of events and activities that sought to entertain youth, such as camps, Scouting and Guiding. The result was that these enterprises became emotionally charged and as was the case with solitary scouts, had the discursive power to create new modes of experience. Thus, it can be said that even with all its shortcomings, making sure recreation happened in a national-ethnic-diasporic setting proved to be an adequate tool for building all kinds of bridges. This is even attributable to the realm of music. Initially, diaspora pop provided a sense of musical modernity but as the exiles integrated into their new host societies and began to relate with the music created there, the notion of contemporaneity seceded and was replaced by an aspiration to tap into the intangible sphere of “Estonianness”. Despite the dominion of nostalgia brought on by this, the diaspora pop scene did manage to provide many of the firsts in Estonian music history in general as well as maintain a steady flow of musical culture in exile.

The Estonians in America were successful in creating various traveling spaces and places for ethnic endeavors as well as finding the means for running community centers in the form of a network of Estonian Houses in urban environments and maintaining rural landscapes where events could be held. Despite all the good will involved, they still managed to alienate some potential participants for a variety of reasons from the obvious (conservative views on language) to the obscure (conservative views on hairstyle). The examples of othering clearly demonstrate that decisions made on the continuum of phe-

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<sup>83</sup> TRIGG (as in footnote 23), p. 31.

nomena-perception-affection-behavior-response were not always in tune with what would best serve the community in the long run. That being said, the moveable feast of “Estonianness” did manage to stay appetizing for enough second-generation exiles (who let it shape their sensibilities and associational habits to the point of sparking passion for the cause) to keep up the cultural and political fight (*välisvõitlus*) until Estonia regained its independence in 1991. Roland Barthes has differentiated between two musics—one that people listen to and one that they play.<sup>84</sup> By paraphrasing that distinction in the context of the Cold War Estonian-American diaspora it can be said that there are two ethnicities—one a person perceives and one they perform. By accord time and attention to exile Estonian “fun and games,” one seems to have been able to, in return, gain the power to shape the practice of forging the ethnic imagination via shared experiences, and indeed thus become, at least in part, Estonian by recreation.

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<sup>84</sup> ROLAND BARTHES: *Image, Music, Text*, London 1977, p. 149.



**Merivoo-Parro, Maarja** (2015). Claiming Ethnicity in Overlapping Diasporic Conditions: Estonian Americans and Academic Mobility During the Cold War. *Acta Historica Tallinnensia*, 21 (1), 106–124.

## **CLAIMING ETHNICITY IN OVERLAPPING DIASPORIC CONDITIONS: ESTONIAN AMERICANS AND ACADEMIC MOBILITY DURING THE COLD WAR<sup>1</sup>**

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Estonian history is saturated with episodes of both voluntary and forced migration that have brought about the emergence of a rather substantial global diaspora with diverse levels of attachment to the present day Estonia. When observing their mentality and its representations, the plurality of remembrance becomes evident on a number of levels – the expatriate communities' directedness towards Estonia-proper on the one hand and Estonia's openness to its expatriate communities on the other. A slightly more evasive subject matter is the relationship between various memory cultures within the diaspora communities. Investigating educational aspects of Estonian refugee diaspora culture opens up a rare vista onto the lived reality of crossing these political and mental borderlines. From the emergence of supplemental schools in America to the creation of the study-in-Finland grant by the Estonian Students Fund in the US, this article explores implications of academic mobility (or in some cases academic nomadism) with regard to ethnicity. It provides insight into the very real tensions that emerged from the overlapping of diasporic conditions during students' short-term migration.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The approximately 12 000 Estonians who made their way from postwar Europe to the United States of America with the help of the 1948 Displaced Persons Act were very keen to maintain their culture and language in this new setting. One of the most obvious manifestations of this is the fact that they established a number of supplementary schools all over North America. To be sure, American Estonian children had gotten instruction in their mother tongue before the refugees came, but in a much less organized and more relaxed manner. In contrast, the new

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<sup>1</sup> This article is written based on the research conducted while I was a visiting Fulbright scholar at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities and is part of the Estonian Research Council project ETF9066 Ethnic and National in Estonian Diaspora Communities.

populace was in dire need of a structured learning environment. They were adamant in making sure that their younger generation who had little or no exposure to Estonia-proper would know enough to either be successful in the native land after the end of occupation or would have the necessary skills to carry on Estonian culture in exile. In essence, the supplementary schools<sup>2</sup> were responsible for teaching everything that the young ones would have been taught back home about Estonia which the American school was naturally not focusing on. East Coast refugee Estonians were quick to establish several schools during the time when DP-immigration (1948–1952) was still taking place – Seabrook was first in 1949. Later, others followed suit all over the US.<sup>3</sup> It is difficult to create a unified chronology of this process, since there was a tendency on the part of parents and activists to put ambition and good will ahead of practical matters and sustainability. This means there were numerous false starts taking place simultaneously all over the country. On occasion, these initiatives grew into larger establishments. This happened for instance when educators who had been gathering children in their home for learning purposes at one point moved the whole endeavor to a communal space, increased administration and registered as an association. Other times the educational relationship never formalized as a school but rather faded away without a significant trace.

In Kersti Luhaäär Linask's 1978 research about Estonian supplemental schools, she estimates that during the academic year 1950/51 there had been 112 pupils attending the select supplemental schools in the US that she studied. By 1965/66, that number had almost doubled. A similar peak in enrollment is also visible among the Estonians in Canada.<sup>4</sup> More comprehensive data collected by the ÜEÜ Koolitoimikond suggests that during the academic year 1951/52 there were 388 students in 12 supplemental schools: Baltimore, Boston, Seabrook, Chicago, Cleveland-Ohio, Lakewood, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, New York, Portland, Willimantic and Wisconsin.<sup>5</sup> According to statistics gathered by the

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<sup>2</sup> The term “supplemental” was officially dropped with the decision by some 70 participants of the Teachers Day held in New York in April of 1970. Since the name change did not have an effect on how schools were run or participated in, this text will not differentiate between pre- and post-1970, but will use “Estonian schools” and “Estonian supplemental schools” interchangeably, if not otherwise noted. Various documents and letters from the Coordinating Center for Estonian Supplemental Schools to managers and patrons of Estonian schools. Box 1, Folder 6. The Albany-Schenectady Eesti Ühing (Estonian Association in Albany and Schenectady, New York) Records. Immigration History Research Center and Archives, University of Minnesota.

<sup>3</sup> Documentation about supplemental schools. Box 1, Folder 1. Eesti Koolide Keskus (Coordinating Center for Estonian Supplemental Schools) Records, Estonian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

<sup>4</sup> **Luhaäär Linask, K.** An Historical Study of Selected Estonian Supplementary Schools in the United States and Canada from 1950 to the Present. PhD dissertation. University of Connecticut, UMI Dissertation Services, 1978, 70. Printed in 1993.

<sup>5</sup> There was also a school in Woodstock, Illinois, but it was not included in the statistics because it never made it through the school year. USA-s asuvate Eesti Täienduskoolide aruanne 1950/51. õ.-a. kohta. Box 1, Folder 1. Eesti Koolide Keskus (Coordinating Center for Estonian Supplemental Schools) Records.

previously mentioned organizations' successor, Coordinating Center for Estonian Supplemental Schools, during the academic year 1968/69 there were 450 students attending 17 schools: Albany-Schenectady, Baltimore, Buffalo, Chicago, Cleveland, Connecticut, Lakewood, Los Angeles, Long Island, Minneapolis, New York, North Illinois, Portland, San Francisco, Seabrook, Seattle, Wilmington.<sup>6</sup> Thus, the volume of the surge in overall enrollment figures might not be as dramatic as would seem at first glance. In addition, it seems to reflect not so much the growing number of adolescents but rather the capacity of adults to organize more schools and get kids involved. Migration within the United States plays an important part in the fluctuating school-scene. For example, Seabrook farms in New Jersey were the first place of stable employment for many DPs. This reality somewhat explains why the first supplemental school was established there. Not only was it the first, for a while it was also the largest. As people emancipated from the labor and life-style rural Seabrook offered, the school withered. By the academic year 1968/69, the area only had a church school with eight attendees<sup>7</sup> and in the following year it did not open its doors at all and morphed into a home school like those found in other areas with scarce Estonian population, such as North and South Carolina.<sup>8</sup> Another hidden aspect of the headcount was the increasingly younger student body, which included children as young as two years of age.<sup>9</sup>

Even though participating in the Estonian school was a matter of principle for many<sup>10</sup>, academic success in the wider society was also coveted and celebrated. That is why in addition to moral support, there were also practical ways in

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<sup>6</sup> Documentation about supplemental schools. Box 1, Folder 1. Eesti Koolide Keskus (Coordinating Center for Estonian Supplemental Schools) Records, Estonian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

<sup>7</sup> Meie täienduskoolid USA-s. Gaston Randvee. Box 1, Folder 2. Eesti Koolide Keskus (Coordinating Center for Estonian Supplemental Schools) Records.

<sup>8</sup> Eesti koolide USA-s õpilaste arv. Box 1, Folder 1. Eesti koolid USA-s ja nende õpilaste koosseis 1968/69 õppeaastast alates. Box 1, Folder 2. Eesti Koolide Keskus (Coordinating Center for Estonian Supplemental Schools) Records.

<sup>9</sup> Documentation about supplemental schools. Box 1, Folder 1. Eesti Koolide Keskus (Coordinating Center for Estonian Supplemental Schools) Records, Estonian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

<sup>10</sup> All statistics of course only reflect the trends for the Estonians in America who were eager to make an effort to maintain ethnicity while at the same time being able and willing to sacrifice money and time to have their offspring educated at the supplemental schools. There were many who for logistical, financial, personal or other reasons were not able to get involved with supplemental schools as well as those who did not want to. It is very difficult to ascertain the exact number of these persons and their ratio within the Estonian populace. Educated contemporary guesses deemed them to comprise of approximately one thousand or slightly more persons with half of them involved with other structured Estonian activities one way or another. Meie täienduskoolid USA-s. Gaston Randvee. Box 1, Folder 2. Eesti Koolide Keskus (Coordinating Center for Estonian Supplemental Schools) Records; **Luhaäär Linask, K.** An Historical Study of Selected Estonian Supplementary Schools in the United States and Canada from 1950 to the Present, 79.

which the community got behind its best and brightest. One of the most noteworthy of these initiatives was the Estonian Students Fund in the United States. The organization later to become known as EstfUSA traces its history back to the years immediately following World War II when it became instrumental in delivering loans to struggling Estonian students under the auspices of the New York Estonian Educational Society.<sup>11</sup> In the late 1950s it started giving out scholarships, and that quickly became its main objective. The organization still exists today and operates in a very wide spectrum providing scholarships to Estonians in Estonia<sup>12</sup> and abroad, giving incentives for diaspora Estonians to study in Estonia and helping Estonian professionals attend courses and conferences abroad.<sup>13</sup> In fact, this scenario of accepting applications from students in Estonia-proper was written into the original certificate of incorporation, with a clause that this shall come to pass only when Estonia is once more

an independent self-governing state and there will be in effect a non-totalitarian democratic government.<sup>14</sup>

## STUDENT EVOCATIONS OF ETHNICITY

Speaking on a very general level, scholarship applications tend to be rather rigid and quite tedious with an inherent power structure that gives a voice to the ones who write the questions rather than those who end up penning the responses. This is to ensure that the capital getting redistributed will serve the ends of the donor and become an extension of their program. In theory the success of an applicant is determined by the level of proximity her manifested intellectual potential and mentality correspond to that of the donor. Thus, I find it plausible that the autobiographical utterances examined in the EstfUSA scholarship applications were conceived and conveyed with the intention of demonstrating the writers' compatibility with the overarching program of the EstfUSA as well as showcasing their exceptional suitability to use funds in such a way as to

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<sup>11</sup> Eesti Üliõpilaste Toetusfond USA-s. Põhikord. Vastu võetud asutamiskoosolekul 8. jaanuar 1950. Box 1, Folder 1. Eesti Üliõpilaste Toetusfond (Estonian Students Fund in USA, Inc) Records, Estonian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

<sup>12</sup> During all stages of my postsecondary education, I too have been the recipient of several EstfUSA scholarships, which have significantly widened my horizons in terms of research and given me the opportunity to engage with archival materials as well as conduct oral history work in Canada and the United States. I will always be indebted and grateful for that. My personal history with the foundation is part of the reason why exploring scholarship applications seemed a particularly inviting exercise. In a way, I share this institutional space with my unsuspecting informants who were born in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s and wrote the applications in question in the 1960s and 1970s.

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.esfusa.org/ajalugu.html> (search conducted: July 18, 2015).

<sup>14</sup> Certificate of incorporation of Estonian Students Fund in USA, inc. p. 4. May 1, 1961. Box 1, Folder 1. Eesti Üliõpilaste Toetusfond (Estonian Students Fund in USA, Inc) Records, Estonian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.



reach for the stars on a more personal level. In other words – not only can the applications and their supporting materials be read as declarations of achievement and aspiration, but also as more or less consciously targeted texts that seek to adhere to what must have been perceived as the established discourse on Estonianness. The following is based on a careful reading of applications written in the 1960s and 1970s by Estonian American students born in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s.

### **Making the case for eligibility**

It is important to note that the extent and frequency of pathos in the applications vary greatly. There are a number of students who place heavy emphasis on rational economic aspects in either a thoughtful and detailed manner or simply by stating the obvious – the need for money. Granted, in such cases a certain undulating reference to Estonianism is sometimes written in between the lines – for example, when the family is in dire straits due to the loss of a breadwinner during the war or complications pertaining to the DP experience. Those seemingly objective reasons have a backdrop of suffering directly linked to the grand narrative of exile itself. One of the more drastic examples on this menu stated the applicant's father's war injuries and subsequent (unspecified) amputation as a reason why she herself is requesting financial assistance:

...he gave his health fighting for Estonia /.../ this scholarship would be of great economic help in return for the sacrifice he made.<sup>15</sup>

On the other (not too distant) corner of the economic rationale lies a cluster of explanations that can be said to have only one reference point – the somewhat ethereal notion of a good Estonian and what constitutes such a person. On occasion, this appeal can be rather blunt;

I feel I am more Estonian than anything else. I wish to pass on Estonianness to future generations and I think this was one idea Jüri Lellep had when he gave the scholarship.<sup>16</sup>

Ironically, this rather particular example of strong wording is in fact misconstrued. It would be reasonable to assume that Jüri Lellep, having been a nineteenth century national awakening activist would have approved of the expressed notions. However, since he passed away in Estonia in 1908, he could by no means have been instrumental in setting up the endowment. It was in fact his son Otto G. Lellep, the inventive engineer and venerable representative of old American Estonians within the largely DP-dominated Estonian community in Milwaukee,<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Scholarship application of L. O. Folder Lellep Fond 1976. Lellep, Jüri Papers, Estonian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

<sup>16</sup> Scholarship application of L. P. Folder Lellep Fond 1977. The Lellep, Jüri Papers, Estonian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

<sup>17</sup> Milwaukee Eesti Rahvusgrupp (Estonian Society of Milwaukee) Records, Estonian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

who donated the money and suggested the name in 1968.<sup>18</sup> Even before this grand gesture Otto G. Lellep had been a generous donor for years and had taken the initiative of paving the legal path towards a major contribution already before the EstfUSA's incorporation.<sup>19</sup> Due to various legal obstacles he wasn't at first able to give as much as he had wanted to, but the "little" that he did give was still hugely influential. In 1965 his donation was the single largest amount among gifts from both individuals and organizations.<sup>20</sup> With the Jüri Lellep Memorial Fund's emergence in 1968, a whole new era in the work of the EstfUSA began and one can also claim that to be true about the young Estonians it was directed towards.

As was shown, it also gave new life to the long gone Jüri Lellep, as his name came to be associated with providing opportunities and nurture for the youth. Numerous instances of uninformed flattery at his address can be found in the applications, including one where the writer claims to personally know and respect him. According to Otto G. Lellep's memoirs, in real life his father Jüri had been a rather stern figure with not much love or tenderness to share with young ones out of fear of spoiling them. In modern terms, Otto's childhood can be seen as rather traumatic. Otto didn't have much handed to him in life and can be said to have been quite the self-made man. Granted, he was able to get an education, but the source of his wealth was ultimately his ingenuity, which he himself in turn seemed to at least partially attribute to his unique upbringing.<sup>21</sup>

This back-story was not lost on all applicants<sup>22</sup> and some were more successful than others in weaving it into their narratives. A New York-born young man even went so far as to come out and say that in his view Lellep's scholarships exist for young people precisely like himself –

who will always stay Estonian and work for Estonia and Estonians.

Moreover, he sees the act of granting scholarships as an investment which places a moral obligation on those who benefit from them.<sup>23</sup> There are also applicants

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<sup>18</sup> <http://www.esfusa.org/ajalugu.html> (search conducted: July 18, 2015); Lellep, Otto G. Papers, Estonian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

<sup>19</sup> Letter from a lawyer to Otto G. Lellep regarding his prospects of creating a fund within EstfUSA. Dec. 7, 1960. Box 1, Folder 5. Otto G. Lellep's correspondence with Helmo Raag and others 1960–1974. Eesti Üliõpilaste Toetusfond (Estonian Students Fund in USA, Inc) Records, Estonian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

<sup>20</sup> Box 1, Folder 5. Otto G. Lellep's correspondence with Helmo Raag and others 1960–1974. Eesti Üliõpilaste Toetusfond (Estonian Students Fund in USA, Inc) Records, Estonian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

<sup>21</sup> Memoirs of Otto G. Lellep. Manuscript. Lellep, Otto G. Papers, Estonian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

<sup>22</sup> A young woman from Milwaukee states the fact that she is currently reading the unpublished memoirs of Otto G. Lellep which she received through a family connection as part of her rationale for nominating herself. L. K. Scholarship application. Box 3, Folder 43. Eesti Üliõpilaste Toetusfond (Estonian Students Fund in USA, Inc) Records, Estonian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

<sup>23</sup> K. R. scholarship application. Folder Lellep Fond 1978. Lellep, Jüri Papers, Estonian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

who seek to place the moral obligation from themselves solely on the deciders by emphasizing that if organizations want to attract young leaders to carry on their mission in the future, they must support the worthy ones now. A sense of entitlement is also sometimes present in these more forceful appeals, for instance:

In the end I believe that as I am already searching for help elsewhere, I should not fail to ask help from the Jüri Lellep Memorial Foundation, seeing as it has been established by a compatriot and ought to thus be not my last, but first hope.<sup>24</sup>

Another common feature in the narratives aspiring to woo the deciders comes in the form of pledges for future action. They come in all shapes and sizes – from the very generic and concise to original and elaborate.

One might assume that when explaining their particular suitability for the scholarship, these young people might also raise the question of Estonia's situation and indeed many do. What is surprising is that most slide over the topic in a very laconic matter and very few make specific reference to the Communist regime. A rather lonesome example of an openly engaged political rationale was penned by a man born in Woodstock in 1959 for an application submitted in 1978:

When among Americans, I always try to introduce Estonia and its dire straits under the Communist regime. To fight against Communism, wherever possible, the true nature of which I have learned to know because of my parents, Estonian events and the Estonian Supplementary School.<sup>25</sup>

The underlying statement here might be something in the lines of – I want you to know that I have accepted and internalized what I've been taught.

Stemming from the way that the scholarship application requires students to list their experiences and affiliations within the framework of what can very broadly be determined as the American Estonian experience, it ends up producing a kind of *curriculum vitae* basking in the light of ethnicity, patriotism and the diasporic project. In fact, being Estonian is sometimes referred to as a career where one could become objectively better and advance. Not surprisingly, representatives of the older generation who are present in this body of sources mainly as authors of recommendation letters do indeed seem to understand it in this perspective. The well-known scouting activist Linold Milles shows support for one of his young colleagues in 1977 by stating that he has

observed his development since birth.

Anu-Irja Parming goes all the way and points out in a recommendation letter for an inspiring young gymnast that although she is a rather recent addition to the activists, her

career within the Estonian community intensified in a rapid manner.

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<sup>24</sup> T. L. scholarship application. Folder Lellep Fond 1980. Lellep, Jüri Papers, Estonian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

<sup>25</sup> I. H. scholarship application. Folder Lellep Fond 1978. Lellep, Jüri Papers, Estonian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

In this line of reasoning, getting a scholarship from EstfUSA can be understood as a kind of promotion in that it enables a moment of external institutional validation that comes bearing gifts of social and monetary capital. An aspect that ought not to be overlooked is that the American academic realm is highly award-driven and this intramural recognition would prove valuable in the wider context as well.

It can also be argued that even without receiving the scholarship award, at least making an effort to be a good candidate was something of an education in itself. The highly organized civil society of American Estonians indeed had its impact on youth in general as they were able and expected to start carrying their weight in these ventures as soon as possible. The specific roles and functions depended on the nature, structure and composition of the community. It is worth pointing out that this tendency was not limited to only Estonians in America, but is quite a common feature of Estonian communities all over the free world. The reflection of this aspect of global Estonianism can also be detected in the cluster of sources dealt with here. For instance, one of the overseas applicants in 1969 was Jaan Männik, a young man living in Sweden. The list of his extracurricular organizational activities includes being treasurer for the Estonian Student Association in Lund. Young Mr. Männik's application was successful,<sup>26</sup> and he went on to have a meaningful career which culminated in 2008 when he began his service as Chairman of the Supervisory Board at Eesti Pank (Bank of Estonia), or in other words – he became the treasurer of his whole nation.

### **The function of the E-word: noun or adjective?**

When reading the applications in bulk, it becomes obvious that they seem to encompass a whole range of values which can in this context be argued to constitute Estonianness and Estonianism. Both of these words can be used as translations of *eestlus*, which is a very common word in the scholarship applications. Patterns with which these notions are utilized hint at the fact that the applicants themselves were well versed on these notions and could navigate among them successfully. Also, the fact that they are seemingly used with ease and occasional eloquence, but never overtly explained, provides evidence that the writers might have felt they were operating in a mental space shared by everyone involved. Obviously, there is no universal definition that would determine Estonianism or Estonianness down to a tee but explorations into the realm can nevertheless be illuminating. The following is an effort to bring out some trends

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<sup>26</sup> Various documents. Box 2, Folder 27. Applications for scholarships and additional correspondence A-M, 1969. Eesti Üliõpilaste Toetusfond (Estonian Students Fund in USA, Inc) Records, Estonian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

pertaining to the use of Esto-words in the scholarship applications, treated here as collective discourse.

Estonianism as a noun is quite significant in this context. The applications are full of declarations and promises of maintaining it as well as carrying it on and making sure it does not wither. There are expressions of pride in possessing it and calls for helping each other achieve it – reciprocal assistance in this rhetoric usually involves the fund giving money and the student using it wisely. On occasion Estonianism can also be referred to as a hobby alongside singing and dancing, or more passionately in a discourse of love, life and blessings. There are some who state that it is something that can be seen and that can be emphasized, but more than anything, the applications and supporting materials seem to hint that youngsters see Estonianism as an ontological category which they believe exists, can feel exist, but can't really succeed in pinning down in a discrete fashion.<sup>27</sup>

Estonian as an adjective is most often utilized in conjunction with various events – small and large, periodically occurring and once-in-a-lifetime ones. Also, it seems to rhyme well with the institutionalized aspects of community affairs, being often present in discourse about organizations both for young people and the wider constituency. Examples of the former are scouts, guides, camps, and supplementary schools. Examples of the latter are local and regional associations, umbrella-organizations and churches. It also seemed to be commonplace to evoke the notion of Estonian in liaison with overarching concepts such as community, society and culture with its many expressive manifestations like literature, poetry and song.

The language and the flag which can be tagged national symbols, representing in this context rather grounded and tangible reference-points to what can be perceived as constituting Estonianness. Notions of history, mentality and spirit were also present, but as part of more abstract constructs. Topics of origins and singularity were touched on in an equally fleeting manner.<sup>28</sup>

A frequent category to emerge in connection to the notion “*Estonian*” was kinship and its many forms – Estonian children, youth, parents, grandparents, men and women were actively present in the discourse. They were depicted both as specific people and generic agents who influence either the writers themselves or the wider (local and/or global) Estonian society. Since political freedom and action, as well as the issue of the lost Republic were not raised nearly as often indicates that for the people under a magnifying glass here, Estonia began at home. The formal public sphere was not a system that seemed inviting as a scene for demonstrating one's Estonianness in rhetoric.

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<sup>27</sup> Lellep, Jüri Papers, Estonian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

## DESTINATION FINLAND: CONNECTING PEOPLE

EstfUSA played an integral role in the academic mobility of American Estonians. In 1959 a program was launched to educate high school graduates, college students and college graduates in Finland with successful applicants getting the opportunity to study free of charge in either Helsinki or Turku, obtain financial aid for living expenses, get a discount on the transatlantic voyage and live *sans* rent in a dormitory, courtesy of the National Union of Students of Finland. The idea was first conceived when the EstfUSA Chairman Helmo Raag's brother got a scholarship from an academic fraternity to study in Helsinki after graduating from Brown University. His overwhelmingly positive feedback gave EstfUSA the impetus to consider starting to give out scholarships of their own. Young Mr. Raag facilitated communications with Helsinki University Student Association which became instrumental in setting up the program from the European end.<sup>29</sup>

In the first years, the organization struggled for good applicants, which is why there is evidence in the archives that on occasion they initiated correspondence with people whom they believed to know somebody who might be interested in the opportunity to

draw strength for their national self-consciousness and validate their search of self<sup>30</sup>

by spending an academic year in Finland. Judging by the sheer amount of applications and correspondence that have become a part of the EstfUSA archival heritage, it is obvious that after a few rotations had taken place, there was an abundance of candidates, meaning not everyone who applied got the opportunity to go.

### As an Estonian among Finns

The mission in Finland was not a very structured one. In fact, just like the supplementary schools in the US, it was more aimed at educating the spirit than the mind. Successful candidates were expected to bolster academic excellence as well as have a good track record in terms of engagement with Estonian activities and overall social skills, but once they got to Finland, the atmosphere became more relaxed. Sure, everybody was supposed to learn about the Finnish culture and explore Estonian studies. However, they saw fit as well to become an ambassador of Estonia and the diaspora should the opportunity present itself, but all of this was to be held in high value on an intentional level. In practice,

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<sup>29</sup> Letter from Helmo Raag to P. R. March 2, 1959. Box 4, Folder 58. Eesti Üliõpilaste Toetusfond (Estonian Students Fund in USA, Inc) Records, Estonian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

<sup>30</sup> Draft of Helmo Raag's letter to Helsinki University Student Association. Box 1, Folder 2. Eesti Üliõpilaste Toetusfond (Estonian Students Fund in USA, Inc) Records, Estonian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

the only real obligations that scholarship holders had, was sending a letter to the EstfUSA once a month and reporting back about one's classes and other activities, valuable experience, day-to-day life, interesting occurrences and state of mind.

A unifying feature in a lot of the first letters people sent back is an explanation of what a moving experience it is to hear a language so similar to Estonian everywhere one goes. This becomes a recurring theme that is elaborated on again and again. Another welcome phenomenon is how Finns have seemingly innate knowledge about Estonia seeing as it is their neighboring country. H.S. reports back in 1968:

It feels so good when people ask "Where are you from?" and one can simply answer "From Estonia!" or "From Tallinn" without having to draw a map of Europe in the air, and then after answering one can smile as the person who asked says how happy she is to meet an Estonian and calls out "Tere tulemast!" ["Welcome!" in Estonian].<sup>31</sup>

Scholarship holder M. P. happily admits that she finds being an Estonian in Finland to be very pleasant since she constantly feels like everyone understands the issues and takes an interest giving her plenty of opportunities to educate people about the diaspora and their politics. She even goes so far as to state that this kind of grass roots level international contact may end up serving Estonia's cause much better than any intramural exercises of

patriotic speeches – to Estonians from Estonians  
ever could.<sup>32</sup>

Letters also depict signs of culture shock – the ways of conduct and rules of civility in Finland differed from those that young people were accustomed to in America or attributed to Finland before arriving. For instance, it was surprising that handshakes happened only upon first meeting someone and were replaced by a short brief waving motion for all further encounters. Table manners spoke of individualism and self-sufficiency – people sat and ate quietly without salutations in the beginning or words of gratitude at the end of the meal, nobody asked for salt or bread, but helped themselves to what they needed. The tongue-tied modes of public conduct were also noticed and frowned upon and accused of inhibiting progress in learning the Finnish language. A correspondent reported that even in a rush hour tram, packed with people, a person standing in the rear could hear someone in the front taking a deep breath since nobody ever talks to anybody else so as not to disturb the others' peace. This mixture of strange and familiar is succinctly present in a sentence written by H. S stating that

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<sup>31</sup> Letter from H. S. to the EstfUSA. December 5, 1968. Box 4, Folder 53. Eesti Üliõpilaste Toetusfond (Estonian Students Fund in USA, Inc) Records, Estonian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

<sup>32</sup> P. to R. 24 March 1969. Box 4, Folder 53. Eesti Üliõpilaste Toetusfond (Estonian Students Fund in USA, Inc) Records, Estonian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

Albeit Finns eat the same pea soup as Estonians do, our social habits are rather different.<sup>33</sup>

Openly critical statements are more of an exception than a rule and many letters from Finland depict admiration and a positive attitude towards its native inhabitants' inner peace and civility. When A. P. writes back in December 1968 about a protest organized by “*normal*” students which was hijacked by left-wing activists and turned awry, she makes a note of how Finnish the behavior of the “rebels” was – when the event was over, people stayed and cleared the venue of any debris and paper from the event.<sup>34</sup>

Judging by the often apologetic letters that have been kept on file, in practice, this once a month reporting principle was also more of a goal than reality. In fact, when a guilt-ridden scholarship holder writes the Chairman of EstfUSA to confess that she feels she is not doing enough to justify her status, including the fact that she has not taken the time to write as often as she should have, Helmo Raag replies that by living in Finland and being an active participant in student life there satisfies 90% of what the Fund is hoping for.<sup>35</sup> Clearly the deciders believed that just being an Estonian among Finns would bear enough fruit in long term ethnic identity to justify spending money and resources on making it happen.

### Controversial travels

The linguistic and cultural proximity of Finland to Estonia was why it seemed important to send youngsters there to receive some of their *Bildung*. It was generally regarded as a positive and rewarding experience not just because of the obvious virtues that its proponents attach to academic mobility, but also because experiencing Finland was perceived almost like experiencing Estonia by proxy. To the disgruntlement of many, the people who had gotten this honor and privilege felt curious and adventurous about the geographical proximity as well. One can only imagine what it must have felt like for the students, especially those living in Helsinki, to be so close to *the* Estonia and imagine the mere 80-kilometer distance.<sup>36</sup> That being said, it should come as no big surprise that there were those

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<sup>33</sup> Letter from H. S. to EstfUSA. December 5, 1968. Box 4, Folder 53. Eesti Üliõpilaste Toetusfond (Estonian Students Fund in USA, Inc) Records, Estonian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

<sup>34</sup> Letter from A. P. to EstfUSA. December 28, 1968. Box 4, Folder 53. Eesti Üliõpilaste Toetusfond (Estonian Students Fund in USA, Inc) Records, Estonian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

<sup>35</sup> Letter from E. O. to Helmo Raag. December 12, 1961; letter from Helmo Raag to E. O. January 1, 1962. Box 4, Folder 58. Eesti Üliõpilaste Toetusfond (Estonian Students Fund in USA, Inc) Records, Estonian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

<sup>36</sup> See for example: letter from H. S. to EstfUSA. December 5, 1968. Box 4, Folder 53. Eesti Üliõpilaste Toetusfond (Estonian Students Fund in USA, Inc) Records, Estonian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.



who went ahead and paid a visit to the homeland. This was not without consequences for EstfUSA. For instance in 1966 it lost part of its funding due to these frowned upon trips.<sup>37</sup> The controversy started with the very first scholarship recipient, H. M.

It's quite safe to assume that the EstfUSA did not see this coming. When the scholarship program was launched, there was considerable mistrust regarding Finland and whether exile Estonians could feel safe there. To throw the Soviets off track and prevent them from making efforts to influence the Finnish partners to drop the program at first it was advertised not as something providing means and opportunity to study in Finland, but in Europe more generally. Another clear indicator of a concerned atmosphere is the fact that before sealing the deal with H. M., Helmo Raag took the time to explain Finland's political situation in some detail and offer personal assurance that the likelihood of becoming subject to Soviet repressions was not considerable, unless there would be another big war.<sup>38</sup>

Young Mr. M. seemed like an ideologically trustworthy person – in his application he chose to commence his biography by stating that his family had escaped Estonia to

get away from communist terror.

Moreover, upon receiving word of his success, H. M. penned a letter of gratitude to EstfUSA in which he vowed:

By accepting this scholarship I will try to do my utmost – in word, thought and action – to prove myself worthy of this honor and not disappoint the board.<sup>39</sup>

Ironically, he ended up doing just that by being part of what was referred to in this context as the first ever international tourist group from Finland to visit Soviet Estonia.

Even though H. M.'s move left the American Estonians opposing visits to Soviet Estonia completely baffled, what he did made a lot of sense to those in his new immediate surroundings. In fact, other scholarship holders reported in their letters that one topic the Finns didn't see eye to eye with exile Estonians was on visitation. In fact, people seemed to expect that getting an opportunity to see the homeland would be a priority for the diasporans.<sup>40</sup> At the same time, they assumed

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<sup>37</sup> Various documents and correspondence. Box 1, folder 2. Correspondence with donors 1951–1965. Eesti Üliõpilaste Toetusfond (Estonian Students Fund in USA, Inc) Records, Estonian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

<sup>38</sup> Letter from Helmo Raag to H. M. March 31, 1959. Box 4, Folder 58. Eesti Üliõpilaste Toetusfond (Estonian Students Fund in USA, Inc) Records, Estonian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

<sup>39</sup> Letter from H. M. to the board of EstfUSA. April 14, 1959. Box 4, Folder 58. Eesti Üliõpilaste Toetusfond (Estonian Students Fund in USA, Inc) Records, Estonian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

<sup>40</sup> See for example: Letter from M. R. to Helmo Raag. November 30, 1960. Box 4, Folder 58. Eesti Üliõpilaste Toetusfond (Estonian Students Fund in USA, Inc) Records, Estonian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

that the young would identify more with their new homeland America instead of the long gone Republic of Estonia and were sincerely surprised to find out that was not the case. These preconceptions grew out of the Finns' relationship with their own compatriots abroad who in a sociological perspective most resembled a labor diaspora and in the overwhelming majority of cases had left their homeland in a fairly voluntary and organized manner.<sup>41</sup> The Estonian story was very different and made drawing analogies complicated.

Needless to say, the EstfUSA was obliged to consider the sentiments of sponsors and did all it could to discourage homeland visits short of banning them altogether. One of the reasons for this rather lenient policy was that in a wider context the US was keen on having eyes and ears behind the Iron Curtain. To the disgruntlement of many Estonians and other former DPs a number of cultural exchange programs were sponsored throughout the Cold War.<sup>42</sup> There is also circumstantial evidence that H. M. might have been invited and encouraged to take his trip by Americans. In any case the EstfUSA official organizational policy was to soothe any conflicts regarding these transgressions and side with those who aspired to alleviate the resulting repercussions and ideological tensions within the community.<sup>43</sup>

It is also worthwhile mentioning that in the mid-1960s, EstfUSA Chairman Helmo Raag moved his whole family to Finland and began working for a company that would later become the telecommunications giant Nokia. His first trip back to Estonia took place already in 1967.<sup>44</sup> Interestingly, it seems that albeit the issue of visiting Soviet-occupied Estonia was to some degree contested all the way until its re-establishment as an independent country in 1991, not only did some of the young people sent to Finland decide to hop over for a visit, but starting from the 1970s, students applying for the Lellep scholarship for studies within the US started to openly confess to either having been back to the homeland with family or harboring hopes of going there in the not so distant future. Judging by the context of these statements, they seem to be designed not as disclaimers, but as proof of the applicants' Estonianness.<sup>45</sup> H. M was also rehabilitated and in 1977 his experience in Finland was featured in a letter soliciting donations as evidence of the great work EstfUSA is doing.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> See for example: **Raento, P.** (guest ed.). Finnishness in Finland and North America: constituents, changes, and challenges. – *Journal of Finnish Studies*, 2005, **9**, 2.

<sup>42</sup> **Zake, I.** *American Latvians: Politics of a Refugee Community*. Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick, 2010.

<sup>43</sup> Various documents and correspondence. Box 4, Folder 58. Eesti Üliõpilaste Toetusfond (Estonian Students Fund in USA, Inc) Records, Estonian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

<sup>44</sup> **Grabbi, H.** Helmo Raag – IN MEMORIAM. July 4, 2004. <http://www.eesti.ca/helmo-raag-151-in-memoriam/article20316> (search conducted: July 18, 2015).

<sup>45</sup> Various applications. See for example L. P. application in Lellepi fond 1981. Lellep, Jüri Papers, Estonian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

<sup>46</sup> Letter from EstfUSA to possible donors 1978. Box 3, Folder 51. Eesti Üliõpilaste Toetusfond (Estonian Students Fund in USA, Inc) Records, Estonian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

## Contested alliances

For those young American Estonians who made their way to Finland, experiencing a change in discourse was surprising and on occasion quite bewildering. They came to realize that the views and opinions as well as the counterarguments that they knew well and had become accustomed to were rather hard to find in Finland. The palette they believed to encompass all possibilities of thinking and talking about their compatriots was in fact rather selective and culturally grounded. This realization can even be diagnosed as a paradigmatic change for these young people. A young woman reporting from Helsinki in 1961 admits that it was strange

hearing people talk about Estonians and realizing they were referring to the ones living in Estonia, also that they regarded them as people who are living and evolving.<sup>47</sup>

This turning of the tables was especially intense when the scholars came into contact with these very same living, breathing and evolving persons from behind the Iron Curtain who were in Helsinki on similar terms – temporarily, for enrichment and popular diplomacy. Therefore, it's only natural that this interaction was one of the topics that received much attention in correspondence. On occasion, the descriptions are rather detailed and contain general observations as well as bits of dialogue and analysis; thus, in a way they resemble diplomatic reports. Two extremes can be delineated as far as attitude is concerned – repulsion and fascination. There were scholars who wanted nothing to do with Estonians from the Soviet Union – saying “Hello” in the hallway of the dormitory was more than enough for one of them.<sup>48</sup> There were those, who actively sought out Soviet Estonian tourists and visitors, tried to make contact, offered them help, services and company as temporary but savvy dwellers of Finland and were eager to share their local knowledge and on occasion even money. For one it didn't seem to pose any moral dilemma to fill in as a date for a ball when the Finnish girlfriend of a very “religious”<sup>49</sup> Soviet Estonian had fallen ill.<sup>50</sup>

The topics of reported conversation range from everyday observations to hard-core issues. Soviet Estonians didn't seem to know much about the refugees and considered them a small group of emigrants who left for suspicious reasons. At the ball which the mixed couple of exile and Soviet Estonian went to, he came out and opined that her lot might as well have stayed in Estonia. She

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<sup>47</sup> Letter from E. O. to Helmo Raag. December 12, 1961. Box 4, Folder 58. Eesti Üliõpilaste Toetusfond (Estonian Students Fund in USA, Inc) Records, Estonian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

<sup>48</sup> Letter from A. P. to EstfUSA. December 28, 1968. Box 4, Folder 53. Eesti Üliõpilaste Toetusfond (Estonian Students Fund in USA, Inc) Records, Estonian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

<sup>49</sup> In this context: pro-Soviet.

<sup>50</sup> Letter from M. R. to Helmo Raag. November 30, 1960. Box 4, Folder 58. Eesti Üliõpilaste Toetusfond (Estonian Students Fund in USA, Inc) Records, Estonian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

reports replying that if that had been the case they might have been sent to Siberia. According to the testimony, this didn't shake him much as he considered a certain purge rather natural in the context of any big social upheaval. The same young woman found more rapport with another Estonian from behind the Iron Curtain. So much so that at one point he rejected the frame of confrontation altogether by blurting out:

you are no capitalist nor am I a communist.

Correspondence also reveals that some of the scholars were deeply touched when attending to recitals by Soviet Estonian musicians and competitions where the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic was represented.<sup>51</sup>

It's possible that one significant factor why the letters were so detailed regarding interaction with Soviet Estonians was because they were intended to avert any harmful rumors on this very sensitive issue. Indeed, there were occasions when meaning got lost in transatlantic communication. For instance, in the excitement of their pending adventures, three young women decided to use humor in the postcards that they sent back from their journey to Finland. Upon reaching Norway they declared that they have decided to stay and enjoy the local men. When in Finland, other postcards were sent, one signed by a scholar and her fictional Finnish fiancée Mauno, another one talked of taking mixed saunas and building a great bridge between the nations. Word of these unreal developments reached the parents and raised issues.<sup>52</sup>

Another surprisingly sensitive topic was communication with Estonian exiles in Sweden who were occasionally depicted as hostile, untrusting and unfair. One of the underlying issues here might be a question of allegiance. The young and impressionable American Estonians embraced the cultural immersion in Finland and learned to know and respect the Finns on a much more intimate level than the Estonians in Sweden ever had the chance to do. In their letters, the views of Swedish Estonians on their neighboring country Finland are tagged as outdated in the case of the older generation and attuned to mainstream Swedish prejudice in the case of the young ones. Hence, to their surprise the EstfUSA scholars found themselves serving as ambassadors for Finland – explaining that Finns were not snobbish or full of bravado over the reality that they had managed to hold on to their independence while Estonians had lost theirs and that the notion of Finno-Ugric kinship had in fact very practical implications.<sup>53</sup> Some Estonians

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<sup>51</sup> Letter from E. O. to Helmo Raag. March 3, 1962 and others. Box 4, Folder 58; letter from E. M. to Helmo and Tiina Raag. October 8, 1963. Box 4, Folder 52; letter from M. S. to EstfUSA. April 1, 1970. Box 4, Folder 53; letter from M. R. to Helmo Raag. November 30, 1960. Box 4, Folder 58. Eesti Üliõpilaste Toetusfond (Estonian Students Fund in USA, Inc) Records, Estonian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

<sup>52</sup> Correspondence between scholarship holders and EstfUSA. Box 4, Folder 53. Eesti Üliõpilaste Toetusfond (Estonian Students Fund in USA, Inc) Records, Estonian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

<sup>53</sup> Letter from K. N. to Helmo Raag. January 21, 1963. Box 4, Folder 52. Eesti Üliõpilaste Toetusfond (Estonian Students Fund in USA, Inc) Records, Estonian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

in Sweden were rather puzzled as to why American Estonian students “run to Finland” in the first place only to “start saying strange things” after spending some time there.<sup>54</sup> The young visitors were also sometimes patronized – after giving speeches in Estonian they were accused of having an American and even a Finnish accent.<sup>55</sup> Although in all likelihood that was the case, such remarks were perceived as unnecessary and demeaning.

On at least one occasion, an EstfUSA scholar E. O. was appalled on behalf of the Soviet Estonians as well. The renowned Estonian Academic Male Choir came to Finland and put on two concerts, both of which were attended by E. O. According to her, the performance was superb and very well received. She also had a chance to meet the singers on February 24th – Independence Day of the original Estonian Republic and in her letter characterized the men as nice, friendly and open-minded. She had shared her family’s escape story, they had complimented her language skills and asked her to send their best to other diaspora Estonians and tell them that people think of them back home. She felt that the Estonian newspaper *Eesti Post* published in Malmö had been downright mean in its politically engaged mocking article about the performances.<sup>56</sup>

When the Helsinki University Student Association decided not to invite representatives of Estonian Students in Sweden to an international event in 1964 and started making moves to establish an exchange program with Soviet Estonian universities, the American Estonian EstfUSA scholars found themselves in the middle of controversy. Estonians in Sweden presumed that the current program would come to a halt and some went so far as to make a point to those currently studying in Finland that they should enjoy their experience as the last to be sent over. Helmo Raag diagnosed this as envy about the fact that Finland was free to make such choices and jealousy that far-away American Estonians were doing well enough to sustain such a sizable program. Contrary to the rumors EstfUSA was by no means considering making an ultimatum to its Finnish partners. In fact, there is evidence to suggest that Helmo Raag wrote letters of support about plans to get more Estonians to study in Finland from the behind the Iron Curtain.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Letter from Helmo Raag to E. M. January 22, 1964. Box 4, Folder 52. Eesti Üliõpilaste Toetusfond (Estonian Students Fund in USA, Inc) Records, Estonian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

<sup>55</sup> Letter from M. R. to Helmo Raag. November 30, 1960. Box 4, Folder 58. Eesti Üliõpilaste Toetusfond (Estonian Students Fund in USA, Inc) Records, Estonian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

<sup>56</sup> Letter from E. O. to Helmo Raag. March 3, 1962. Box 4, Folder 58. Eesti Üliõpilaste Toetusfond (Estonian Students Fund in USA, Inc) Records, Estonian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

<sup>57</sup> Letter from E. M. to Helmo Raag. January 13, 1964; letter from Helmo Raag to E. M. January 22, 1964. Box 4, Folder 52. Eesti Üliõpilaste Toetusfond (Estonian Students Fund in USA, Inc) Records, Estonian American Collection, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

## CONCLUSION

It is undeniable that during the Cold War the Estonian diaspora in the free world was feverishly active in several regards with politics informing most, if not all, communal enterprises. This is also true about the realm of scholarships and academic mobility. As the archival material utilized for the purpose of this article demonstrates, scholarship applications can reveal details about how ethnicity is perceived and rationalized in an institutional setting. Correspondence between students who have been granted the opportunity for academic mobility and the people responsible for the privilege can in turn yield valuable information regarding the tensions that emerge when young people are faced with overlapping diasporic conditions. By this construct I am referring to the situation where the young people who were part of the American Estonian diaspora temporarily became part of Finland's Estonians and had a chance to experience the Swedish Estonian diaspora as well, not to mention have direct contact with Estonians from Estonia-proper, and in some cases even visit the homeland. These multifaceted interactions place young people in different diasporic conditions, which at times – depending on their geographical location and mental space – could overlap and create fascinating tensions which brought about contested alliances.

Of course, it needs to be stated that the Estonian community with the opportunities it presented did not constitute the only scene of ethnic ponderings and declarations for second generation American Estonians. In fact, their coming of age was exceptionally well-timed as it coincided with a large-scale frenzy of searching and finding rootedness in ethnicity. It is important to add, that whilst many other minorities in America experienced a revival of interest and activity, Estonians – just like other late arrivals – had what can be referred to as a continuity of that disposition.<sup>58</sup>

With regards to the young EstfUSA scholars' experience that has been reflected upon in this article, it needs to be added that there were also many Estonians in Sweden who had nothing whatsoever to do with the negative occurrences which were described above. In fact, there is ample evidence to show that there were other views and sentiments that were much friendlier towards young American Estonians, Finns and Soviet Estonians. However, even in a supportive environment providing positive feedback, for the young people studying and living in Finland as EstfUSA scholars, there was no escaping from questioning various aspects of their identity and allegiance. For some, it was a good time and place for soul searching and finding out what they wanted out of life both within and beyond categories such as ethnicity and diaspora. Most became avid enthusiasts of the program, and some even got directly involved with its activities once they got back to America. The conflicts and confrontations as well as harmonies and conciliations scholars experienced in Finland made them more aware of the global Estonian community they were a part of.

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<sup>58</sup> **Walko, M. A.** *Rejecting the Second Generation Hypothesis: Maintaining Estonian Ethnicity in Lakewood, New Jersey.* AMS Press, New York, 1989.

**ETNILISUS JA KATTUVAD DIASPORAASEISUNDID:  
AMEERIKA EESTLASTE AKADEEMILINE MOBIILSUS  
KÜLMA SÕJA AJAL**

Maarja MERIVOO-PARRO

Käesoleva artikli pürausmaaks on noorte Ameerika pagulaseestlaste vaimne maailm külma sõja ajal. Täpsema lähenemisnurga funktsioonis on stipendiume jagava organisatsiooni Eesti Üliõpilaste Toetusfond USA-s institutsionaalne ruum. Kirjutis baseerub ulatuslikul arhiivimaterjalil, mida säilitatakse Minnesota Ülikooli juures tegutsevas Immigratsiooni Ajaloo Uuringute Keskuses.

Artikli esimeses osas on vaatluse all stipendiumitaotlustes ilmnevad eestluse diskursused. Eraldi on esile toodud noorte kirjutistest väljaõetav motivatsioon ja oma kandidatuuri õigustus, mis kokku moodustavad huvitava veenmisharratiivi. Avatud on ka Eesti Üliõpilaste Toetusfondi loomise tagamaid ja rahasse puutuvat. Artikli teises osas on põhjalikult käsitletud Eesti Üliõpilaste Toetusfondi missiooni saata noori väliseestlasi Soome õppima. Ehkki algselt oldi selle perspektiivikuse osas erinevatel põhjustel kahtleval positsioonil, kujunes ettevõtmise populaarseks ja sai kogukondliku heakskiidu kui võitlusliku paguladiasporaa *raison d'être*'ile hästi kaasa aitav kogukondlike ressursside kasutus.

Omapärane vaade avaneb, kui uurida Eesti Üliõpilaste Toetusfondi ja stipendiaatide omavahelist võrdlemisi usalduslikku kirjavahetust. Huvitaval kombel kujunes Soome-missioon enamikule osalistele üsnagi vabameelseks ja loominguks ajaks. Etnilise ja rahvusliku tunnetuse osas toimus aga kirjeldatud sättumusest hoolimata vaimseid murranguid eelkõige kattuvate diasporaaseisundite tõttu, mis aktualiseerusid noorte otsekontaktides soomlaste, Rootsi eestlaste ning kodueestlastega. Kogetu mõtestamise tulemusena langetatud otsustel oli ka laiemat pagulaseestlaskonda puudutavaid tagajärgi.

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