

London School of Economics and Political Science
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Historical Culture, Conflicting Memories and Identities in post-Soviet Estonia

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Abstract

This study investigates the interplay of collective memories and national identity in Estonia, and uses life story interviews with members of the intellectual elite as the primary source. I view collective memory not as a monolithic homogenous unit, but as subdivided into various group memories that can be conflicting. The conflict line between 'Estonian victims' and 'Russian perpetrators' figures prominently in the historical culture of post-Soviet Estonia. However, by setting an ethnic Estonian memory against a 'Soviet Russian' memory, the official historical narrative fails to account for the complexity of the various counter-histories and newly emerging identities activated in times of socio-political 'transition'. Considering that any national history is above all the tale of the dominant group, a comparative analysis of the different group memories among those debating, teaching and writing Estonian history helps to discover which historical facts were integrated into the official narrative after 1991 and which had to be deliberately omitted. From the life story interviews with over forty intellectuals of Estonian, Russian and Estonian Russian background it transpired that group memories are not determined by ethnic background alone, but that generational factors and the socio-political milieu play as significant a role. In the interviews 'narrative identity' is reconstructed and the intertwined levels of 'communicative memory' and of 'cultural memory' are revealed. Post-Soviet Estonia is a 'nationalising state' with an exclusive ethnic concept of the nation. Estonian identity is based on language, folklore and culture and a long tradition of defining one's identity against the 'other' (i.e. Baltic German, Soviet Russian rule). In contrast to some postmodernists, I argue that it is memories of certain 'formative historical events' that compose one constitutive part of national identity. At the core of Estonia's national narrative lies the story of subjugation *and* survival; thus events of collective suffering and resistance figure prominently. After 1940 in particular it was up to individual history teachers to convey a more critical view on the past, and it was historians born in the late 1950s who took an active political stance in the move for independence (e.g. Estonian Heritage Society). Quintessentially, historians did not function as 'custodians of counter-memory' during the Soviet period; instead it was through private family memories, underground literature, forbidden books and other sites of counter memory that alternative historical accounts were preserved.

This study of emerging collective identities in Estonia is applicable to the larger context of societies in Eastern Europe that have undergone processes of identity-reconfiguration during and after the collapse of the Soviet bloc.

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Acronyms

BdS	Commander in Chief of the Security Police and SD (Germ., <i>Befehlshaber der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD</i>)
CC	Central Committee (Est., <i>Keskkomitee</i>)
CPE	Communist Party of Estonia
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
ČSSR	Czechoslovak Socialist Republic (1960-90)
ECP	Estonian Communist Party (Est., <i>Eesti Kummunistlik Partei</i>)
EE	Estonian Encyclopaedia
EG	Mobile killing unit of the <i>Sipo</i> (Germ., <i>Einsatzgruppe</i>)
EM	Situational reports of the <i>Sipo</i> (Germ., <i>Ereignismeldungen UdSSR</i>)
EMS	"Estonian Heritage Society" (Est., <i>Eesti Muinsuskaitse Selts</i>)
ENE	Soviet Estonian Encyclopaedia (Est., <i>Eesti Nõukogude Entsükloopeedia</i>)
ENIP	Estonian National Independence Party (<i>Eesti Rahvusliku Sõltumatuse Partei</i>)
ESSR	Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic (Est., <i>Eesti Nõukogude Sotsialistlik Vabariik</i>)
Est.	Estonian
EU	European Union (since 1993)
EÜS	Estonian Students Society (Est., <i>Eesti Üliõpilaste Selts</i>)
EVL	Estonian War of Independence Veterans' League (Est., <i>Eesti Vabadussõjalaste Liit</i>)
Ger.	German
HGr.	<i>Heeresgruppe</i> : Army Group
IME	Economically Self-Managing Estonia (Est. <i>Isemajandav Eesti</i>)
Ital.	Italian
KdS	Commander of the Security Police and SD (Germ., <i>Kommandeur der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD</i>)
KGB	Soviet Secret Police (successor of NKVD)
KL	Estonian Home Guard, Estonian Defence League (Est. <i>Kaitseliit</i>)
Lat.	Latin
MRP	Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact
MRP-AEG	Estonian Group for the Publication of the Secret Protocols of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact.
NKVD	Soviet Security Police (Russ. <i>Narodnyi Komissariat Vnutrennikh Del</i>)
OHL	Supreme Command of the German Reich (Germ., <i>Oberste Heeres Leitung</i>)
OK	Estonian auxiliary police (self-defense) (Est., <i>Omakaitse</i>)
OKW	Armed Forces High Command (Germ., <i>Oberkommando der Wehrmacht</i>)
OMON	Special Task Militia Unit of the Ministry of the Interior of the USSR
POW	Prisoner of war
RFSS	Head of the SS (Heinrich Himmler) (Germ., <i>Reichsführer SS</i>)
RFSSR	Russian Federative Soviet Socialist Republic
RMO	Minister for the Occupied Eastern Territories (Germ., <i>Reichsminister für die besetzten Ostgebiete</i>)
RR	Peoples' Front (Est., <i>Rahvarinne</i>)
Russ.	Russian
Schuma	Auxiliary police (Germ., <i>Schutzmannschaft</i>)
SD	Security Service (Germ., <i>Sicherheitsdienst</i>)
Sipo	Security Police (Germ., <i>Sicherheitspolizei</i>)

SK	Special detachment of <i>EG</i> (Germ., <i>Sonderkommando</i>)
SS	Shock Troops, Nazi elite force (Germ., <i>Schutzstaffel</i>)
TKNÜ	United Council of Workers' Collectives
Turk.	Turkish
TU	University of Tartu
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
Waffen SS	Volunteer elite army formed as a subdivision of the SS

Glossary of frequently used Estonian and Russian Terms

<i>äärkamisaeg</i>	The awakening time (1860 -1880)
<i>asustav kogu</i>	constitutive assembly
<i>Eesti rahvas</i>	Estonian People
<i>Eesti Kodanike Komiteed</i>	Estonian Citizens Committee
<i>Gubernya</i>	Province in imperial Russia
<i>Interrinne</i>	Interfront
<i>Kolkhoz</i>	Collective Farm
<i>Kulak</i>	a wealthy peasant
<i>Komsomol</i>	Youth Organisation of the CPSU
<i>Metsavendlus</i>	Forest Brethren
<i>Metsavennad</i>	Forest Brethren
<i>Oblast</i>	Administrative territorial subdivision in the RSFSR.
<i>Riigikogu</i>	Estonian Parliament
<i>Toompea</i>	Parliament and Cabinet Office located on the Toompea Hill, Tallinn.

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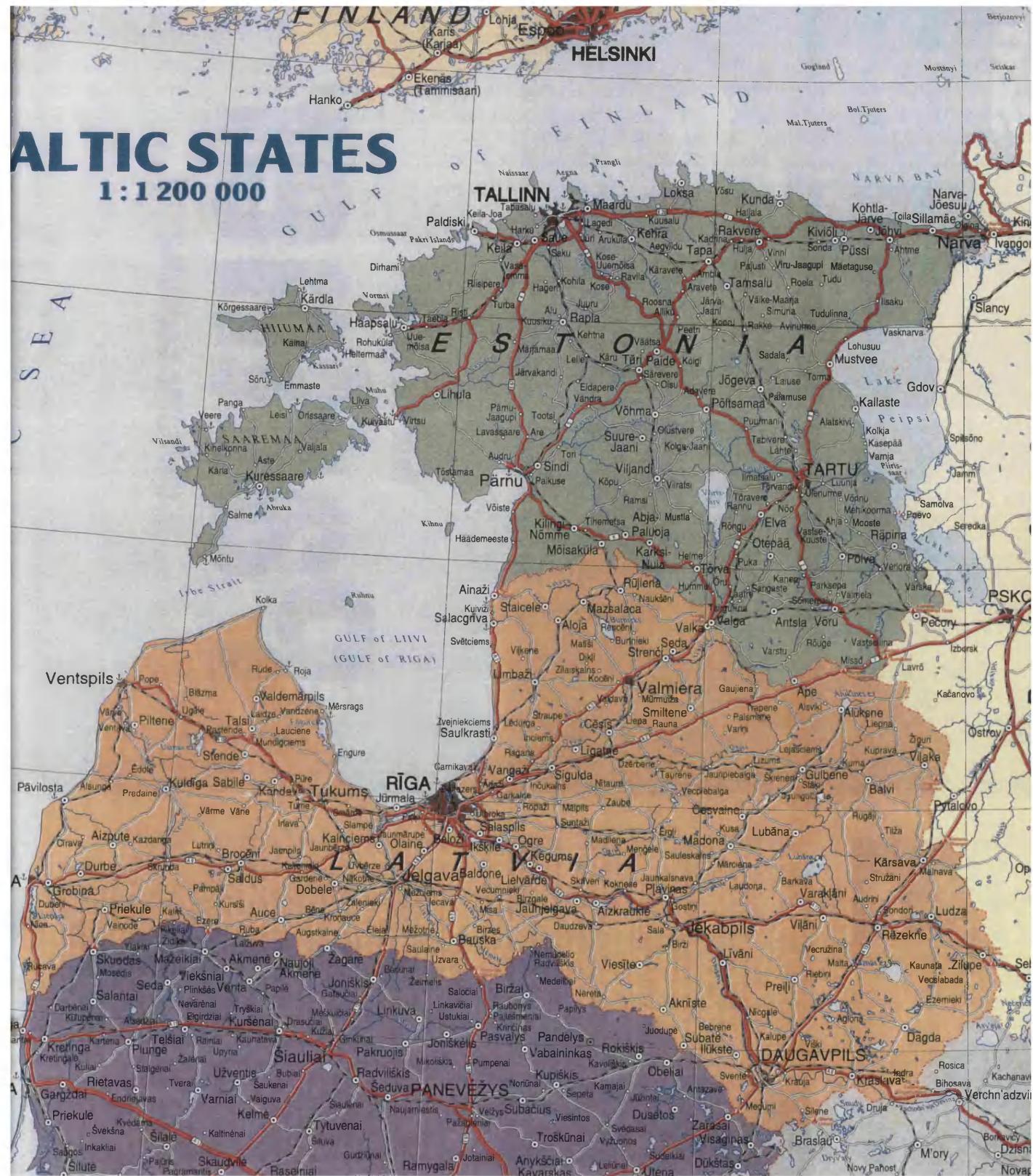
Some of the central ideas of this study have been published in a working paper (“Theory Building: Dynamics of Collective Memory in Estonia”, in: Department of East European Studies, Uppsala, *Working Paper*, No 51, April 2000) and in a German publication (“Theoretische Überlegungen zum Begriff des kollektiven Gedächtnisses in Estland”, in: Peter Nitschke (eds.), *Sammelband: Kulturvermittlung und Interregionalitäten*, Frankfurt: Collegium Polonicum, 2003).

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Introduction:

Historical Culture, Conflicting Memories and Identities in post-Soviet Estonia

The first time I arrived in Tallinn I was greeted by a festive cheer all over the Old Town. It was the day the last Russian troops withdrew from the country: August 31, 1994. The last time I was there was on September 14, 2003, the day when Estonians confirmed by referendum their aspiration of joining the European Union; this was also followed by a night of celebration. Some weeks earlier I had listened to the international press review on the German radio, and was struck that, as a matter of course, the Estonian *Postimees* was cited alongside the *FAZ*, *Le Monde*, *Corriere della Sera*, and the *Guardian*. This made me realise that things had changed for good.

During my second year in politics and history studies at the University of Münster, I began to focus on Eastern Europe, motivated by my academic curiosity about the cataclysmic political processes that had unravelled the former 'Eastern Bloc'. As I planned to specialise in East European studies, I seized the opportunity of a stipend from the Robert Bosch Stiftung to study the Estonian language. This involved a longer initial stay in Estonia of four weeks. Although my decision to study Estonian instead of Latvian or Lithuanian may have been somewhat contingent, my first visit sparked my interest in the country's recent history. Firstly, Estonia constitutes a 'borderland' between the German and Russian cultural and political spheres of influence, and numerous traces of the Baltic-German heritage can be found in the architecture, language, administrative and legal structure, the culture, songs, and even the food. Secondly, Estonia can be seen as exemplary of small nations that re-emerged after the demise of the Soviet empire. Estonia's consolidation as a modern nation is highly interesting when considered against the backdrop of the current discourse on whether the nation-state is a dying form of socio-political organisation, and on the place of small nations in the 21st c., challenged by trans-nationalism and globalisation. Hence, an investigation of the Estonian case may advance our knowledge of the plight of these small nations. Thirdly, due to its small size – of just over a million inhabitants - Estonia provides a microcosm for the researcher, enabling him or her to draw more general conclusions from the findings gathered. Fourthly, like the case of post-Soviet Latvia, Estonia retains a remarkable Soviet legacy, most visible in the form of the large Russian-speaking community, which presently amounts to

32% of the total population, and that makes inter-ethnic relations, i.e. questions of integration and reconciliation, a pressing, ever-present, issue.¹

Since the early 1990s, a bulk of literature in the field of political science has emerged which is devoted to analysing Estonia's policy towards the Russian-speaking minority, and to the political and economic transformation of the country. This literature is characterised by a 'presentist' approach, and largely disregards the great implications that Estonia's eventful past has on current processes of national reconfiguration, integration, and reconciliation between the two groups.

In contrast, I aimed to understand how times of foreign rule, occupation and return to independent statehood have shaped modern Estonian identity. The analysis of times of socio-political upheaval, such as the end of an undemocratic regime and the subsequent 'transitional phase' during which independent statehood is restored, is highly instructive for the study of collective memory and national identity; it is during these times that competing interpretations of the nation surface in the society's debate, and are 'up for grabs'.² Based on the understanding that collective memories constitute an important part of national identity (A. D. Smith 1991), I set out to examine the dynamic processes of collective memory and national identity in contemporary Estonia, and to show the complexity, diversity, and fragmentation of existing collective memories and group identities. In this thesis, both the subjective perspective on past experience and the codification of various group memories competing on the official level are accounted for. Examples, such as the debate among Estonian historians about the memory of former President Päts, the work of the Estonian Occupation Museum, that of the Estonian Commission for the investigation of crimes against humanity, and the disputed monument for the Estonian SS Legionnaires, illustrate the heated debate over the codification of collective memories in post-Soviet Estonia. At times we can even speak of 'fierce battles' over the interpretation of historical reality; in such cases, history acquires an 'existential' quality for a people's identity, as changes in the interpretation of historical facts also challenge the group identity (or the national identity). Therefore, collective memory both restricts and informs day-to-day politics, a *nexus* seldom considered in clear-cut political science studies.

The principal steps taken to answer the initial question are several. To begin with, I attempted to define systematically the theoretical concepts of 'collective memory' and 'national identity', showing that collective memory is not homogenous, but is in fact subdivided into overlapping and competing group memories. For the sake of analytical

clarity, I adopted Jan Assmann's distinction between 'cultural memory' (long-term cultural manifestations) and 'communicative memory' (medium-term spoken accounts). I argued that the link between collective memory and national identity consists of shared memories of certain foundational histories, which constitute the building blocks of a group's identity; and I highlighted the 'connective structure' of national identity, i.e. that it encapsulates the group's past, its present, and its future as common destiny. Particularly during periods of foreign rule, the subjective belief in certain foundational histories (or national myths) has figured as an important means for many Estonians to strengthen their sense of national identity.

As processes of national identification are based on the logic of inclusion and exclusion, it is crucial to look at the role of the 'other' in Estonian identity formation. Estonian identity is based on language, folklore, and culture, and a long tradition of defining one's identity against the German landlord or Soviet-Russian rule. At the core of Estonia's national narrative stands the story of '700 years of slavery and 700 years of survival'; events of collective suffering and resistance are at the heart of a modern Estonian identity. In the newly constructed national narrative of post-Soviet Estonia, the conflict lines between 'Estonian victims' and 'Soviet-Russian perpetrators' or 'invaders' figure prominently in the 'historical culture' of post-Soviet Estonia. Post-Soviet Estonia is a 'nationalising state', to use Roger Brubaker's term, with an exclusive ethnic concept of the nation (Brubaker 1996). However, by setting an ethnic Estonian memory against a Soviet-Russian memory, the national narrative of post-Soviet Estonia reduces the complexity of the various counter-histories and newly emerging identities that had been activated in times of socio-political transition.

Any national history is above all the tale of the dominant group (Benjamin 1977: 260); hence, by contrasting the different accounts held by competing groups, such as the Estonians, Russians, Estonian exiles, Estonian Russians, and Estonians born in Russia, on formative historical events, one can map out some of the controversial topics or taboo issues *within* the collective memory of intellectuals in post-Soviet Estonia.

Due to the pivotal role of intellectuals during the first wave of national and cultural awakenings throughout Central and Eastern Europe in the late 19th c., and informed by the fact that many professional historians played an important role as statesmen in post-1991 Estonia, I chose to interview historians. They participate in the discourse on Estonian history, they write the official national narrative, and they codify the various collective memories. I

examined whether professional historians functioned as ‘bearers’ or ‘custodians’ of counter-memory in times of foreign rule, and asked historians in Estonia about their personal memories, their interpretation of historical reality, and about their self-understanding as historians. Quintessentially, I came to explore how historians made sense of historical change and the loss of meaning it can entail.³

Departing from the notion that an individual’s life story (French, *ego histoire*) impacts upon his or her interpretation of national history (French, *grande histoire*), and that the official history in turn provides the framework for his or her personal understanding, I focused on the historian’s personal life story in the interviews, to explore how the subjective experience of the personal life-story influences his or her history writing and teaching.

It was inevitable that, in the interviews, tension arose from the fact that the respondents simultaneously speak as professional historians and as contemporary witnesses. Furthermore, as both the interviewee and the interviewer construct narrative identity over the course of the biographical interview, the researcher’s self-reflexivity is essential (Lucius-Hoene & Deppermann 2002). According to Rüsen: “human individuals conceive of their identity in terms of the historical narratives that they tell themselves about their past” (Rüsen in Ankersmit 1998: 192). Thus, to account for the various group identities that reconfigured post-Soviet Estonia, I focused on *how* the past is narrated in the interview.

The historians had acquired a whole range of different social coping strategies during the Soviet period, such as compliance, dissent or *inertia* etc. Their oral testimony provides fresh insight, as their (written and spoken) word was strictly censored in Soviet Estonia, and they faced new constraints on their work after 1991 in the climate of a ‘nationalising state’. Thus, the more subjective personal accounts of Estonia’s recent past remain largely unwritten and difficult to access, particularly for a non-Estonian readership. It is important to preserve the accounts of the older historians, the narrators of mixed background, and the younger generation, as they are often under-represented in the discussions on Estonia’s troubled past.

Lastly, concepts of ‘collective memory’ and ‘national identity’ are redefined for the context of Eastern European societies, while accounting for some of the existing idiosyncrasies - such as the experience of long-term foreign rule, a long-standing oral tradition and a lack of trust in state institutions, a polarisation into a private and a public sphere, and consequently divided spheres of remembrance - as legacies of the Soviet system. Another important consequence of the Soviet period is ‘hybrid identities’ that emerge at the limits of fixed (ethno-centric) identifications.⁴ For instance, respondents of Estonian Russian

background experienced forms of ‘cultural hybridity’ since they can be described as “betwixt and between” different communities (Turner 1986: 96); at the same time, they can be considered “newly emerging identities” in post-Soviet Estonia (Mannheim 1928: 310).

The empirical research on which my thesis is based, the primary source, is comprised of long biographical interviews with over 40 members of Estonia’s intellectual elite (conducted in 1996, 2001 and 2003). Most of the interviewees are professionally trained historians of Estonian, Russian and Estonian Russian background living in Estonia or abroad, and working in schools, at universities, in museums, in journalism, or politics. Born between the 1920s and the late ‘70s, the group of respondents can be subdivided into four generations, or ‘generational contexts’, to use Mannheim’s term; each is characterised by a specific ‘ethic of memory’, i.e. a particular way of interpreting the past, present and future (Ricoeur 1999: 5 – 11).⁵

Apart from this, I used English-speaking newspapers on current Estonian affairs (mainly the *Baltic Times*) and many of the relevant publications on Estonian history, culture and politics as secondary sources (mainly published in German and English). Moreover, I considered most of the significant theoretical contributions to the concepts of ‘collective memory’, ‘national identity’ and ‘historical culture’ discussed and operationalised in this thesis.

The thesis does not claim to give a comprehensive overview of Estonia’s collective memory. Such a task would, in any case, be impossible; collective memory is not a monolithic unit, but is subdivided into various group memories. This thesis focuses primarily on the historical developments in Estonia since the late 19th c., while leaving aside socio-economic determinants of change. Special emphasis is placed upon the respondents’ subjective interpretation of historical reality. While I did not check the accuracy of their oral accounts through archival study, I did contrast these different views of past events with each other.

This Estonian case study can serve as an example of how collective memories in societies that experienced the German and Soviet occupations and Soviet rule still impact the Estonians’ understanding of freedom and democracy. This study of emerging post-Soviet identities in Estonia is applicable in the larger context of societies in Eastern Europe that underwent identity re-configuration after the collapse of the Soviet empire. It is thus crucial to

make the different perceptions transparent, particularly with regard to the further political integration of the new Central and Eastern European members of the European Union.

The plan of my thesis, structured by these objectives, is as follows:

Chapter One lays the theoretical groundwork, as it discusses the concept of collective memory, the relation between history and memory, and the concept of historical culture.

Chapter Two argues that the theoretical link between national identity and collective memory is constituted by foundational histories, i.e. highly significant historical events that are formative for a group's identity. Concepts of individual and collective identity are elucidated, and particular emphasis is placed on the role of the 'significant other' for processes of group identification.

In Chapter Three, an overview of Estonian history from the 19th c. to the Singing Revolution is presented.

Chapter Four analyses the changing nature of Estonian national identity and Estonian nationalism from the 19th c. onwards.

Chapter Five makes a strong case for oral history and life story interviews as instructive tools for understanding the complexities of socio-political change in post-Soviet societies. I explain my choice of respondents and elucidate how, in the interviews with historians, cultural and communicative memories are interwoven. I then outline four 'generational contexts' among historians in post-Soviet Estonia.

Chapter Six presents evidence from the interviews on history teaching, writing, and telling in the Estonian SSR and during the political transition. The question of a historian's social, intellectual and moral responsibility under a totalitarian regime or in times of socio-political change forms the heart of Chapter Six. Three categories of historical events formative for the Estonian national identity - events of collective suffering and of resistance and taboo topics - are singled out, and the core elements of the official national narrative in post-Soviet Estonia are presented.

Chapter Seven illustrates the continuous struggle surrounding the official representation of the different memories held by various groups on Estonia's troubled past, and a taxonomy of the various public uses of history in post-Soviet Estonia is drawn up.

In the Epilogue, six modes of remembering and talking about the past that became apparent in the life story interviews are listed; and some of the effects of long-term occupation and the Soviet system on the respondents' self-description are shown.

The Appendices provide a list of principal narrators and the different questionnaires designed for historians in Estonia and Estonian historians abroad.

Endnotes of the Introduction:

¹ See the detailed figures are: 28 % Russians, 3 % Ukrainians and 1 % Belarussians (<http://estonica.org>); at other places the figure for the Russian-speaking minority is given as 25.6 % (Laurestin et al. 2002).

² The term 'transition' is a helpful intellectual concoction, but it should be used with a note of caution, since every society is in 'transition'. The idea of unidirectional movement from one state to another, as implied in this linear concept, is faulty, because it sets stable, consolidated Western societies in contrast to 'transitional', central European societies. This is why Giordano states, "the post-socialist transition is over, because it had never started in the first place" (transl. from German) (Giordano 2005). In spite of this, I make use of this term throughout the thesis, because since the late 1980s the socio-political transition has been heightened in Estonia.

³ In the interviews the subjective dimension of historical experience (e.g. trauma, mourning and memory work) is explored, so that this thesis touches on the neighbouring discipline of social psychology.

⁴ The concept of 'cultural hybridity' is taken from the post-colonial discourse where it has been employed by scholars such as Homi K. Bhabha and Stuart Hall (Bhabha 1994; Bhabha 1996; Hall 1994; Hall 1996a; Hall 1996b; Hall 1996c). See Epilogue.

⁵ Mannheim defines generation (or 'generational context', as he puts it) in socio-political and not in biological terms; this will be expounded in detail in the methodological Chapter. When I use the term 'generation' in the thesis, I stick to Mannheim's definition of the term. The term 'ethics of memory', or 'ethics of remembrance', has been discussed by Paul Ricoeur (Ricoeur 1999).

Chapter One:

On Collective Memory

*“Nur bedeutsame Vergangenheit wird erinnert,
nur erinnerte Vergangenheit wird bedeutsam.”*

- J. Assmann ¹

0. Introduction

The relation of collective memory to processes of national identity formation constitutes the principal intellectual axis around which the first two theoretical Chapters are organised. This entails a separate discussion of ‘collective memory’ and ‘national identity’, in which parts of the existing body of theory are critically assessed and working definitions are established. This is crucial as both concepts suffer from evasiveness, vagueness and a danger of over-generalisation, for reasons exemplified later.²

Until recently, studies of memory were mainly located in the field of neuroscience, neuro-physiology and psychology, primarily laboratory-based memory research that understood memory as a context-free, isolated process.³ The works of Henri Bergson at the turn of the last century and that of Maurice Halbwachs during the 1920s were path-breaking exceptions to this.⁴

The angle taken on memory in the context of this study is reflective of some of the studies that emerged in the social science discourse during the past two decades and that understand memory chiefly as a collective social phenomenon with an interest in its social and cultural basis.

The Egyptologist Jan Assmann, who is a leading scholar in the field of memory studies, predicted some time ago that an entire paradigm of cultural studies will be formulated around ‘memory’ and undoubtedly the term ‘collective memory’ has become *en vogue* ever since the 1990s.⁵

Following a summary of the development of ‘memory’ since antiquity, the essential points of Halbwachs’ theory on collective memory (French, *mémoire collective*) will be outlined. Secondly, further elaborations of the earlier concept of collective memory by Jan Assmann, Peter Burke, and Pierre Nora are critically reviewed. In the course of this Chapter my theoretical reflections touch several problems regarding the concept of collective memory,

such as: 1) the mechanisms of its transmission and the question of continuity and change; 2) the contested memories of conflicting groups; 3) the dynamics of remembering and forgetting; 4) the adaptability and malleability of collective memory; and 5) the relation of history (writing) and memory.

A general working definition to aid a clearer conceptual understanding of collective memory is also established.

In Chapters One and Two I consider the classical theory of collective memory and national identity and I illustrate my points with a cross-selection of examples taken from Germany, Italy, Israel, France and South America. I chose these countries, because - apart from the fact that they all make interesting case studies - their social transformations date back at least 20 to 60 years (except for the East German case) whereas the socio-political transition in Central and Eastern Europe has been more recent.⁶

1. A short history of memory

What is memory? In his detailed account on the history of the memory in Western society from antiquity to contemporary times, Jacques Le Goff states that "memory, the capacity for conserving certain information, refers first of all to a group of psychic functions that allow us to actualise past impressions or information that we represent to ourselves as past" (Le Goff 1992: 5).

Because Le Goff conceptualises memory as a dynamic system depending on language and shared communication, he periodises the development of memory in four stages according to the degree of written memory, starting with societies that have a predominantly oral or "ethnic memory".⁷ Ethnic memory is preserved by specialist "memory-men", such as bards, priests, *literati* and genealogists and its transmission is through apprenticeship and storytelling. In contrast to the word-for-word memorisation, specific to written cultures, narratives of ethnic memory are "generative reconstructions" that allow for creative leeway, instead of insisting on exact mechanical memorisation (Ibid.: 54 ff). In literate cultures, the written word extends the storage capacity of people's memory, it moves beyond the physical limits of the body and locates itself as the written word in archives, libraries or epitaphs (Ibid.: 52).

Antiquity, the first stage in the development of memory, is marked by a movement from oral transmission to writing and the formulation of a rhetorical theory of memory. The *Rethorica ad Herenium* (86 - 82 BC) situated memory in a system of rhetoric and distinguished between places and images (Lat., *loci et imagines*) while clarifying the active character of images in the process of remembering, and between the memory of words and of things (Lat., *memoria rerum et memoria verborum*).⁸ All of which can be subsumed under the art of memory (Lat., *ars memoriae*) outlining techniques of remembering, or mnemotechnology (Ibid.: 67).⁹

In medieval times Christianity transformed these ancient traditions of memory in profound ways.¹⁰ While oral memory, such as popular folklore memory or ethnic memory, continued to exist through epic songs, and *chanson de geste* performed by *troubadours* and *jongleurs*, Christianity came to dominate the intellectual sphere with its circular liturgical memory, chronology and remembrance of the dead in the *memento* of the canon during Mass (Assmann 1997: 61 f). Besides this Church-based memory there existed a memory of archives, genealogies, and a feudal memory concerning the land.

In the early 12th c. the New Rhetoric (Ital., *rethorica novissima*) composed by Boncompagno da Signa from Bologna, integrates the system of Christian morality, such as the duality of heaven and hell, virtue and vice, into the memory of the Middle Ages (Le Goff 1992: 77).

From the 16th c. onwards, the modern phase introduced further profound transformations of memory through decisive advances in printing, progress in science and philosophy, and through the fundamental changes in the overall organisation of society (i.e. centralisation in and through administration and bureaucracy) (Ibid.: 84).

It is impossible not to mention Benedict Anderson at this point, who attributed such a decisive role to the development of print technology and 'print capitalism' for the rise of national consciousness, modern nations, and nationalism; as it is the reading public who finds itself represented by this new medium and by the same token imagines itself through it (Anderson 1991).¹¹

In the 19th c. memory's expansion is unstoppable, with the main causes being a growing education system and the secularisation of commemorations in general. The French Revolution, with its calendars, and festivals all in the service of its remembrance, can be seen as the benchmark with regard to a general "multiplication of commemorations" (Le Goff 1992: 86).¹² Other notable manifestations of memory in the late 19th and early 20th cs. are the creation of national archives, public record offices and historical research institutes (in the wake of the rising spirit of Historicism). The creation of these institutions was particularly significant in the context of the national unification of Italy and Germany. Le Goff draws a comparison with the Scandinavian countries, Norway, Denmark, Finland, which were more open to popular memory, manifested in the creation of museums of folklore.

Other features of memory in the early 20th c. are the erection of monuments to the dead after the Great War - such as the tomb of the Unknown Soldier - and photography that revolutionised memory.¹³ Le Goff gives the example of the family photo album as the *iconotheque* of family memory (Ibid.: 88 ff).¹⁴ Certainly the contemporary electronic revolution profoundly affected (and continues to affect) language, communication and thus memory, but I will not touch on these interesting discussions in the course of my thesis (Ibid.: 90 – 97).

In critique of Le Goff's otherwise highly interesting book I would note that he fails to supply a definition of memory as a collective social phenomenon; and that he uses terms such as 'social memory' and 'collective memory' interchangeably without prior definition.¹⁵

1.1. Individual memory and the group: from Halbwachs to Assmann

How do individual memory and social memory relate? In as much as memory is subjective by nature, it is social at the same time. For individual memory does not exist in a *vacuum*, instead it depends on a social framework for its existence, maintenance, and reconstruction, thus we must speak of ‘social memory’.

The French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs was the first to place individual memory within the social frame of society (*Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire*). According to him, individual memory requires the support of a group, as it is only through group membership, - such as kinship, religious and class affiliations that individuals acquire, localise and recall their memories. Understanding individual memory as a social construct formed and determined by society, Halbwachs stressed both its social and constructive nature (Halbwachs 1985: 19 - 24). It is social, because individual memory is structured through language and based on social interaction, communication and sharing, and so are its content and referential points. Hence, group membership and a socially prescribed cognitive framework are essential to processes of individual remembering as well as forgetting.¹⁶

“Memory makes us and we make memory”

Elizabeth Tonkin’s formula of “memory makes us and we make memory”, helps to elucidate the multi-layeredness of collective memory (Tonkin 1992: 97). “Memory makes us”, indicates that collective memory is not just stored data, but rather like the glass in a window frame, through which individual group members perceive and interpret past, present and future; seeing through the ‘eyes of memory’ that both inform and limit the actions of individual group members (F. A. Yates in Le Goff 1992: 77). “We make memory”, signifies the constructive aspect of memory. That the past is not simply preserved in collective memory, but is instead (constantly) reconstructed with the aid of material traces, rites, texts, and traditions left behind by that past, is one of Halbwachs’ main tenets (Halbwachs 1966: 132 f). Consequently, the past is selectively remembered, appropriated or forgotten, and shaped by the moral and political considerations, interests, and aspirations of the present (Coser 1992: 25). In view of that collective memory is a social construct of the past in the light of the present; and our interpretation of the past is tailored to our basic requirement to find viable patterns for the present (Hobsbawm 1972: 3 – 18).¹⁷ Moreover, the social framework of memory, such as language, a religious community, the family, and class, cannot be considered

neutral or impartial; instead Halbwachs speaks of social conventions that are in turn impacting on the group's remembrance (the *ways* of remembering and *what* is remembered) (Halbwachs 1966: 366 ff).

The primacy of social cohesion

The legacy of Durkheim's influence on Halbwachs' thinking can be found in the latter's assumption that a main function of collective memory is to create social cohesion, and that this is why society tends to erase from its memory all that might create friction among group members. In order to maintain a sense of social cohesion over time, groups consciously rearrange their recollections in such a way as to adjust them to the variable conditions of equilibrium (Halbwachs 1966: 382). Hence, groups preserve their pasts under aspects of continuity and distinctiveness of their identity, while blanking out all which is not in support of a positive group image (Assmann 1997: 40).

This aspect of Halbwachs' concept can seem reductionist. It appears that he does not consider the potential for conflict and fragmentation inherent in collective memories, but regards it only as a source of social cohesion. Consequently, his theoretical framework does not specify mechanisms that would explain how divided societies remember their troubled past.

The collectivity

In his later work Halbwachs used the term *mémoire collective*, which is essentially a social memory. Initially, we need to determine what is meant by 'collective', or what it is not. Both Halbwachs and his teacher, Emile Durkheim, have been criticised for simply applying the terminology of individual psychology to collective groups.¹⁸ In 1915 Durkheim asserted that he is not proposing the existence of a 'group mind', as groups do not have a mind of their own, and that there is nothing else but an individual mind. However, he recognises that over time, groups form a collective structure that manifests itself in institutions and that can be called *conscience collective* (Durkheim 1964).¹⁹

Halbwachs clearly stated "while the collective memory endures and draws strength from its base in a coherent body of people, it is individuals as group members who remember"

(Halbwachs 1980: 48). Moreover, he did not understand society in a ‘totalising’ way, but acknowledged the multiplicity and diversity of its various sub-groups, each with their respective ‘group memories’. As an individual partakes in many different groups (and group memories) throughout his or her life, individual memory is an ‘agglomerate’ of all these various (shared) group memories (Halbwachs 1966: 200; Assmann 1997: 37). Besides, both the *conscience collective* and *mémoire collective* are not to be confused with what C. G. Jung termed the ‘collective unconscious’ (Germ., *kollektives Unbewußtes*). Jung defined the latter as a second psychic system existing in addition to our immediate consciousness, which is of a universal and impersonal nature, identical in all individuals. According to him the ‘collective unconscious’ consists of pre-existent forms, the so-called ‘archetypes’ and does not develop individually but is inherited (Jung 1991: 42 f; Assmann 1997: 47).

In sum, Halbwachs uses the term *collective* memory, because 1) memory fundamentally depends on the social framework of a group, and 2) because each individual takes part in a number of different group memories and thus assimilates and unites these various group memories.

1.1. *Figure I: Levels of Collective Memory*

LEVELS OF COLLECTIVE MEMORY
<p><i>Third Level of Memory Work</i> Collective reconstruction, re-interpretation and selection of past events in institutions.</p>
<p><i>Second Level of Memory Work</i> Categorising, conceptualising, describing of past events.</p>
<p><i>First Level of Memory Work</i> Collective conversation and collective sharing of personal memories.</p>

Figure I exhibits the multiple layers of meaning and the *processual* nature of collective memory; with it I intend to make the preceding theoretical conceptualisations somewhat more graphic and cogent. Individual memory is produced through 'memory work' which takes place in the aforementioned *cadres sociaux* and constitutes the first level of collective memory.²⁰ 'Memory work' is based on 'collective conversation' that includes actual social interaction among group members as well its translation and internalisation by individual group members (through socialisation). Language forms the link between the collective and the individual, as it enables 'collective conversation' and 'collective sharing', through which even those group members who lacked the first-hand experience of certain events are able to participate in their imagined reconstruction in the group's collective memory.

The second level of collective memory involves 'memory work' that describes, categorises and conceptualises past events, work that helps the individual to maintain his or her orientation in space and time. More abstract processes of re-interpretation, reconstruction and selection take place on the third level of collective memory which is furthest removed from the individual's *actual* first-hand experience and thus subject to a high likelihood of distortion and manipulation. The memory work on this level takes place in institutions such as schools, courts, and state archives, etc.

All levels together form the multi-layered collective memory in which individual memory is anchored. Admittedly, the differentiation into the three levels is an artificial one, as in reality these frames of perception and interpretation of reality co-exist

1.2. *Communicative memory and cultural memory: a dual concept*

This paragraph discusses how continuity and change figure in the collective memory. As social groups are delimited in space and time, apart from the question of how collective memory is transmitted and preserved *within* the same group (e.g. intra-generational sharing) we have to ask how inter-generational transmission of collective memories are guaranteed.²¹ Mechanisms of transmission can either be familial and unmediated or mediated and public, the latter is largely done through institutions, the most obvious being the education system (Douglas 1986); other forms of public transmission are commemorative traditions.²²

To account for continuity of collective memory over time, Halbwachs made the important distinction between 'historical' and 'autobiographical' memory. Whereas historical memory is periodically reinforced through commemorations, festivals, and rituals, autobiographical memory is the memory of events that were personally experienced (Halbwachs 1980: 50 - 59; Coser 1992: 23 f.).

Jan Assmann uses Halbwachs' distinction of autobiographical and historical memory as the point of departure to launch his dual concept of 'cultural' and 'communicative' memory. Communicative memory corresponds with Halbwachs' notion of autobiographical memory, as it too depends on oral traditions and is both flexible and ephemeral. By choosing the term 'communicative', Assmann captures the role of language and communication for collective memory more poignantly than the term 'autobiographical' memory may have done (Assmann 1997: 50 f.).²³ To Assmann communicative memory encompasses three to four generations, consisting of all experiences that are personally communicated and vouched for (with regard to their accuracy); i.e. communicative memory includes both first-hand and second-hand experiences.

Cultural memory on the other hand has the potential to endure many generations, as it is recorded, codified, and transmitted through literary tradition, monuments, cultural artefacts and an "institutionalised communication", such as commemorative rites and festivals (Ibid.: 12, 56).²⁴ Consequently, the development of cultural memory is closely linked to the rise of script societies.²⁵

As stated earlier collective memory both informs and restricts the actions of individual group members. The restrictive (or prescriptive) function of collective memory stems from its normative nature. Here, it is cultural memory in particular which conveys norms and values, presenting the group with guidelines for their shared way of life (while its content is often stylised and reduced to a simple story which encapsulates a moral lesson) (Ibid.: 140 f.).²⁶ What needs further scrutiny is the exact nature of the interplay of communicative and cultural memory; how do they interact and influence each other (while bearing in mind that this distinction is an artificial construct)?

Each generation holds a set of beliefs. Most beliefs remain relatively constant across generations, but each generation develops some new opinions and attitudes based on what events shaped the socio-political environment during their life.²⁷

It is how to integrate these new beliefs into the self-image held by a group that poses a constant challenge. Pennebaker & Banasik state that societies reflect on and reconstruct their past(s) after approximately 20 - 30 years. The reasons for this specific time span are a sufficient 'psychological distance', the accumulation of generational resources to establish commemorations, and what they term the 'death of the dictator' (i.e. any feared repercussions from the authorities) (Pennebaker & Banasik 1997: 14 ff).²⁸

The generational cycles of memory suggested by Pennebaker, Banasik, and Jan Assmann do not necessarily contradict each other, as all would agree that collective memory is continuously re-negotiated. The problem lies more in the outcome of this constant negotiation for the group identity. If great breaks with the tradition and profound changes in the interpretation of the past (present and future) are the result, then according to Halbwachs, the group would cease to exist and a new one with a different collective memory emerge (Assmann 1997: 40).

'Flashbulb memory'

Questions of how personal memory and collective memory interact, and of how much individual history is influenced by the grander scheme of socio-political events, are also tackled by Catrin Finkenauer. She refers to the term 'flashbulb memory' to characterise distinctly vivid, concrete, and long-lasting memories of personal circumstances surrounding people's discovery of shocking events (Finkenauer et al. 1997: 191 f). Thus, 'flashbulb memories' point to the setting in which personal circumstances intersect with a historical event, so that individual memory and social memory conflate. In this case the individual remembers not only the event itself but also the social context in which he or she first heard about the news, i.e. the location, the weather, the time of the day, and who else was present. Events remembered as 'flashbulb memories' are of consequential novelty and of great emotionality; examples are the assassination of J. F. Kennedy, both the Voyager and Columbia disaster, the erection (and fall) of the Berlin Wall, and 9/11. The flashbulb metaphor captures the nature of these memories that are like clearly lit and distinctly vivid islands surrounded by the grey sea of *amnesia*.²⁹

Pennebaker and his co-authors pose the question of what qualifies individual memory to enter into a group's collective memory; the question alone is indicative of the fact that they understand individual memory as something separate from collective memory.³⁰ Furthermore, in their attempt to define what constitutes collective memory, they contend that only memories of events with a 'widespread significance' for a particular group (and generation) qualify as collective memory. 'Widespread significance' here means large-scale events associated with high levels of social sharing that affect large segments of the population. Moreover, the events in question have to represent a fundamental long-term change to the lives of group members, such as that caused by massive political upheaval or famine (Pennebaker & Banasik 1997: 17). For these authors collective memories are memories of societal-level events that are collectively created and shared (Paez & Basabe et al. 1997: 147 - 174).

In sum, the definitions of collective memory brought forward in Pennebaker's book largely oppose the analysis of both Halbwachs and Jan Assmann, who conceptualise collective memory in a much broader and more inclusive fashion. That only collectively experienced events of a certain kind qualify, results from a superficial reading of the classics on collective memory. As collective memory encompasses *both* 'communicative' and 'cultural' memory, it is not only large-scale societal events that qualify for collective memory but first-hand individual experience does too (and besides only the individual can have the (sensation of the) experience and not the group); nor did Halbwachs insist that collective memory has to be of an earthshaking or of an emotionally laden quality. Therefore, the set of definitions put forward in Pennebaker's book limit the scope of the concept of collective memory.

A preliminary definition of collective memory

Both Halbwachs' and Assmann's concepts of collective memory account for the *dialectical* interplay of continuity and change, of past and present, and of individual remembering and collective memory. To me it is the long-lasting, institutionally manifested forms of cultural memory that ensure continuity in collective memory, whereas communicative memory represents the continuous re-interpretation of the solid facts and forms of cultural memory. Thus, it is communicative memory that gives a group the flexibility to adapt to the changing requirements of modernisation (and globalisation).

I understand collective memory (including both cultural and communicative memory) as a pool of shared cultural resources and a stock of shared knowledge that guarantees continuity; whereas change lies in the constant process of social re-interpretation and reconstruction (with its inclusions and exclusions) of these cultural resources.³¹ Consequently, change lies in the *how* and *what* is remembered at any point in time.

I depart from Halbwachs' belief that a group ceases to exist when it re-interprets the past in a radically different fashion from previous generations (i.e. when the social frame is fundamentally changed) (Assmann 1997: 40), because I contend that the 'pool of cultural resources' remains unchanged over cycles of *longue durée*.³² Finally, it can be said that both Halbwachs and Assmann recognise the *processual* nature of collective memory; that it is not simply preserved or reproduced over time but continuously socially re-negotiated, re-interpreted, and re-constructed, and that we are dealing with very dynamic social processes.³³

1.3. *Continuity: Sites of memory*

When we use the term collective memory, we have to be aware that collective memory manifests itself in various forms, some more fluid, some more crystallised, more or less material and long-lasting; here oral traditions can be classed as fluid, whereas cultural artefacts, sites and monuments constitute more crystallised forms (Assmann & Harth 1991: 11 - 25). Writing of the "territorialisation of memory", Smith too examines the role that territory plays in collective memory (Smith 1996: 383). Memory, he asserts, is bound to the homeland, which works as "repository of historic memories and associations" (Smith 1991: 9).

A group locates its collective memory within a relevant spatial framework, and recollects memories of events with the help of landmarks. In *La topographie légendaire des évangiles en Terre Sainte. Étude de mémoire collective*, Halbwachs examined the role of landscape for processes of localisation of collective memory, posing the question of how a spatial frame aids collective remembering and its cross-generational continuity (Halbwachs in Coser 1992: 173).³⁴ He analysed Christian memory of holy places of the commemorative landscape of Palestine and found out that it is continually reshaped according to the changing needs of the people who do the remembering (Douglas in Halbwachs 1980: 13). In this context Assmann introduces the term *mnemotop* to describe topographic texts of cultural memory or simply sites of cultural memory (Assmann 1997: 60).³⁵

The French historian Pierre Nora proposes a new history based on the study of these sites and places of cultural memory, or *lieux de mémoire*.³⁶ Nora adopted a relatively broad definition of *lieux de mémoire* as “any significant entity, whether material or non-material in nature, which by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community.”³⁷ With an almost ethnographic inspiration Nora’s project attempts to analyse the places in which the collective heritage of France was crystallised; a project for which memory provides the overall structure.

Joan of Arc, Verdun, the *Vendée*, the *Académie Française*, the *Louvre* and the *Eiffel* Tower are all *lieux de mémoire*. To Nora this is not just any selection of objects, instead he attempted to go beyond historical reality to discover the symbolic world of things and recover the memory that they sustained.

According to Nora prior to the *lieux de mémoire* so-called settings of memory (French, *milieux de mémoire*) existed, settings in which memory formed a real part of everyday experience. *Milieux de mémoire* could be found in peasant cultures, which constituted an abundant reserve of memory. To Nora *Lieux* are created in the interaction of memory and history, places where memories are anchored and embodied, sites in which a residual sense of continuity remains;³⁸ some are ‘dominant’ as places of triumphant celebrations, others are ‘dominated’ as places of refuge, such as cemeteries (Nora 1990: 32).

1.4. Group memories, multi-vocality and conflict

So far, the importance of remembrance for cultural continuity and social coherence has been stressed, but collective memory serves a double function: it not only endows the group with stability, but remembering also bears a subversive potential of resistance, conflict, exclusion and change. Jan Assmann refers to the subversive potential as counter-memories. When a group counter-poses its present situation to its collective memories of a shared past, criticism of the *status quo*, and ultimately the urge for revolution and change may arise.³⁹ This is particularly the case, when a group shares collective memories of a heroic or ‘golden age’ marked by freedom, wealth or military power that stands in stark contrast to the present experience of deficiency or inequality, caused by foreign occupation or other forms of dependence. The memory of such a heroic past can turn into a social utopia for the future, a counter-history that raises hope and expectation and mobilises people to call for a change (Assmann 1997: 227).⁴⁰

Conflicting memories is also the focus for Peter Burke's theory, whose point of departure is Halbwachs' assertion that due to the plurality of social identities, collective memory is differentiated into many sub-units which overlap and are often inter-woven (Halbwachs 1966: 195). According to Burke, each *mémoire collective* is the product of a constant inner-group struggle over competing versions and images of the past, a struggle that attempts to rectify putatively false interpretations of the historical past, present or future goals (Burke 1991: 298). An example for this are the memories of the *Vichy* regime in post-War France which are of a divided and conflicting nature. Nora remarks that *Vichy* suggested the resurgence of the whole counter-revolutionary past and was so traumatic because of its resonance to earlier times. Further examples are conflicting memories between the subjugators and the subjugated, and between the culturally rooted and the uprooted immigrant communities (Burke 1991: 297 ff). Whereas the victorious contestant who writes national history can afford to forget, the defeated is not permitted to forget their history as they have to work on alternatives to the *status quo*; hence, national history reflects the power relations representing the tale of the dominant group (Benjamin 1977).⁴¹

Halbwachs also attributed a nostalgic function to collective memory (Halbwachs 1966: 149 ff). *Nostalgia*, i.e. the desire to return to an idealised past, is similar to the sort of counter-memories described earlier (Kleiner 1977: 11).⁴² The process of recalling, which is so characteristic of *nostalgia*, can be oriented not only spatially, such as to one's homeland, but also towards a particular time, to which one cannot return (Bellelli & Amatulli 1997: 209 ff.). *Nostalgia* is a way of cultural resistance to maintain one's identity in the face of societal changes and uncertainties; such is the case with migrants or *diaspora* communities when faced with the threat of having to adapt to the dominant culture of the host state.

Le Goff remarks that societies that view the past as the ideal model of the future, perceive change or innovation as *renaissance*, the return to the past. An example of this is the Zapatista's efforts to restore a peasant society in Morelos and erase the memory and traces of the age of Porfirio Diaz (Le Goff 1992: 9).

1.5. On the dynamics of remembering and forgetting

"Those who cannot remember their past are condemned to relive it."

- G. Santayana

Diábolus, the Devil, is the one who confuses by making people forget. Forgetting causes bewilderment due to a loss of orientation and direction. Le Goff calls both Judaism and Christianity “religions of remembrance”, and refers to Deuteronomy and the Last Supper for each case. Deuteronomy is about the catastrophic consequences of forgetting (Assmann 1997: 215); and it was the role of the Prophets, such as *Amos*, *Isaiah*, *Hosea*, and *Ezechiel* to remind the people of the covenant with God. The prophets judged the kings and the state of society by the guidelines laid out in the Torah.

Burke portrays the function of a modern historian with that of a ‘remembrancer’, who in medieval England collected the debt, having to remind those who wanted to forget (Burke 1991). This touches on the question of who are the rightful bearers of a society’s collective memory, and makes clear that the notion of ‘custodianship of memory’ is quintessentially based on a moral claim.⁴³

The motivational nature of forgetting

Halbwachs furnished a theory of forgetting as well as of remembering. According to him, the flip-side of collective memory, *amnesia*, is caused by the dissolution or change of the social framework or *cadre sociaux*. As mentioned earlier, changes to the framework occur as the result of an adjustment of the social framework to changing conditions or when individuals separate from the group permanently (Halbwachs 1985: 368; Halbwachs 1980: 24 - 30; Assmann 1997: 40); other examples would be through the destruction of libraries or a lack of schooling in minority languages.

As mentioned earlier, Halbwachs believed that a group aims at reconstructing its collective memory under the premise of maintaining social coherence. Freud was also interested in the motivational nature of forgetting. In “reconstructive memory work” individuals repress that which is negative, or remember it in a distorted way. The process of forgetting, or selective omission of events, allows them to assimilate their memory to the social frames of reference built around the dominant values and beliefs of society.⁴⁴

Baumeister and Hastings give four social strategies that groups acquire in order to maintain a positive self image (Baumeister & Hastings 1997: 278 ff): 1) The first strategy is

the selective omission of disagreeable facts; 2) exaggeration of a few shreds of the historical ‘truth’; 3) blaming circumstances and the enemy and focusing on the misdeeds of one’s opponent to justify one’s own wrong-doings as a mere response to the former; and 4) fabrication.

I hold that complete fabrication is rare, because although facts of collective memory may be deleted, re-interpreted and ‘embellished’, they need to resonate among the people (if they are not to be forgotten!); which they only do if the images appropriated stem from a pool of shared cultural resources.

On forgetting or the capacity to feel un-historically

In 1874 Nietzsche posed the essential question of *how* much individuals and groups should forget, when he asserted that the “capacity to feel un-historically”, i.e. to forget, is equally vital for the survival of a people as their ‘historical consciousness’ (Germ., *Geschichtsbewußtsein*) (Nietzsche 1995: 62).⁴⁵ For Nietzsche a people’s ability to forget is a pre-requisite of its endurance, but how much can they forget without losing their sense of collective identity?⁴⁶ The degree to which the past has to be forgotten if it is not to become the “gravedigger of the present”, is determined by the “plastic power” of a people. By this, Nietzsche means the capacity of a people to accommodate loss or political change, to incorporate the past and to recreate and transform themselves; that is to adapt to a changing framework.⁴⁷

Nietzsche sees human nature as prone to forgetting its historical past, so that a culture that shows a strong interest in remembering its history and in refined mechanisms to ensure the tradition of memory, is an exception that needs explaining. An attempt to do so is made by Burke’s notion of the counter-history of the defeated, who cannot afford to forget their history and have to work on alternatives to the *status quo*. In this context, Burke gives the example of the English, who when compared to the long memory of the Poles or Irish, have a relatively short social memory (Burke 1991: 297).⁴⁸

Only a few years later and in a Nietzschean spirit Ernest Renan states that memories are constitutive of the nation, but that forgetting - or ‘historical error’ - plays a crucial role in the creation and continued existence of nations (Renan in Bhabha 1990:11).⁴⁹ He explains this by the fact that the circumstances under which nations came into being were mostly violent, as was the case in the Saxon or Norman conquest, and the Huguenot pogrom in 1572 (*la Saint-Barthélemy*), which is why they need to be forgotten (Ibid.: 10).⁵⁰ But in his speech he could

allude to ancient massacres as they are far enough removed and knowledge about them is patchy so that they constitute the material for the construction of national genealogies. It was the far more recent massacre of the Paris *Communards* in 1870/1 that he could not mention as this event needed to be forgotten first (Anderson 1991: 200 f).⁵¹

On enhabitation and doxic knowledge

Billig shares Nietzsche's and Renan's view which saw the reproduction of the nation as being dependent on the complex dialectic of collective remembering and *amnesia*; and elaborates that it is not only important to forget the past, but also the present (Billig 1997: 10, 37 f). Billig reminds us that contrary to common belief forgetting and remembering do not constitute a dichotomy, but that instead they are characterised by a complex interplay. Traditions can simultaneously be present and absent in political practice, places and texts, so that collective memory can be preserved without the conscious activity of individual remembering. The collective memory of a society manifests itself in routinised practices of everyday life which occur without conscious awareness; they don't need to be consciously remembered. Billig describes these processes of routine formation as *enhabitation*, the past becomes *enhabited* (Ibid.: 42). Billig gives the example of the daily 'flagging' of nationhood (where the waved flag serves as a banal reminder of nationhood) and explores the banal nationalism of established nations, who project all the aggressive and irrational forms of nationalism on to 'others' (such as the Balkans, Rwanda, etc.), while forgetting their own banal nationalisms (Ibid.: 39 ff). Therefore "the metonymic image of banal nationalism, is not a flag which is being consciously waved with fervent passion; it is the flag hanging unnoticed on the public building" (Ibid.: 10).

Pierre Bourdieu's ideas can further our understanding of how these processes of remembering and forgetting work on a societal level: Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* grasps the dialectic of remembering and forgetting as *habitus* is based on forgetting of that which became familiar to us. It constitutes a taken-for-granted or *doxic* knowledge which sees the world as self-evident (Bourdieu 1977: 4 f; Bourdieu 1990a: 134 f).⁵² Bourdieu defines *habitus* as "embodied history, internalised as a second nature and so forgotten as history – it is the active presence of the whole past of which it is the product" (Bourdieu 1990b: 56). Throughout his work, Bourdieu challenged these unquestioned perceptions, particularly in relation to power structures, as forgetting is essential for the maintenance and reproduction of the social order.

Collective memory and *amnesia* have been tools of manipulation and thus important instruments of power in the hands of the rulers. To make themselves masters of remembering and forgetting, means gaining, legitimising and maintaining power; be it through official neutralisation, through censorship, or organised *amnesia* and institutional forgetting of conflicting memories and counter-histories of non-dominant groups (Le Goff 1992: 98; Burke 1991: 299).⁵³ Societies whose social memory is primarily oral or who are in the process of establishing a literate culture offer particularly good chances to the researcher of understanding the struggle for domination over remembrance and tradition and the distortion or manipulation of memory (Le Goff 1992: 98).

2. Between history and memory

"History wants to be objective, and it cannot be. It wants to resuscitate and it can only reconstruct."
- P. Ricoeur⁵⁴

2.1. Dynamics of past and present

In this section the dialectical relation between history and memory is discussed. When does history begin and when does memory end? How (and where) does the transformation or conversion from memory into history take place? Are history and memory opposing categories or are they inextricably inter-woven?

On the dichotomy between history and memory

Because history was thought to be based on objective facts, its claim of ‘truth-telling’ stood under a scientific banner (Assmann 1997: 75 f).⁵⁵ Along these lines, Leopold von Ranke, a figure central to German historicism, believed that one could retrieve the “pure historical truth”, and so the historian had to tell how things *really* happened (Ranke in Le Goff 1992: 165; Ranke 1973).

Le Goff acknowledges that history is frequently manipulated by political regimes and national movements, but in his view memory “is more dangerously subject to manipulation by time and by societies” (Le Goff 1992: xi, xiv). Memory has been under suspicion to be subjective or even fictitious, because our ability to remember faithfully is limited or restricted. As previously mentioned, it is in the course of the reconstructive memory work that a lot of details are lost, distorted, and new material is imported. Moreover, after many years it is

hardly possible for individuals to distinguish the memory that arose from first hand experience from those images of the past based on second hand information. However, if memory is the “raw material of history”, as Le Goff suggests, then is the latter not simply the product of a process of conversion (and reconstruction) of remembering into reified, institutionalised history and thus just as subjective?⁵⁶

To Halbwachs, history starts only when tradition ends and the social memory is fading; i.e. when the past is no longer ‘inhabited’ as all historical knowledge lost its impact on the group’s actions and thinking (Assmann 1997: 44). It is only at this point then when the work of the historian can begin (Halbwachs 1980: 105 ff). History is opposed to memory, for where memory emphasises inner-group similarities, continuity, and the group’s distinctiveness towards the ‘other’, history does the exact reverse. History highlights differences, breaks and discontinuities within a group’s historical development. Moreover history has generalising tendencies in that historical facts are abstracted from the specific group context to be re-organised in a time of ‘universal history’ (French, *durée artificielle*) detached from the group (Halbwachs 1980: 101). Consequently, Halbwachs holds that history cannot be memory, as memory is always inextricably connected to a specific group, and is thus limited in time and space (Halbwachs 1980: 78 - 87). For as long as a *milieux de mémoire* exists to support the group’s active remembering, the group and its memory are in an intimate union where memory is communicated and alive (French, *mémoire vécue*) (Assmann 1997: 64). The conversion of memory to history begins when the *milieux* changes, a rupture occurs and the memory of the past is no longer the lived reality of a group.

In Halbwach’s scheme of things, memory is also opposed to tradition. Similar to *histoire*, tradition is an organised and institutionalised form of memory; but different from *histoire*, traditions are canonised memories that are periodically commemorated (Halbwachs 1985: 243 - 296). Assmann points out that the difference between tradition and memory is far more fluid (Assmann 1997: 45, 64 ff).⁵⁷

Interestingly, Halbwachs understands history as impartial, unitary, and universal, although he holds that collective memory consists of several group memories (Halbwachs 1980: 83). Here, one could object that a large group (such as a nation) does not have a single history; instead its history is the result of a constant struggle over competing histories that are continually re-written.⁵⁸

A contemporary reworking of Halbwachs’ deliberations on the oppositional pair of history and memory can be found in Nora’s *Les lieux de Mémoire* where he provides an

extensive list of distinctions, of which I will quote a few: 1) real memory is undisturbed social memory, integrated, inherent-present-minded, in contrast to history which Nora sees as the organising-principle of this “historiographic age”; 2) memory is life, history is (only) a representation of the past and hence always incomplete; 3) memory is rooted in the concrete, history is universal; 4) memory is absolute, history is relative; 5) memory clings to ‘sites’ while history clings to events; 6) history turns memory into stone, it transforms and distorts it (Nora 1996: introduction). Nora’s starting point is a critique of our modern and disenchanted times, in which he diagnoses the end of a society that remembers. To him it is processes of industrialisation, democratisation, de-colonisation, and the mass media which brought about an acceleration of history that disrupted the equilibrium between past and present and which caused an uprooting of memory.

Since the 1960s traditional fact-based history has been replaced by a *nouvelle histoire* - a social history less interested in the events themselves but in the reconstruction of these events over time; and an urban and labour history emerged, which accounted for exactly this multiplicity of perspectives (with new methods such as oral history). Finally, a new historiography was established, which involves the study of the manipulation of the collective memories of past events, less interested in what actually happened than in its perpetual reuse and misuse (Le Goff 1992: 96 f.).

It can thus be concluded that Halbwachs and Nora share a traditional, positivist concept of history which appears somewhat out-dated (cf. Große-Kracht 1996: 21 - 31).

2.2. *The inclusive concept of historical culture*

I realised that it was necessary to go beyond the artificial distinction of history and memory, and that Rüsen’s inclusive concept of ‘historical culture’ proved useful in doing so. Moreover, a limitation of the concept of ‘collective memory’ as launched by Halbwachs and elaborated further by Assmann stems from the fact that it is not a fully developed analytical category, and so methodological problems arise in its application to concrete case studies. Therefore, I employ the concept of ‘historical culture’ (Germ., *Geschichtskultur*), first introduced by Jörn Rüsen, as it offers an integrative approach to the study of collective memory and history by understanding both phenomena as expressions of ‘historical culture’.

In short, ‘historical culture’ includes every articulation and contestation of ‘historical consciousness’ (Germ., *Geschichtsbewußtsein*) and all the ways in which ‘historical memory’

is processed in the daily life of a society.⁵⁹ In Rüsen's words, 'historical consciousness' is a dynamic, process-based concept denoting the relationship between the present, our interpretation of the past, and expectations of the future. 'Historical memory' then stands for an individual's interpretation of the past, whereby the individual and collective levels of historical memory are inseparably linked as the individual often exceeds his or her own autobiographical memory by relating his or her life story to the wider historical developments of the group in order to make better sense of it all. In my own reading of Rüsen's work, 'historical consciousness' is closely linked to an individual's understanding of time, whereby 'historical memory' provides for orientation in the time-space-continuum.⁶⁰

In sum, the concept of historical culture provides a general framework for the analysis of different historical narratives and competing counter-memories within a society.

2.3. *Excursus: post-1945 Germany*

"Forgetfulness leads to exile, while remembrance is the secret of redemption"

- Baal Shem Tov⁶¹

If we accept that a major attraction to belong to a nation is that the latter is the patron (and defender) of the group's positive self-image, group worth and collective self-esteem, then what does a national community do if it has great difficulty in deriving such a positive group image out of its recent past, as is the case for post-1945 Germany (Smith 1998: 166; cf. Horowitz 2000)? Collective attempts to select from more positive streams of tradition or the imposition of taboos on certain historical events of the group's past which are damaging for its self-image and which limit its present and future actions, are possible ways out of this dilemma (Fulbrook 1999: 108 f).⁶²

These strategies could also be observed during the founding years of the Federal German Republic (Germ. abbr. BRD) and the German Democratic Republic (Germ. abbr. DDR); the latter's key founding myth was that of an anti-fascist state of peasants and workers in which communist fighters such as Ernst Thälmann and the *companeros* of the Spanish Brigades were adopted as national heroes. In the context of Marxist-Leninist thinking, it was perfectly feasible to draw on a more positive version of the recent German past as a history of class struggle. By employing Marxist terminology, Nazism was explained as the "highest form of imperialist monopoly" and was not seen as an intrinsically German breed. As a result,

the German peasants and workers were innocent, while the true villains were the capitalists, the enemy of the people (Germ., *Klassenfeind*), and the large-estate owners (the Donzel or Germ., *Junker*).⁶³

In the case of the Federal German Republic it was by interpreting the Nazi era as a ‘catastrophe’ that the eminent historian Friedrich Meinecke attempted to regain a positive image of the nation. He implied by this very choice of words that the era in question was comparable to some natural disaster that simply overwhelmed the German people and that a small gang of criminals forced them down a ‘false path’ (Germ., *Irrweg*); hence he asked that the “duped and blinded German masses” be cleared from any responsibility for the atrocities committed and achieve exoneration and re-integration of Germany into the international community.⁶⁴ This attempt corresponded with Chancellor Konrad Adenauer’s ‘policy of dealing with the past’ (Germ., *Vergangenheitspolitik*) in the early ‘50s which was permeated by a “traditional grammar of exculpation”.⁶⁵

A stance similar to that of Meinecke was taken by another German historian, Gerhard Ritter, who aimed to salvage Germany as an un-political ‘cultural nation’ (Germ., *Kulturnation*) (Fulbrook 1999: 115).⁶⁶ He argued that Nazism is not intrinsic to the German people, but needs to be treated as a broader European phenomenon. By employing the category of “totalitarianism”, he was able to describe the Third Reich and communism in the same breath as systems of totalitarian dictatorship.⁶⁷

In some ways compatible with the role played by Meinecke’s historical relativism in West Germany, were the writings of the philosopher Benedetto Croce (1866 - 1952) in post-War Italy. Through his “rhetorical reconstruction” of Italian identity, Italy was rehabilitated and admitted back into the West European community of nations. Croce re-interpreted Italian history to prove Italy’s close ties and commitment to West European values (i.e. Enlightenment and Renaissance), and to make Italy’s fascist past appear as something externally imposed on Italians and not something inherent to the Italian culture (Cushman 1997: 187 ff; cf. Croce 1949). Croce’s writing displays another example of pronounced *presentism* when he stated that “all history is contemporary history” and “no matter how distant in time (...) in reality history is related to present needs and to the situations in which these events find their echoes.” (Croce in Le Goff 1992: 107). This emphasis on the present (and future) over the past, was Croce’s strategy to come to terms with Italy’s fascist past.

I now turn to the study of Olick & Levy (1997) on *Holocaust myth and rationality in German Politics* in which the authors assert that collective memory shapes and constrains the present and *vice versa*, or more specifically collective memory shapes and constrains claim-making in the present political debate and generally in the ‘historical culture’ of a society.⁶⁸ They illustrate this through the example of the debate over breaks and continuities in Germany’s history including the search for ‘normality’ (Germ., *Schlussstrichdebatte*). Peter Gay once characterised the Germans as being ‘obsessed’ with their preoccupation with the past; in “anguished retrospection”, they try to find the flaw or antecedent, to explain the unexplainable that followed (Gay 1978: 7). Does Germany have a ‘special path to modernity’ (Germ., *Sonderweg*), or was Hitler merely an ‘accident in the system’ (Germ., *Betriebsunfall*) (Fischer 1998) are some of the fundamental questions of this debate.

In their study Olick & Levy distinguish different types of cultural constraint through which collective memory operates in a society (Olick & Levy 1997: 922 - 925, 934). On the one hand collective memory restricts the present as proscription (of “*what shall not be done*”) in the form of taboos and prohibition; on the other hand it gives prescription (of “*what must be done*”) in the form of duties and requirements. The authors concede that in practice these analytical distinctions are not as clear-cut and co-exist or overlap (Ibid.: 931).

On taboo

All societies establish taboos, which are an avoidance practice of something allegedly dangerous and contagious. Taboos involve moral constitutive principles, and claims that are absolute and beyond debate so that their transgression means pollution.⁶⁹ Olick & Levy analyse the Holocaust as a ‘source of proscription’ in German politics. The Holocaust formed a constitutive taboo in West German society and as a major cultural referent it was (and is) present in almost every moment of German politics; to censor all “anti-Jewish racism” from the public discourse to an extent that the authors describe ritualistic, was in accordance with the inner logic of this taboo.

Transformation of taboos

Cultural constraints are not fixed entities, but they can be transformed over time (Ibid.: 925). The ‘German historians’ debate’ (Germ., *Historikerstreit*) in 1986/87 serves as an example for

the transformation of a cultural constraint from an absolute taboo to a prohibition. It was Ernst Nolte who challenged the dominant orthodoxy of the Holocaust interpretation, by disputing its uniqueness and thus attempting to “normalise” the German *Sonderweg* (Fulbrook 1999: 118-128). He sought to relativise the atrocities committed in the Nazi era, by claiming that they were no different from Stalin’s gulags or Pol Pot; stating that the rise of National Socialism was a defensive reaction to “Asiatic deeds” and the Bolshevik threat. In opposition to that Jürgen Habermas argued that to relativise the atrocities by means of a comparative historiography is nothing but a denial of Germany’s historical responsibilities.

Olick & Levy ascertain that what the neo-conservatives (such as Nolte and aforementioned Ritter) were really after in this debate was to alter the “ontological status” of the Holocaust taboo, as an unquestionable interpretation, and to transform it into a prohibition; since a prohibition that was open to rational argumentation allowed for the public refutation of the Holocaust (or by individuals, such as the “Holocaust denier” John Irving) (Olick & Levy 1997: 932 f.).

On transgression

One example of a transgression of the Holocaust taboo is Phillip Jenninger’s speech in front of the German Parliament at the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the ‘Night of Broken Glass’ (Germ., *Reichskristallnacht*) in 1988.⁷⁰ Jenninger, who was the parliamentary floor leader of the Christian Democrats (CDU), adopted an ‘understanding approach’, describing the early 1930s from the viewpoint of ordinary German people. Throughout his speech it remained unclear to the audience whether he was simply portraying the average situation of the ordinary Germans and the rise of anti-Semitism, or whether it was in fact a sympathetic or apologetic account of the choices taken by the majority of Germans at the time. The actual phrase that triggered the scandal and Jenninger’s downfall from office soon after was that he described the phenomenon of Hitler’s rise to power as ‘enthrallement’ (Germ., *Fazinosum*), capturing the ‘charismatic’ and ‘fascinating’ aspects of Hitler. The choice of words is highly problematic in that it implies that the German people have been ‘blindly’ attracted by Hitler.⁷¹

In sum, this incident demonstrates that the Holocaust taboo was still very much intact and that almost two years after the ‘German historian’s debate’ had taken place.

3. Chapter summary & outlook

In this Chapter I determined that there is no collective memory *per se*, because collective memories are multiple, fluid, and subject to an ongoing process of negotiation over time. To conceptualise collective memory as *processual* and contested automatically sharpens our awareness for the existence of conflicting counter-memories within a group.

Furthermore, I have attempted to demonstrate that a definition of 'collective memory' needs to incorporate the dialectical relation between past and present. Asmann's dual concept of cultural and communicative memory is valuable in that it enables us to view collective memory as a "compound of persistence and change"; for even if the present generation may rewrite history, it does not write on a blank sheet, as Coser so aptly remarked (Coser 1992: 34). Hence, I assume a middle ground between the 'presentist' and 'primordialist' view of the past.

I presented a preliminary definition of 'collective memory', *as a pool of shared cultural resources and a stock of shared knowledge (some of it more dormant and some of it more activated) from which symbols and images can be drawn and which provides interpretations and orientation for the group. Whereas the pool of resources guarantees cultural continuity and endurance, change lies in the continual process of re-interpretation and reconstruction of these cultural resources.*

It was made clear that in as much as group members must remember in order to maintain the distinct character of their group, the community's continued existence also depends on an ability to forget. Hence, forgetting and remembering are part of one and the same process.

It further emerged that collective memory and collective *amnesia* (and taboo) can be powerful tools in the hands of political rulers. But contrary to some social constructionists I argued that collective memory is not entirely malleable and instrumental to national leaders. In fact the degree of manipulation is limited, because these 'fabrications' still have to resonate with the people in order to make a successful appeal.

I explored the relation of history and memory and showed how scholars often tend to treat them as an oppositional pair; in order to go beyond this dichotomy, I introduced the inclusive concept of 'historical culture'.

The fact that collective memories form vital building blocks in the reconstruction of collective identities has been alluded to all through this Chapter; to determine the theoretical

link between collective memory and national identity will be the main objective of Chapter Two.

Endnotes of Chapter I:

¹ “Only important past events are remembered, only the past that is remembered is important” (transl. from Germ.) (Assmann 1997: 77).

² Many studies on memory or identity politics in western and eastern European countries use the theoretical concepts of collective memory and national identity, but generally lack the theoretical scrutiny to define each of these concepts.

³ For a comprehensive overview on memory acquisition, storage, recall, encoding, forgetting, short-term, and long-term memory, see Squire & Kandel 2000.

⁴ Henri Bergson saw collective memory as an active process of sense-making through time (*Matière et mémoire*, Paris 1896); He rediscovered the central notion of the image at the intersection of memory and perception. His theory was highly influential on Marcel Proust, who, in *Search of Lost Time* (*la recherché du temps perdu* (1913 - 1927) experimented with new use of memory perspectives, and on the Surrealist movement, as well as on Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams*. The concept of *mémoire collective* was first developed by Maurice Halbwachs (1877 - 16.03.1945 in Buchenwald) in *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire* (1925); *La topographie légendaire des évanigiles en terre seinte. Étude de mémoire collective* (1941), and *La mémoire collective* (1950). In times of (post-) modern ambivalence and heightened individualisation memory has also been the stuffs of more recent cinema movies, such as Christopher Nolan's "Memento" (2000) or "Time Regained", the 1999 movie adaptation of Proust's *La recherché du temps perdu*.

⁵ Initially most of them were concerned with the Holocaust and as the great number of publications on this topic is hard to overlook, I will only refer to some of them, such as: Olick & Robbins 1998, Young 1993, and Hartman 1994.

⁶ I largely reserve my discussion of the Estonian case study (and references to other Central and East European societies) to later Chapters. Why this particular selection of countries? In post-1789 France collective memory was used to create loyal Frenchmen; Nora terms this endeavour the “republicanisation of memory” (Nora 1990: 96). Other interesting highlights in modern French history are the ‘Dreyfus-Affair’ and the disputed memory of the Vichy regime. In Italy and Germany, collective memory was used to legitimise the project of national unification in the late 19th c. and in the 20th c. both societies had to come to terms with a fascist past (Burke 1991: 298). In this Chapter I illustrate the ways in which collective memory both informs and restricts the political debate through the example of post-War Germany. The modern State of Israel is an example of a deeply divided society with a deeply divided memory. Lastly, the recent history of South America provides us with examples of societies that endured dictatorships.

⁷ To Le Goff the term 'ethnic memory' signifies memory that is predominantly orally transmitted; cf. Cipolla 1969.

⁸ Halbwachs and Nora elaborate on the notion of *loci, mnemotopos, espace, localiser, situer* or *lieux* of memory in their work, see section on individual and group memory in this Chapter.

⁹ In Vico's *On Ancient Wisdom of Italy* (1735) we read: “The Latins call memory *memoria* when it retains sense perceptions, and *reminiscencia* when it gives them back to us. But they designated in the same way the faculty by which we form images, which the Greeks called *phantasia*, and which we call *imaginativa*; for where we vulgarly say *imaginare*, the Latins said *memorare* (...). Thus the Greeks say in their mythology that the muses, the powers of imagination, are the daughters of Memory” (Vico in Le Goff 1992: 86).

¹⁰ Le Goff refers to Judaism and Christianity as “religions of remembrance”, based on Deuteronomy (Old Testament) and the Last Supper (New Testament) (Le Goff 1992: 68-80).

¹¹ For a critique of Anderson's work, see Smith 1998: 138 f.

¹² cf. Ozouf 1988; Zerubavel 1977. Mosse describes this as ‘politics of the new style’ and Marx called it ‘the introduction of the masses into history’ (Mosse 1975: chs. 1, 2). Nora describes it as an ‘era of commemoration’ (French, *L'ère de la commémoration*) in all of Europe (Nora 1992).

¹³ Mosse looks at the creation and implications of the myth of the war experience and at the sanctification of sacrifice, while considering public iconography, monuments, ceremonial and literary narratives (Mosse 1990). In Second Empire Germany the erection of monuments dedicated to Wilhelm II came close to a near *mania* (e.g. *Porta Westfalica, Völkerschlachtdenkmal*). Anderson makes the tomb of the Unknown Soldier the starting point of his argument by asking how people can sacrifice themselves for the nation (Anderson 1991: 9). In answer to that question, Smith explains that nationalism, by its ability to unite the dead, the living and the yet unborn in a single community of fate, provides humanity with a secular version of immortality through absorption into the nation (Smith 1998: 140).

¹⁴ Here Le Goff suggests that the photo album is a representation of the family, or rather of the self-image of the family, how it wants to be in comparison to and competition with representations in other family photo albums.

¹⁵ This is the reason why I used the term 'memory' so far. As will be shown in the following sections, it was Halbwachs, Abi Warburg, and later Fentress & Wickham (1992) as well as Peter Burke (1991), who elaborated on the term 'social memory'. The French term *mémoire* was coined in the 11th c. On a detailed etymological genesis of the term, see Le Goff 1992: 84 f.

¹⁶ Nations are an example for such an ‘interpretive framework’, they must not only be imagined but they need to create their own history or interpretations of themselves; this is why Edward Said insisted that they are “interpretive communities” (Said in Billig 1997: 70), on frames of remembrance, cf. Irwin-Zarecka 1994.

¹⁷ Hobsbawm holds a *presentist* position, as he is reading the past through categories of the present, viewing collective memories as a resource for the political mobilisation of the masses and images of the past as fabrications of the present. In

contrast, Marc Bloch appears to assume a middle ground when proposing that history should more than enable us to understand the present by means of the past, but also to understand the past by means of the present (Bloch in Le Goff 1992: 107).

¹⁸ I am referring here to Marc Bloch's critique of the Durkheimian School of thought (Bloch was the co-founder of the *Annales* School). Similarly, Bartlett criticised Durkheim for believing that social groups constitute a genuine physical unit, (...) [that] is possessed of nearly all the characteristics of the human individual (Assmann 1997: 133).

¹⁹ This collective structure or *conscience collective* comes close to what Halbwachs later termed 'social framework'. On Durkheim see Giddens 1978: Cf. Mary Douglas, who writes that institutions are 'thought worlds' with a common stock of knowledge, which influence individual cognitive processes in that they are not only generating preferences and transmitting ideas, but also doing the classifying, remembering, and forgetting (Douglas 1986).

²⁰ Fulbrook uses the terms 'collective conversation' and 'memory work'; the latter was coined by Freud (Fulbrook 1999: 44 ff). I found Fulbrook's elaboration on Halbwachs' concept of collective memory useful and thus based *figure 1* on her discussion. However, I realised that she understands collective memory as something outside the individual, or to say it differently, that the individual (and its memory) can be separated from the collective frame of the group; and this as previously explicated, is not Halbwachs' understanding of collective memory (or in fact my own). Halbwachs often used the term collective memory in the plural, hinting at the many different collective memories in a society. Although neither Halbwachs nor Fulbrook account for this potential of conflict, Jan Assmann and particularly Peter Burke do, as I will discuss later in the section on multi-vocality, conflict and change. Even the title of Fulbrook's book on German national identity after the Holocaust, I would rephrase into German national identities (or German identities) after the Holocaust, as again, there are conflicting interpretations at work on what constitutes 'Germanness'.

²¹ Jan Vansina understands collective memory as "cross-generational, oral transmission of events important to the group"; he is mainly concerned with the oral transmission of memory, although this is only one way in which memory can be transmitted (Vansina 1965).

²² On public commemorations see Mosse 1975: chs. 3, 4.

²³ In Das kommunikative Gedächtnis. Eine Theorie der Erinnerung Welzer (2002) takes an interdisciplinary approach to the study of memory in an attempt to synthesise new insights from the field of social science with findings from the field of neuroscience (such as neuronal, cognitive development in early childhood, and kinetic memory). Welzer states that the 'communicative memory' (in Assmann's sense) is the autobiographical memory (Welzer 2002: 193, 205, 221 f) and that autobiographical memory organises all memory and experience of an individual. His book is concerned with family memory, questions of false memory and the all-important role of media scripts for the individual memory (i.e. imported memories).

²⁴ By grouping cultural memory into the realm of the sacred, removed from daily life and real time, Assmann makes use of Durkheim's dichotomy of sacred and the profane (Assmann 1997: 52 f).

²⁵ Assmann locates the turning point of this development in ancient Israel, where after the destruction of the Temple, a fundamental shift from a "ritual coherence" to the interpretation of texts through the Rabbinate came about and influenced the entire Western Christian civilisation thereafter (Assmann 1997: 87 ff). For a definition of cultural memory, see Assmann & Hölscher 1988: 15; also see Chapter Two.

²⁶ The formative and normative function of collective memory for group identity are discussed in Chapter Two.

²⁷ Along the lines of Karl Mannheim, Conway explores how generations are formed in social units of shared conceptual knowledge, and that collective plans and goals emerging within a generation continue to support the generational identity (Conway 1997b: 21- 45). In Chapter Five a detailed definition of 'generation' or rather 'generational context' is provided.

²⁸ The time span of 20 – 30 years may be true for modern societies, but would need rethinking for the context of pre-modern societies.

²⁹ Cf. Brown & Kulik 1977. In some way a 'flashbulb memory' is a special form of collective memory accentuating Halbwachs' sociological insight into the social framework of collective memories.

³⁰ Assmann states that, strictly speaking, only the sensations, but not the memory itself, are individual to individual memory (Assmann 1997: 37); or in Halbwachs' words "we are unaware that we are but an echo" (Halbwachs 1980: 44).

³¹ Assmann describes these constant processes of social re-interpretation and reconstruction as 'recycling' (Assmann & Hölscher 1988: 15)

³² It can be said that Halbwachs gravitated towards a *presentist* stance, by stating that a group ceases to exist when its group members can no longer (agree to) remember the same things. Yet he allows for continuity in collective memory (Coser 1992: 26 f), because he contends that a society does not take on *new* ideas or traditions, instead a society may - according to its present needs - reconstruct past memories of groups that have not played a dominant part in that society (i.e. tapping into the pool of shared cultural resources of all the groups constituting that society) (Halbwachs 1985: 383 ff; Assmann 1997: 42). Nevertheless, his writings remain somewhat blurred as to what this implies for the endurance of a distinct group identity.

³³ This question of adaptability of collective memory to the demands of socio-political transition is relevant for the later discussion of post-communist societies.

³⁴ Halbwachs' idea of "localisation" (French, *localiser*) is connected with the ancient concept of *loci* as discussed in this Chapter.

³⁵ In Chapters Three and Four I discuss the role of the territory (and sacred sites in the countryside) for Estonian identity.

³⁶ Under the direction of Pierre Nora, an opulent work concerned with the constitution of the national memory in post-revolutionary France and laid out in three parts: Part I La République, (1984) which deals the *immaterial* aspects of memory; Part II La Nation (1986) which deals the *territory* of France, its borders, the state with its monuments or symbolic instruments and the legacy of historical sites and their preservation; and Part III Les France (1992); cf. Wood 1994: 123 – 149.

³⁷ *Lieux de mémoire* are places in three senses: 1) material (e.g. archives, libraries, museums, and architectural edifices); 2) symbolic (e.g. commemorative ceremonies, pilgrimages, anniversaries, and emblems); and 3) functional (e.g. autobiographies), all of which co-exist.

³⁸ In the French language, he remarks, the association of the words *lieu* and *mémoire* proved to have profound connotations – historical, intellectual and emotional – largely unconscious – much like that of the English word *root*. I will return to the term *milieux de mémoire* in the discussion on history and memory in this Chapter.

³⁹ On counter-memories to the present (Germ., *kontrapräsentische Erinnerung*), see Assmann 1997: 24, 79 ff.

⁴⁰ Assmann gives the example of Deuteronomy for such a counter-history; cf. J. Assmann & Harth 1992: 52.

⁴¹ In subsequent Chapters I will examine how the different conflicting groups in post-Soviet Estonia negotiate the / their past.

⁴² Cf. Davis 1979.

⁴³ I will pursue the question of who the ‘rightful bearers’ of a society’s memory are and of the ‘moral obligation’ of the historian (and intellectual) in Chapters Five to Seven.

⁴⁴ Bartlett placed this reconstructive process of memory in the larger context of “conventionalisation”, a process during which the highly complex web of causes of any event is reduced, simplified, condensed, and assimilated to the general frame of conventions (Igartua & Paez 1997: 80 f); something that Baumeister and Hastings refer to as “contextual framing” (Baumeister & Hastings 1997: 277- 294).

⁴⁵ Assmann discusses Nietzsche’s ideas of historical consciousness (Assmann 1997: 67). For the discourse on historical consciousness, see Rüsén 1984; Rüsén 1994a.

⁴⁶ The *nexus* between collective memory, forgetting, and national identity formation will be elucidated in Chapter Two.

⁴⁷ I was perplexed by the etymological proximity of *amnesia* and amnesty, as it suggests that *amnesia* carries a sense of liberation and freedom, cf. Michnik 1999; Ricoeur 1999.

⁴⁸ I find Burke’s assertion with regard to the short-term memory of the English problematic, but will not go into a discussion of his claim at this point.

⁴⁹ The speech was held at the Sorbonne in 1882, the context being the defeat of France by Germany in 1870/71 and the loss of Alsace Lorraine.

⁵⁰ This reminds me of Eugen J. Weber’s Peasants into Frenchmen: the modernization of rural France, 1870-1914 (1976), since the peasants had to ‘forget’ their vernaculars to become Frenchmen.

⁵¹ Alternatively, Renan might have used examples from the past to speak of the present – but in a coded form.

⁵² Bourdieu’s concept of ‘*doxic* knowledge’ is derived from Durkheim’s concept of the ‘sacred contagion’ according to which a society constructs an agreed *moral code* via a process of sacralisation to regulate society’s peaceful functioning by inhibiting transgressions through dangerous beliefs. Once constructed it is granted an unquestioned, autonomous existence as it has become internalised into the *conscience collective* and taken as an implicit given; cf. Douglas 1966; and Douglas 1975. Cf. the discussion of cultural memory as a ‘moral regulation system’ in Chapter Two.

⁵³ Cf. Irwin-Zarecka’s study on selective remembering or rather on the exclusion of the memory of the Jewish past in the reconstruction of post-War Poland (Irwin-Zarecka: 1989).

⁵⁴ Ricoeur in: Le Goff 1992: 105.

⁵⁵ Cf. Carr 1990; on the discussion of myth and history see Chapter Two and Chapter Six for a detailed discussion on history writing.

⁵⁶ The question of ‘validity’ of memory in the context of life story interviews will be discussed in Chapter Five.

⁵⁷ Edward Shils’ defined the term as *traditum*, which in its most elementary sense is anything which is transmitted or handed down from the past to the present. His remark on tradition may aid our understanding; he writes “when tradition is accepted, it is as vivid and as vital to those who accept it as any other part of their action or belief. It is the past in the present but it is as much part of the present as any very recent innovation” (Shils 1981: 12 f).

⁵⁸ Anderson speaks of the narrative or the biography of the nation (Anderson 1983: 204). Deconstructionists see a narration at the heart of the nation, a founding myth, the story of its origin (cf. Bhabha 1990). I will explore these competing histories in the case of post-Soviet Estonia.

⁵⁹ Rüsén & Jäger 2001: 399; Rüsén 1994a: 213; Rüsén 1994c: 3 – 25.

⁶⁰ J. G. Droysen considered “history as a factor of cultural orientation in the present”(Germ. original “*Geschichte als kulturellen Orientierungsfaktor der Gegenwart*”), in Rüsén & Jäger, 2001: 404.

⁶¹ Baal Shem Tov in Smith 1995b: vi.

⁶² As was the case in the 1950s and early 1960s in West Germany, cf: Mitscherlich & Mitscherlich 2004.

⁶³ Fulbrook describes how these official myths failed to resonate with the memories and perceptions of the people, at least during the first two decades of the DDR. Therefore, the First Secretary, Erich Honecker, tried a new strategy in the 1980s, connecting to the all-German heritage of Frederick I and Martin Luther (Fulbrook 1999).

⁶⁴ This strategy of exculpation appears to build on the old image of the slightly naïve German Michel which will be discussed in Chapter Two.

⁶⁵ Meinecke published German catastrophe: reflection and recollections in 1946 (1950); Fulbrook comments that the main thrust of this book is on the defeat, division of the German nation, international stigma and trauma that the Nazi era brought upon the Germans, but there was little desire to deal with the atrocities committed by Germans in the Holocaust (Fulbrook 1999: 113 ff).

⁶⁶ The term *Kulturnation* was coined by Meinecke, in Weltbürgertum und Nationalstaat: Studien zur Genesis des deutschen Nationalstaates (1969) (Cosmopolitanism and the Nation State) first published in 1917. I will return to the distinction of cultural and political nation in the context of the development of Estonian nationalism in Chapter Four.

⁶⁷ Ritter 1948; cf. Nolte 1965; see Chapter Seven on the quagmires of historical comparisons.

⁶⁸ Following Billig national identity would be such a political claim (Billig 1997: 63).

⁶⁹ See the concept of the “sacred contagion” in Douglas 1966; cf. Jan Assmann’s definitions of ‘canon’ and ‘common sense’ knowledge elaborated in Chapter Two

⁷⁰ The Night of Glass is a euphemistic term, more accurately it is described as the Reich’s Pogrom Night (Germ., *Reichspogromnacht*), i.e. the first major pogrom night against the Jews all over Germany on November 9, 1938.

⁷¹ Fulbrook remarks that Jenninger uses the same metaphor of a “catastrophic false track” as Meinecke had done 40 years earlier (Fulbrook 1999: 102); cf. Rüsen & Grüter et al. 1992: 121- 135.

Chapter Two:

National Identity and Collective Memory - Establishing a Theoretical Link

“Erst durch die Geschichte wird sich ein Volk seiner selbst vollständig bewusst.”

- A. Schopenhauer

“Ethnicity is the act of cultural recovery through memory.”

- S. Hall

“Dictatorship destroys language, memory and history.”

- H. & H. Canick

0. Introduction

The concept of collective memory has been discussed in the preceding Chapter. The main objective in this Chapter is to establish a theoretical link between collective memory and collective cultural identities, with a particular focus on national identity.

In an attempt to understand their interrelated workings, I explore both the restrictive and informative impact of collective memory on processes of national identification and the preservation and reconstruction of national identity over time.

Jan Assmann argues that the conscious activity of remembering (Germ., *Erinnerung*) is crucial for processes of collective identity formation and that group identity can only be reproduced by remembering, as it is through remembering that groups imagine themselves.¹ Anthony D. Smith contributes to the concept of a ‘myth-memory complex’ (that consists of common myths and shared historical memories) an integral role for the construction of collective cultural identities when he asserts that without the subjective element of shared memories, the sense of being part of the nation, would be absent, and no passionate identification by individual citizens with a particular nation would be possible (Smith 1996: 384).

In this Chapter I pose the question whether national identity is just like any other collective cultural identity; or whether it has a particular potency when compared to other collective social identities? In order to respond to this question my starting point will be the ‘ethno-symbolist’ approach, which maintains that national identity equips a people with a

sense of belonging through a shared legacy, with orientation for the present, and a common purpose for the future, - in short with a ‘connective structure’ (Assmann 1997: 16 ff).

Apart from the aspects of national identity that are more tied to subjective belief, I accentuate that the ‘national’ can refer to both the nation as cultural community and to its political form, i.e. the modern nation-state. I then draw attention to ways in which national identification can become a ‘political claim’. Notably this was the case during processes of increased nation defining activity of the “newly nationalising states” of Central and Eastern Europe after the Great War and after the collapse of the Soviet bloc.²

How does collective memory impact on processes of national identification? An answer to this important question is provided by Assmann who maintains that cultural memory can be identity-reinforcing because it contains ‘common sense’ knowledge about *who we are* and *what shall be done* and a *canon* defining the criteria of group membership (Ibid.: 103 – 129, 140 ff).

The relevance of collective memory for processes of national identification becomes apparent when we turn to the societies of Central and Eastern Europe that endured long-term occupation and totalitarian rule. The endeavours witnessed during the Stalinist period to cut people off from their historical memory through forms of organised forgetting was an attempt to deprive them of their collective identity and to homogenise them into Soviet people instead.

This Chapter elucidates how the persistence of collective identities is tied to collective memory. I put forward that a cultural community is able to survive occupation through collective and private remembering. Here, the Estonian struggle against Soviet rule was a struggle to keep their ‘counter-memory’ alive. This was an existential need, as remembering meant nothing less but to survive as a nation. It is also possible to assume the exact opposite position and to argue that it is forgetting (in the sense of accommodation to the occupying power) that ensures a people’s survival under occupation; but in this case the group which survived might have lost its cultural distinctiveness.³

This Chapter concentrates on the theoretical discussion of the various concepts; the Estonian case study will be discussed in later Chapters.

PART I:

1. Individual and collective identities

As has been discussed in Chapter One, every collective memory needs a social frame, but in turn for it to be sustained, the social frame depends on group memory. Furthermore, each individual needs the social group both for its memory and identity. Kaspar Hauser, who appeared in Nuremberg on May 26, 1928 after he had been raised in isolation (with a minimum of human contact), could barely speak and had little recollection of the past. Hauser's case appears to support the 'no memory, no identity – equation'.⁴

Individual identity

Individual (or personal) identity comes into being when a child begins to experience itself as an entity separate from the rest of the world. Hence, identity originates in the 'self- and other' distinction, in the separateness and boundaries of the self from both the animate and inanimate outside world (Peck 1990: 90). Individual identity, as defined by Bhikhu Parekh, is something that

"refers to who we are, how we are constituted, what makes us the kind of persons we are. It includes the central organising principles of our being, our deepest tendencies, dominant passions, characteristic ways of thought, deeply held values, ideals, attachments, commitments, our psychological and moral dispositions, traits of temperament, the way we define and understand ourselves (...)" (Parekh 1995: 257).

Collective social identity

How can we define collective social identity? Social identity theory, as first formulated by Henri Tajfel, attempted to face this challenge as it was concerned with the role of group processes in the formation of collective identities (i.e. social interaction, socialisation, and communication).⁵ However, this theoretical approach has been criticised for taking too much of a universalist stance, as it is based on the assumption that there are universal principles and universal psychological features underlying all forms of group identity and that these basic principles are in fact traceable (Billig 1997: 66 ff).

Let me run through what I hold to be the main features of any collective social identity. Firstly, the term ‘collective social identity’ implies that any collective identity is founded on social interaction and communication. On the basis of these inter-group processes, collective identity is socially re-constructed over time and is thus both dialogic and relational in character. Secondly, identity is by definition always contested, be it by an internal ‘other’ within the group or by an outsider, i.e. an external ‘other’.⁶ Thirdly, identity is not a property, nothing fixed, but a process of identification (of self-description, ascription, and representation), thus it is ‘processual’ (cf. Moscovici 1983; Schotter & Gergen 1989).⁷ In these processes of identification, time and thus memory constitute crucial factors.

A preliminarily definition of ‘collective social identity’ should include that it is a group identity based on degrees of felt commonality and of felt sameness among group members (e.g. based on cultural markers etc.) distinguishing them from outsiders; moreover, any sense of belonging to a group is connected to the knowledge of a shared past, present, and a common purpose for the future.

In this study, I am concerned with the intertwined levels of collective and individual identity. As most studies on collective identities (such as national identity) move all too freely between the individual and collective level, I find it necessary to clarify that it is neither possible to deduce any conclusions from the individual level for the collective, nor to reduce any findings made on the collective for the individual level.⁸ For it is exactly this reductionism that gives rise to the use of problematic terms such as ‘national character’ or ‘national mentalities’ and implies a deterministic concept of some sort of (racial or biological) predisposition for certain traits of character that are regarded as unchangingly true for each member of a particular national group.⁹ To avoid being criticised for adopting a universalist stance myself, it is important to add that identities cannot be analysed outside of their specific socio-historical context.

1.1. Identity prior to difference

It is commonly held that collective identities are relational, as they emerge in relation to the ‘other’; and that inherent in the very concept of identity is the duality of ‘us’ and ‘them’. Identity includes the rejection of the ‘other’, without which it cannot exist. However, Parekh points to the confusion arising from the simple equation of identity with difference (or

alterity). He states that identity is logically and ontologically *prior* to difference and that difference *per se* cannot be made the basis of identity, but that it is the community with its inner structure and constitutive organising principles which forms the basis of any collective identity (Parekh 1995: 256).

1.2. *Cultural collective identities*

Culture is a shared system of symbols that forms the basis of all social identities. As a pool of cultural resources it provides the forms, such as language, art etc., through which collective memory can be transmitted and preserved. Culture is also the *medium* through which a sense of collective identity can be created, re-produced, communicated and maintained (Assmann 1997: 139). Smith describes culture as

“both an inter-generational repository and heritage, or a set of traditions, and an active shaping repertoire of meanings and images, embodied in values, myths and symbols that serve to unite a group of people with shared experiences and memories, and differentiate them from outsiders” (Smith 1998: 187).

Consequently, national identity is not just a ‘collective identity’, but more accurately, a ‘collective cultural identity’. Ethnic communities, castes, religious denominations and nations are examples of such collective cultural identities. These are communities of a more long lasting and binding quality for the individual members, than those based solely on common needs or interest, such as class-based, political or occupational identities. Smith suggests that there are certain cultural elements, such as symbols, values, memories, myths and traditions, inherent in all collective cultural identities and that they meet the community's need for a sense of stability, of continuity, of distinctiveness, for a collective destiny which is often linked to a sense of chosenness (Smith 1995a: 131 f, 140 f).¹⁰ Figure II below depicts these various needs of the community and the cultural elements inherent in all collective cultural identities:¹¹

2.1. *Figure II: Integral Elements of Collective Cultural Communities*

CONTINUITY	STABILITY	DISTINCTIVENESS	MISSION & DIGNITY	DESTINY
Through memories of past sacrifices, victories, defeats etc.	Through traditions (customs, law codes etc.).	Through symbols (flags, costumes, and anthems etc.).	Through collective values (such as courage, honour, wisdom, and compassion).	Through myth of origins, liberation, a 'golden age', a sacred past, and chosenness.

1.3. *The power of national identity*

Fulbrook contends that national identity is yet another collective identity (Fulbrook 1999: 232). In contrast, Greenfeld advises us not to equate national identity with collective identity or to confuse national identity with just any other type of identity, - such as religious, linguistic, territorial, class-based, or political identity, which do not share a specific national perspective. According to her, national identity is not a universal or all-inclusive identity, but derives from membership of a people that is defined as a nation (Greenfeld 1992: 7, 12 ff).

1.4. *The connective structure of national identity*

So, *why* do people feel it important to have a national identity? Smith maintains that a key to national identity is that it serves as a powerful means of defining and locating individual selves in the world through a prism of collective personality and distinctive culture (Smith 1991: 17 f). National identity provides the group with a sense of belonging and a means of orientation over time, as it helps to provide answers to the questions of 'who am I'; 'what am I'; 'where do I come from'; and 'where am I going to'?¹²

The "who am I" question asks for descent, genealogical lineage, and place of birth and is connected to the individual level; whereas the "what am I" question asks for membership in a distinctive community, for adherence to a certain culture or religious affiliation. Thus the latter question is associated more with the level of collective cultural identities, such as national identity (Smith 1995a: 130). Smith concludes that by providing answers to all these intertwined questions, national identity bestows on the group an enduring element of common legacy which links the group to a presumed collective past and a destiny that provides it with some vision of a common future (Smith 1991: 25). The 'common legacy' consisting of

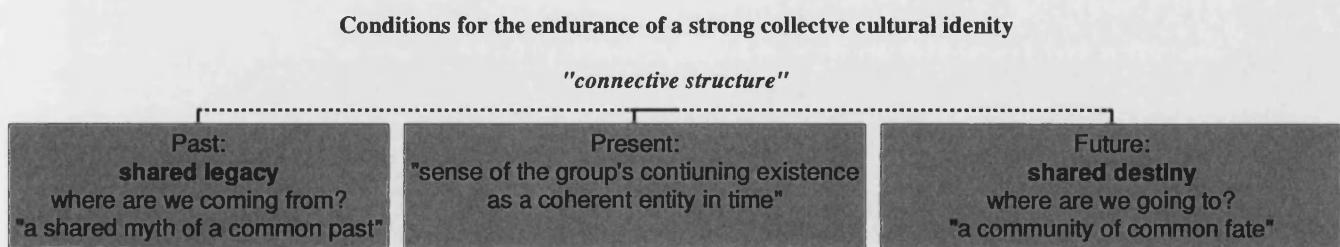
memories and myths of a common past constitutes a shared knowledge to which group members can turn for guidance and inspiration;¹³ it reminds the group of its unique culture and is therefore crucial for its national self-definition.

The group's need for a notion of collective destiny has been alluded to earlier. Destiny is connected to a common mission, which may be premised upon the group's belief in a myth of election. Destiny and mission have always been aspects of religious communities and clearly national identity not only provides a road-map for a group through time but is also linked to an idea of immortality (Anderson 1991: ch. 1).

I have shown that national identity is a collective sentiment based in the field of culture. In fact, Jan Assmann attributes to culture a similar function as Smith does to national identity. According to Assmann, it is with the help of a 'connective structure' that culture binds the individual and the collective identity together. By linking the collective memory of the past with the present group identity and its cultural continuity, it creates a collective identity of shared knowledge, shared memories, and a shared self-image based on common norms and values (Assmann 1997: 16 ff).

I have applied Assmann's concept of a 'connective structure' to a simplified tripartite model of national identity. The crucial factor of time, and thus of memory, for processes of national identification becomes evident in figure III below.¹⁴

2.2. *Figure III: Connective Structure of National Identity*



The debate on national identity can be both future - or past orientated. There are cases where the past is too divisive or shameful to be revived and political leaders attempt to make a break with that past through forms of publicly prescribed *amnesia*. However, I disagree with Parekh when he contends that in some cases, views on national identity can be either solely future - or past - orientated, for an orientation that is solely directed to the past, will ultimately lead to

the community's decline (Parekh 1994: 501). Also, when political leaders propagate the restoration of a past national identity, their parlance can be misleading, as it is really about different visions of the nation's future. We would have to ask and examine very carefully *which* past events are selected, to *whose* advantage and for *what* purpose.¹⁵ In my opinion that purpose is primarily to legitimise a specific road to the future (Ibid.: 500; Parekh 1995: 266).

1.5. *The nation as a political and cultural community*

Parekh expresses an uneasiness to use terms such as 'nation' or 'national'. For him they carry heavy ideological baggage, as they imply that every polity is or should be constituted as a nation. Instead he suggests rephrasing the concept of national identity as the "collective identity of a polity" (Parekh 1995: 255). In spite of his apprehension, he arrives at some sort of definition. To him 'national identity' refers to the way a polity is constituted; it includes the central organising principles of that polity, its structural tendencies, characteristic ways of thinking and living (Ibid.: 257). He describes 'national identity' in rather broad terms, as

"a cluster of interrelated and relatively open-ended tendencies and impulses that are neither fixed nor alterable at will, that need to be periodically redefined in the light of a shared inherited past, present needs and common future aspiration" (Parekh 1994: 503).

To me his definitional approach is way too general and it lacks clarity. Notwithstanding my criticism, in his writing Parekh makes us acutely aware that the term 'national', can refer both to the nation as a self-conscious ethno-cultural community and to its institutional or political form (i.e. the modern nation-state), a useful point to bear in mind for a further analysis (Ibid.: 501 ff).¹⁶ The nation is a cultural community, because its members share a 'common way of life' (Parekh 1995: 260); and it is a political community that is defined as "a territorially concentrated group of people bound together by their acceptance of a common mode of conducting their collective affairs, including a body of institutions and shared values" (Parekh 1994: 501). From this we can tell that the political community is located in the public sphere and that it consists *only* of that which all members share collectively as a community. What underlies this distinction between a political and cultural community is Parekh's endeavour to reach a "broadly shared, inescapably thin concept of national identity;" and to avoid the commonly made equation of the political community with the culture of the dominant ethnic (or national) group (Ibid.: 502 f); something that bears great relevance for multicultural societies. It is for those societies that Parekh re-defined 'national identity' more recently

“as a manner of moral and emotional identification with a particular community based on a shared loyalty to its constitutive principles and participation in its collective self-understanding. It creates a sense of common belonging, provides a basis for collective identification, fosters common loyalties, and gives the members of the community the confidence to live with and even delight in their cultural disagreements and cultural differences” (Parekh 1999a: 69).

In this context, Parekh proposes that national identity needs to be located in the political structure and defined in political / institutional terms and not in ethno-cultural terms, in order to leave sufficient space for other identities. He continues to say that national identity in multicultural societies no longer requires collectively agreed national goals, for these are necessarily subject to dispute and constant redefinition, and it does not entail a uniform view of the country's history either, for its history is necessarily complex and contested.

This is a highly idealistic, and utopian point of view that lacks a base in reality, as it blanks out the nationalistic logic of exclusion at work all over the world. Furthermore, Habermas' ‘constitutional patriotism’ of a community that is solely defined in political terms, is hardly sufficient to create loyalty, a deeply felt sense of solidarity, and long-term societal cohesion (Habermas 1996: 499).¹⁷

For Parekh it is *only* in traditional societies that the political life derives its legitimacy from the traditional guardians of the community's culture, only here is the community's political identity largely an organic expression of its cultural identity (and that this changes considerably in transitional and modernising societies). At the same time Parekh understands the strong influence that collective memories, dominant myths, and traumatic experiences have both on political and cultural identities (Parekh 1995: 257 ff). Furthermore, for the political discourse he holds that “the most effective way to recommend or condemn (...) a course of action is to argue (...) that it alone is consistent with, or that it deeply offends, the community's identity” (Ibid.: 265).

Clearly, the distinction between a political and cultural community is an ideal-typical one, for the two are overlapping and mutually irreducible (Ibid.: 259 f). It is impossible to separate the political from the cultural community in its entirety, for what is the base of the political community if not the specific culture of that polity? How else can solidarity among the members of a community, loyalty towards state institutions, and societal coherence be generated other than through culture?

Having these two separate categories is nonetheless of practical use (even if they are ideal typical constructions) when examining whether a nation's identity is defined more in

political or ethno-cultural terms. In addition these categories allow for greater clarity when looking at questions of integration of minorities and in order to identify any shifts occurring in the process of national identification.

Situational identity

So far, I have given a working definition of ‘collective cultural identities’ and have discussed the concept of national identity. Now, I would like to consider the contributions of those scholars who argue that collective identities are in fact ‘situational’ (cf. Duijzings 1992). By situational they mean that individuals can shift between aspects of collective social identity depending on the needs of their present situation. Here, Hutnik speaks of the “switching of identities” (Hutnik 1991).¹⁸ What then are the clues that trigger these latent aspects of collective social identity and make them salient? Furthermore, if “ethnic options” were merely a matter of choice, why is it that ethnic conflicts still persist in the former Yugoslavia, in Israel or Northern Ireland, to name only a few examples?

1.6. Ethno-symbolist approach

From the discussion on collective cultural identities it became evident that national identity cannot be conceptualised *only* in light of the requirements of modernity (Smith 1996: 377). Here, the ‘ethno-symbolist approach’ provides a wider perspective on modern national identities by accounting for earlier ethno-cultural ties and pre-modern ethnic identities (Ibid.: 361). To Smith it is the ethnic community (or *ethnie*) that is at the base of any process of national identity formation. He defines an ‘ethnic community’ as a “named culture-community whose members have a myth of common origins, shared memories and cultural characteristics, a link with a homeland and a measure of solidarity” (Smith 1995a: 133).¹⁹ According to his definitions, national and ethnic communities share historical memories, myths and cultural traits. But as ethnic communities undergo various formative processes of state-building on their way to becoming modern nations, additional territorial, economic and legal-political aspects that characterise the political community, have to be included in the definition (Smith 1995a: 135). Therefore, Smith defines a nation as “a named human population sharing an historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members” (Smith 1991: 43).

These definitions of *ethnie* and nation place a similar emphasis on the integral role of myths of common ancestry and shared historical memories. Nevertheless, national identity is not only defined by memory and myths, otherwise collective memory and national identity would be no different and this Chapter nothing but a superfluous exercise.

In light of the preceding discussion regarding the different concepts of collective cultural identities, I have adopted Smith's definition of national identity for purposes of my thesis. It is not the objective of this study to define national identity anew, but to explore the interrelated workings of national identification and collective memory instead. Some clarifying words on terminology may still be needed. In order to indicate the processual dynamics inherent in national identity, I use the terms 'national identification' and 'national identity' interchangeably (cf. Törnquist-Plewa 1998: 93). In addition, I also do not set out to trace back the entire '*ethnogenesis*' of the Estonian nation in all its stages, although I employ terms such as the 'formation of national identity' and 'processes of national identification' in this study.²⁰ The nationalistic project of vernacular mobilisation and politicisation of ethnic identity in 19th c. Estonia that paved the way for the modern Estonian nation is delineated in this thesis, but this discussion serves more as a historical background as the main focus centres on the changes, breaks and continuities that occurred in Estonian national identification during the 20th c. (and until more recently).

Ethnicity, the 'subjective aspect' of national identity

Like collective memory, national identity is regarded to be a subjective and a highly pervasive component of politics and history. Tajfel believes that a nation will only exist if a body of people *feel* themselves to be a nation, that is if they identify with it and categorise themselves in group terms (Tajfel 1981: 229). Accordingly, the strength of (any) collective identity depends on how strongly the (subjective) sense of belonging is rooted in each individual's consciousness. Likewise, Smith asserts that without the 'subjective element' of shared memories, the sense of being part of a nation would be missing and no passionate identification with the nation is possible (Smith 1996: 384).²¹ However, from this we can ask, what exactly is the quality of this emotional or subjective aspect of national identity, this sense of belonging to and identifying with one's national group? Can we identify this 'subjective element' as ethnicity?

Stuart Hall defines ethnicity as a place from which the individual acts or speaks; the way in which individuals relates to history, tradition and memory (Hall 1996a: 348; Hall 1996b:

162). George Schöpflin holds that it is ethnicity with its largely cultural and historical content that figures as a strongly subjective component but that subjectivity is not to be equated with being irrational, as it works according to its own logic or *rationale* (Schöpflin 1991: 55).²² He further contends that ethnicity has not lost its importance in modern societies, but functions like a ‘binding agent’ in modern democracies and that without it civil society and democratic institutions would not hold together. In other words, it is ethnicity that forms one of the three pillars of democratic nationhood, apart from the state and civil society (Schöpflin 2000: 35 – 50).

Ernest Renan also refers to the subjective belief and the emotional dimension of national identity when he proclaims that

“a nation is a soul, (...) [constituted by] a rich legacy of remembrances (...) [and] the actual consent, the desire to live together, to continue to value the heritage which all hold in common. (...) A nation is a grand solidarity constituted by the sentiment of sacrifices which one had made and those that one is disposed to make again” (Renan in Hutchinson & Smith 1994: 17).²³

He regards suffering and sacrifices as great national unifiers, as they contain a strong emotional charge. However, Renan talks little about the pleasure the members can derive from belonging to and partaking in the nation. The closest Renan gets to this aspect of nationhood, is when he speaks about the “desire to live together”. It is in collective ceremonies and rituals that this joyous quality is apparent.²⁴

Like proponents of the ethno-symbolist approach, I use the terms *ethnie* or ethnic identity in a way which does not conceptualise *ethnie* as a community of physical kinship ties (as some primordialists argue), but that the groups’ social bonds stem from a shared belief in myths of descent.²⁵

Politicisation: ‘national redefining activity’

Billig argues that national identity is more than an inner psychological state or an individual self-definition. For him national identity is more powerful than other social affiliations, because it can function as a “political claim” to recognition of the group’s nationhood, to representation in the redistribution of resources, in the field of cultural reproduction, and to a homeland (Billig 1997: 65). Fulbrook defines the nation as a self-defining community of common memory and destiny, which under certain conditions - such as warfare and external

threats - can command a remarkable emotional power, political shape, and mass following (Fulbrook 1999: 21).

At times of crisis or disunity of an ethnic or national community, 'national regeneration' has often been on the agenda of intellectuals and politicians.²⁶ In recovering and reconstructing shared memories, they attempt to revive popular identification with a collective past (Smith 1998: 194).²⁷ To Smith, the 'nation-defining-activity' of intellectuals is informed both by the drive for national regeneration and the 'national myth of authenticity' (Smith 1995a: 137, 142 f, 149 ff);²⁸ and it ultimately involves a mass politicisation of the cultural community where cultural affinities are turned into 'political claims' for independent nationhood (Smith 1986: 50-58). The 'nationalist myth of authenticity' employs notions of the 'true self' (Hall 1996a: 339); and often treats the 'ethnic heritage' as a precious genetic inheritance that needs to be preserved and transmitted in an 'uncontaminated' form. This is why Balibar refers to the nationalistic doctrine of authenticity, as the 'tale of uniqueness' (Balibar in Billig 1997: 71). Again, the belief in cultural uniqueness is used to effectively stake a legitimate (political) claim to independent nationhood, always in contrast to other competing groups.

1.7. *Group identification and the 'other'*

Following from the earlier elaboration on the role of the 'other' in processes of group identification, it can be maintained that the categorisation into 'in- and out-group', clearly defined boundaries of 'us' and 'them', 'friend' or 'foe' constituting key features in this process of group identification and appear to be preconditions for a group's strong common identity.²⁹ Tajfel emphasises that due to the individual's need for a positive group identity, the group produces flattering auto-stereotypes and demeaning images of those other nations (Tajfel 1981: 56 f).³⁰ Horowitz argues along similar lines, when asserting that ethnic groups are on a continuous quest for 'group worth' and 'collective self-esteem', always comparing themselves with the 'other' (*ex negativo* definition) (Horowitz in Smith 1998: 165).³¹

Parekh admonishes that it is exactly this constant concern of maintaining a positive national self-image that brings with it the danger of erosion and even loss of the collective identity. For when the 'other' becomes the constant frame of reference, a community might only stress aspects of its culture that are different from the 'other' and is thus at risk of becoming other-directed. Moreover, this attitude discourages inter-communal borrowing while fostering a spirit of exclusiveness. To fear such inter-communal borrowing in the name of preserving and safeguarding national identity, Parekh argues, is to misunderstand the very dynamics of



national identity, for the latter is not a fixed entity, but processual and in need of constant reconstruction (Parekh 1994: 503; Parekh 1995: 255, 268).

PART II:

2. Collective memory and national identity

So far, I have argued that collective memory and national identity are both social formations connected to a particular community; and (as collective cultural identities and cultural or communicative memory) they both are *phenomena* located in the wider field of culture. Furthermore, it is on the functional level that national identity and collective memory converge: Collective memory has an identity-reinforcing function and it strengthens the bonds of solidarity among group members by forming an integral part of the ‘connective structure’ that underlies collective cultural identities (i.e. national identity). It has also been argued that collective memory holds a divisive potential and the same is true for national identity. The national narrative attempts to represent the nation’s coherent development and is premised upon the assumption that there can only be a single national narrative, conveying a coherent set of norms and values. However, processes of national identification can be *conflictual* and divisive as well, as the national debate on the ‘Dreyfuss affair’ or the German historians’ debate (Germ., *Historikerstreit*) have illustrated.³²

Cultural memory

Jan Assmann argues that the conscious activity of remembering (Germ., *Erinnerung*) and the formation of a collective memory (Germ., *kollektives Gedächtnis*) play a central role in processes of collective identification, as a group’s identity can only be reproduced through remembering and it is by remembering that groups imagine themselves. Therefore, every collective identity is a social construct or social *imaginaire* depending on the collective imagining of its individual members (Assmann 1997: 132 f.).³³ For the most part collective identities cease to exist due to collective forgetting. Hence, the motivation to sustain and preserve the stock of knowledge inherent in collective memories stems from the group’s need for identity (Ibid.: 160).

The collective identity of groups with an extensive size like that of a nation, cannot be based on communicative memory alone (for reasons explicated in Chapter One), instead their persistence is tied to the effective organisation, tradition and circulation of cultural memory.

To recap, communicative memory is transformed into cultural memory during the shift from an oral tradition to a literate culture (Germ., *Verschriftlichung*) and through

‘canonisation’, i.e. the selection of traditions that contain formative and normative knowledge (Wischermann 1996: 66).³⁴ Cultural memory is manifest in the form of texts, art, monuments and rituals that are re-interpreted over time. As cultural and emotional symbols of collective identification they offer highly condensed and idealised accounts of what the community takes to be its values, organising principles and collective identity (Parekh 1999a: 67 f). Consequently, images, such as the national anthem, the national flag, and public ceremonies play a vital role in constituting and defining a national community's collective self-understanding.

Another important mechanism at work in the constant reconstruction process of cultural memory is called ‘objectivation’ or the screening out of conflicting accounts of the past in order to reach a more homogeneous and coherent version of it (Assmann 1997: 40). Halbwachs alluded to this mechanism, when he wrote that collective memory is maintained with the *sole* purpose to guarantee social cohesion, continuity and a stable group image. Thus the emphasis lies on the commonality of group members and the difference towards outsiders, so that only those memories are selected that enhance the similarity of group members (Halbwachs 1985: 242).

Canon

Assmann describes a *canon* as the condensed essence of each collective identity. It is composed of a set of selected traditions and guidelines which are crucial for the ongoing process of collective identification as it holds the *normative* knowledge of what it takes to become a group member and what group membership entails.³⁵ Joining a social group means assuming and internalising its common traditions and values.³⁶ The canon constitutes the *nexus* between individual and collective identity, as the individual has to know and accept it in order to acquire symbolic membership of the group (Assmann 1997: 127). Assmann shows the inextricable link between collective identification and collective memory, when he points to the fact that individual group members attain and maintain their group membership through ‘re-membering’, which literally means the individual’s re-entering or re-joining of the group (J. Assmann 1995: 51-76).³⁷

The logic of inclusion and exclusion

Assmann alludes to the etymological proximity between canon and conversion, but the term conversion is misleading as it alludes to a purely voluntary nature of group membership

(Assmann 1997: 126). The notion of ‘trouble-free conversion’ is problematic, because it may be possible to opt for group membership in a community defined on cultural or religious grounds, but this is more complicated for communities based on genealogical or racial conceptions (even if it is only the subjective belief in the former). In the latter case conversion by adaptation of the canon is not sufficient to be accepted by the ‘in-group’. Greenfeld gives an example of in-admissible collective identities, when she refers to those Jews who converted to Christianity, and who, like the poet and writer Heinrich Heine, saw in baptism the “admission ticket to European civilisation” (Greenfeld 1992: 383). There was no admission ticket to the German *Volk*, after identities were politicised and race became the issue that rendered conversion impossible.

Because culture is not only unifying and inclusive, but also holds a divisive, exclusive potential, Assmann speaks of its *limiting* structure (Assmann 1988: 13 f; Assmann 1997: 153 ff). In short, internal processes of enhanced cultural (or political) integration as well as any collective attempt to emphasise the group’s cultural (or political) boundary markers against the ‘other’ (e.g. in the context of contested identities and inter-ethnic conflict) result both in an enhanced ‘us’ and ‘them’ distinction and generate cohesion often coupled to a sense of uniqueness among the in-group.³⁸

The German ‘project of education’ (Germ., *Bildungsprojekt*) of the 19th c. serves as a good example of the limiting structure of culture for it was an attempt to construct a German national identity by means of the German education system.³⁹ Here, the German term ‘*Bildung der Nation*’ means literally both the formation *and* the education of the nation. (Assmann 1993: 45, 84).⁴⁰ Aleida Assmann argues that the German idea of education (Germ., *Bildungsidee*) was initially meant as an integrative force born out of Enlightenment ideas, but that in the effort to create a new normative tradition for the German nation after 1870 (an endeavour much connected with the work of Ernst Troeltsch (1865-1923)) a shift came about where culture, language, and history were revised according to a simplified ‘us and them’ dualism (Ibid.: 80 - 90).

Many *diaspora* communities are highly concerned with fortifying their cultural (or political) boundary markers in order to secure their survival as a group. This need for a more distinctive demarcation is met through enhanced canonisation, by which all that is ‘alien’ to the community’s collective identity is erased from the canon, and all the normative traditions are sacralised (Assmann 1997: 151 f, 159).

From this we can conclude that the canon of a society holds both the criteria for inclusion and exclusion, as it censors alternatives incompatible with the normative traditions,

sets up group boundaries and determines what is remembered and what is forgotten. In some societies the canon remains hidden in the grey zone of implicit meanings and is hard to tackle for newly aspiring members. One area however where the canon within a society manifests itself in more explicit and palpable forms, is within inter-ethnic group relations (cf. Assmann 1986: 127-143).

Common sense, a shared way of life

National sentiments are based on ‘common sense’ assumptions and assertions about the nation or the community’s shared way of life. Parekh defines this shared way of life

“as representing a specific mode of regulating the personal and interpersonal life and involving shared forms of thought and behaviours. It entails a shared self-understanding, that is, a body of ideas, images and myths in terms of which its members understand and organise their lives and interpret (...) each other’s action and utterances (...) [formative function – the author]. It also involves a shared body of rules, conventions, practices, and values which regulate how they should behave towards each other (...) as well as their mutual expectations and obligations [normative function- the author] (...) Every way of life presupposed and cultivates (...) a common social character among its members” (Parekh 1995: 257 f).

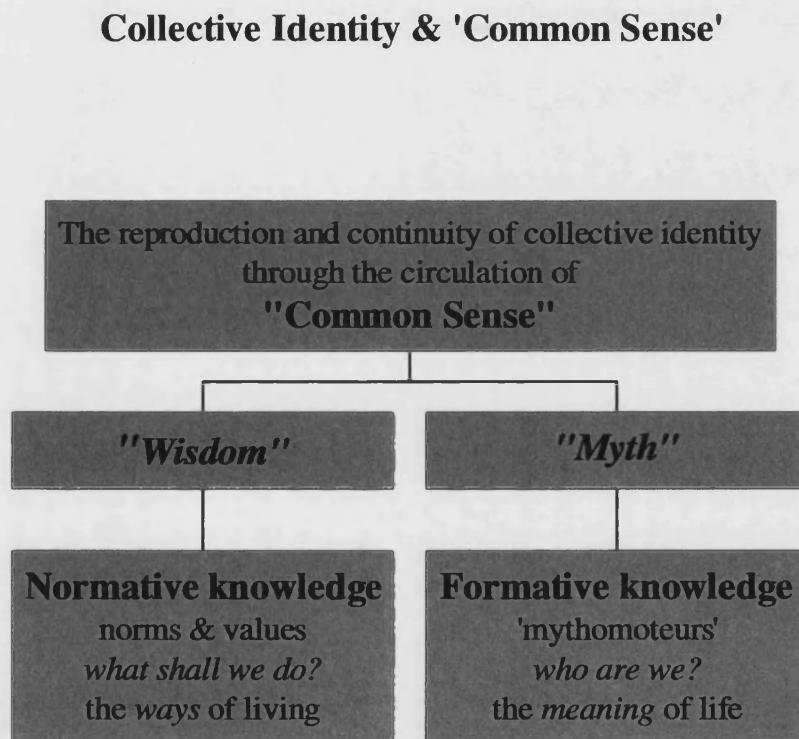
According to this definition a community’s ‘shared way of life’ constitutes the cultural level of national identity and possesses a normative and a formative dimension.

Common sense, wisdom and myth

To Assmann ‘common sense’ (Germ., *Gemeinsinn* or *kultureller Sinn*) is a sense inherent in a culture which is circulated through communication and social interaction of the group members, and is codified and articulated in a common language, common knowledge, and common (cultural) memory. Common sense contains identity-reinforcing knowledge and is the repository of shared values, experiences, expectations and interpretations. Common sense promotes the priority of the common good of the community over that of the individual and in that way fosters group solidarity and societal cohesion (Assmann 1997: 140 ff).⁴¹ Similar to Parekh, Assmann identifies a normative and a formative dimension inherent in common sense; whereby he differentiates common sense into ‘myth’ and ‘wisdom’: Wisdom is that which conveys normative knowledge including rules and moral guidelines for the ways of living in the community (by providing answers to the question of “*what shall we do*”).⁴² Myth

then is the knowledge conveyed through legends and foundational histories about the mythical origins of a nation. It answers questions about the meaning of life (by providing answers to the question of “*who we are*”). This formative knowledge feeds into the group’s self-defining processes and is thus also identity reinforcing. Assmann picks up on Levi-Strauss’ notion of *mythomotorik* to describe how foundational histories provide impulses for processes of collective identification (*Ibid.*: 142).⁴³

2.4. **Figure IV: Collective Identity and Common Sense Knowledge**



Tradition and continuity: ritual and textual coherence

To secure the continuity and tradition of common sense knowledge, cultural memory needs to be regularly re-enforced, re-enacted and re-called (Germ., *vergegenwärtigt*)⁴⁴ in rituals, ceremonies and texts (such as epics, annals, chronicles) to form a powerful bond across the generations of a society. Assmann points out that rites and festivals are by their very nature circular, and that circulation (and repetition) over time is inherent in them. In this context

Assmann speaks of 'ritual coherence'. With the development of script cultures, however, the principle of repetition is replaced by that of interpretation (Ibid.: 87 – 91).⁴⁵

All of this shows that only by remembering the past *together* as a group can a collective identity come into being and that the maintenance and persistence of collective cultural identities depend on *collective* acts of imagining.⁴⁶ This is why Parekh stresses the importance of granting minorities collective political and cultural group rights, to endow them with the opportunity to assert or acquire their collective self-consciousness and a sense of collective agency (Parekh 1999a: 72). This leads to the question of what happens in cases where collective celebrations and rituals in commemoration of the nation are forbidden or kept to a bare minimum, as is the case for societies under military occupation.⁴⁷

Mythogenesis, foundational histories and formative historical events

Myth and history are often used as opposing categories. An example of this can be found in an article by Snyder & Ballentine on "Nationalism and the Marketplace of ideas" in which they define myth as assertions that would lose credibility if exposed to rigorous, disinterested public evaluation (Snyder & Ballentine 1996). Contrary to that, Assmann endeavours to break with this dichotomy that equates myth with fiction and history with reality (Assmann 1997: 75 f).⁴⁸ He holds that lines are much more fluid and that those historical events that are attributed a formative, constitutive role and which become '*foundational narratives*' (Germ., *fundierende Geschichte*) are myth, no matter if they are based on fact or fiction.⁴⁹ Accordingly, *mythogenesis* is the transformational process of historical events into these foundational narratives.

Groups base their distinctiveness on foundational or formative historical events of their community, such as memories of liberation, a golden age, victories and defeats with subsequent heroes, and martyrs etc. (Smith 1998: 191). In his four stages of nation formation Smith places 'foundational myths' (such as myths of ancestry, liberation and migration) in the time of ethnic origin. Here, the myth of *Romulus* and *Remus*, that of the *Kiev Rus'*, and the Polish *Piast* dynasty features as prominent examples.⁵⁰ It is only the second stage of nation formation - the period of ethnic consolidation - which will be recalled as the community's 'golden age' and which can feature as a revolutionary counter-myth in times of dependence and crisis (Smith 1995a: 141 f).

According to Assmann *myths* fulfil two functions, as each myth has the potential for an identity-reinforcing foundational narrative (in support of the *status quo*) or to fulfil a revolutionary function by contrasting the present situation with the collective memory of a better past (Assmann 1997: 79 ff). Myths in their revolutionary function were utilised in the national liberation movements of the late 19th and early 20th cs., as well as in messianic movements. Assmann gives the example of the 'Book of Esther' as representing such a counter-myth since it reverses the experience of *diaspora* and pogrom into a courageous act of victory (*Ibid.*: 83).⁵¹

Because the German Reich was a 'latecomer nation' (Germ., *verspätete Nation*) at the time of its foundation in 1870, Germans were long dominated by the myth of the regeneration or resurrection of the past empire (and by the corresponding myth of having been cheated and denied their historical right).⁵² An example of the revolutionary function of myths can be found in German history, namely the myth of the sleeping Barbarossa in the *Kyffhäuser* who will rise from the dead in the same way as the last Holy Roman Empire has done.⁵³ Subsequently after 1870, Wilhelm II was equated with Barbarossa and seen as the 'Saviour', who after 800 years of slumber reawakened to unite the empire.⁵⁴ The second corresponding myth centres on the 'German Michel', a blue-eyed and sleepy headed boy whose slight naiveté and good heartedness are exploited by Germany's enemies. Another symbol of resistance for the national identification is the figure of Germania, whose spirit was evoked in Ludwig I's Valhalla. When building it in 1819, he merged the historical battles of Jena and Auerstedt in 1813 (Germ., *Völkerschlacht*) with the battle of the Teutoburger Forest.⁵⁵ And during the 1870s, when anti-French sentiments were at a peak, Hermann the Cheruscan was re-interpreted as the first German and liberator against foreign rule - which was then unmistakably French rule (cf. Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983).

The collective memory of Masada

The collective memory of Masada is an example for a foundational myth that is primarily identity-reinforcing; as it became a foundational narrative of national pride, love of freedom and a readiness for patriotic sacrifice within the modern State of Israel.⁵⁶ The myth of Masada is exemplary of the different, and even co-existing re-interpretations of a myth over time, something that Zerubavel refers to as "multi-vocality of counter-myths" (Zerubavel 1995a). In the context of the revival of the Zionist movement in Israel, Masada was interpreted as a myth

of renewal, in which the ancient freedom fighters served as an inspiration for the Zionist cause to rebuild a Jewish national home in Palestine.⁵⁷ During the early formative years of the modern State of Israel, Masada was interpreted as an example of patriotic death in the battle for freedom, in that it highlighted the rebels' active resistance while the aspect of suicide was played down. After the Yom Kippur War and with a growing political crisis erupting, another interpretation emerged that Zerubavel calls the "tragic commemorative narrative of Masada", which sees it as one of the greatest traumas of Jewish history.

3. Chapter summary & outlook

The purpose of this Chapter has been to clarify some of the differences between various conceptions of individual and collective identity, between collective cultural identities, and national identity in particular. It pointed to the fact that national identification is based on a political and a cultural community and that the two are overlapping but also mutually irreducible. The power of national identity was explained by its specific 'connective structure' that roadmaps the collective group through time. Moreover, the emotional and subjective aspects of national identity were described, while pointing out that through processes of politicisation, ethnic or national sentiments can function as potent political claims.

The second part of Chapter One focussed on the theoretical link between collective memory and national identity. Both phenomena are located in the wider field of culture and operate according to the logic of inclusion and exclusion, and both hold a unifying, identity-reinforcing function as well as a revolutionary, divisive potential for the respective society.

In discussing cultural formations, such as canon, canonisation, common sense and foundational histories in more detail, the Chapter has pointed out some of the interrelated workings of collective memory and processes of national identification.

In the following two Chapters the development of the modern Estonian identity is delineated from the late 19th c. until the post-Soviet period. Here, I scrutinise in what way the theoretical concept of national identity needs to be re-defined in the light of some of the peculiarities of Central and East European societies. In later Chapters those 'formative historical events' which appear to constitute the building blocks of Estonia's national identity are singled out. I will also be concerned with the codification of collective memories by historians and politicians and with the ways in which the official version of national history influences that which is remembered and that which is forgotten.

Endnotes of Chapter II:

¹ Certainly it is not *only* through remembering that groups “imagine” themselves; depictions of the group (or nation) in the mass media, in works of art, etc. can also work identity-reinforcing. However, the way I understand Jan Assmann is that ultimately all of this boils down to the act of remembering who we are.

² Cf. Brubaker 1996. On the discussion of post-Soviet Estonia as a ‘nationalising state’, see Chapter Four

³ The story line of Milan Kundera’s *Book of Laughter and Forgetting* (1978, Germ. transl. 1994) is the story of totalitarian system attempting to deprive a people of their memory and national consciousness by a method of organised forgetting. Kundera argues that a nation which loses awareness of its past gradually loses itself. Hence, he lets one of the novel’s characters say, “the struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting”. Kundera, who has been living as an ex-patriot Czech in France since 1975, understood his role as that of a custodian of the Czech ‘counter-memory’, of a saviour of a history that was otherwise prone to be swallowed by forgetting (Kundera 30.10.80).

⁴ In brief, Hauser (1812-1833) was an enigmatic foundling with alleged ties to the house of Baden (as the hereditary prince) who was kept in captivity until he was 17 years old. He became an attraction to many and was later violently assassinated; see Hörisch 1994. Werner Herzog was inspired to make a film of the story: *The Enigma of Kasper Hauser* (1974).

⁵ See Tajfel 1981; Tajfel 1982; cf. Brown 1988; and Abrams & Hoog 1991.

⁶ Petersoo (2001) develops the categories of the internal and external, positive or negative ‘other’. In Chapter Four, I will pay attention to the role of the German and Russian ‘other’ in the process of Estonian national identification. For processes of individual identity, identification is “a psychological process whereby the subject assimilates an aspect, property or attribute of the other and is transformed, wholly or partially, after the model the other provides. It is by means of a series of identifications that the personality is constituted and specified” (Laplanche & Pontalis 1983: 205).

⁷ For a further reading on collective identity, see Niethammer 2000.

⁸ This is why Scheuch speaks of ‘individual and holistic fallacies’ (Scheuch in Smith 1995a: 130).

⁹ An example for this would be to stereotype all Frenchmen as not trustworthy and all Germans as having an authoritarian character with sadist leaning. Cf. Adorno 1973; Elias 1989.

¹⁰ According to Smith a ‘myth of election’ asserts that the chosen people has certain privileges because it performs specified duties to the deity, to itself and to others. It must accept a moral and ritual code of conduct to fulfil its obligations, if it is to retain its chosen position. He also holds that myths of this kind figure as an invaluable (inner) resource when it comes to staking national claims. Jan Assmann makes the connection between the myth of distinctiveness and persistence (or resistance) of a people through the sacralisation of its collective identity. He points to the Jewish case and describes the 5th book of Moses, the covenant, as a handbook for such an ‘ethnic resistance movement’ (Assmann 1997: 159, 212f; cf. Walzer 1982).

¹¹ Figure II is based on Smith (Smith 1995 a: 131 f).

¹² In contrast to Smith, Hall is of the opinion that these “great structuring principles” that have kept the individual in check with a prescribed role (that tell us our place in the social universe) were deeply undermined by the socio-political developments of modernity, such as globalisation, de-territorialisation, migration and the overall erosion of tradition (Hall 1996:343).

¹³ Cf. Lowenthal 1998.

¹⁴ Figure II is based on Assmann’s concept of ‘connective structure’ as well as on Smith’s and Fulbrook’s elaboration on collective cultural identities (Smith 1991: 25; Smith 1995a: 131 ff; and Fulbrook 1999: 17, 232 ff).

¹⁵ My study attempts to do exactly this for the case of post-Soviet Estonia.

¹⁶ A distinction not much different from the civic / ethnic distinction frequently used in the discourse on conceptions of national identity; see section on eastern and western nationalism in Chapter Four.

¹⁷ A valid case in support of this is the former GDR. Here the political ideology and institutionally shaped collective identity were not enough to create a solid collective identity in opposition to the West German identity (or old continuous identities).

¹⁸ Törnquist-Plewa examines “cultural affinities” - or “cultural options”- in the “borderland societies” of Central Eastern Europe; according to her definition, a borderland is a situation where two or more ethnic or national cultures co-exist, defined not in a purely territorial but also in a socio-psychological meaning of the term (Törnquist-Plewa 1998: 79-107).

¹⁹ According to Smith there are three ideal-typical forms of ethnic community: The ethno-linguistic type, the ethno-religious type, and the ethno-political type. Depending on the type of ethnic community (that constitutes the core *ethnie*) the stages of national mobilisation of the nation-to-be differ. Overall, Smith distinguishes two different routes to the modern nation, the lateral or aristocratic type through bureaucratic incorporation and secondly the vernacular mobilisation of a vertical or demotic *ethnie* (Smith 1991). Estonia in this scheme of things qualifies for an ethno-linguistic community, which was mobilised through the cultivation of the vernacular language and local history. On a detailed description of the first cultural and national awakening in Estonian, see Chapter Three

²⁰ The process of becoming aware as a group, of having a group identity Jan Assmann refers to as *ethnogenesis* (Assmann 1997: 143-160).

²¹ Cf. Francois & Schulze 1998: 17-32.

²² Nationalism is often seen as something irrational and emotional and projected onto others, like peoples of Eastern Europe with their ethnic concept of the nation and recent ethnic or national revivals, see also: Billig 1997: 46 f; and Ignatieff 1993.

²³ To illustrate the context in which Renan’s speech is located, I quote a member of the League of Patriots (1881): “I know people who think hatred fades - but it does not! We shall never forget. Too much French soil has been stolen from us; the conquerors have conquered to much” (in Le Goff 1992: 87).

²⁴ Cf. Zizek 1994: 133 – 66.

²⁵ Accordingly, Connor (1990), a proponent of the ethno-symbolist approach, argues that it is the group members' subjective belief in their common descent rather than the authenticity of the actual historical facts or genetic kinship that is at the base of a strong national identity. At the other end of the spectrum stands Berghe (1978) representing a primordialist position.

²⁶ An example of this reviving activity through intellectuals are the creation of the epics *Kalevala* and *Kalevipoeg* for the Finnish and the Estonian context, see Chapter Three. Smith also stresses that the endurance of modern nations depends on the presence of a vivid sense of 'ethno-history' embedded in the popular consciousness (Smith 1995a: 138 f). This is the task of so-called 'ethno-historians', a group of intellectuals characterised for the Estonian context in Chapter Six.

²⁷ Smith refers to the *ethnicisation* of identity, by which he means a polarisation and politicisation of ethnic affinities at times of crisis (Smith 1996: 383 ff).

²⁸ The 'drive for national regeneration' has its base in the 'myth of a golden age' that signifies the hope and potentiality for national regeneration. In its more extreme forms 'national regeneration' involves attempts of purifying the community from 'foreign elements', such as inter-cultural borrowings, loanwords.

²⁹ See section 1.2. on identity prior to difference; cf. Barth's (1970) concept of cultural markers and boundary demarcation and regulation; cf. Smith 1998: 181; and Jenkins 1994.

³⁰ See Kühne 2001; Pajupuu 1994.

³¹ This last section opens the door to the discourse on inter-ethnic group relations and ethnic conflict regulation, but as the focus of this Chapter is on the relation between collective memory and nation identification, I - at this point - only acknowledge the existence of that discussion.

³² The underlying idea here is that a unified understanding of the national history produces a coherent collective self-understanding; but the 'Dreyfuss Affair' or the *Historikerstreit* are examples for conflict lines in the national narrative; see Nora 1990; Augstein 1987; cf. Assmann & Assmann 1990.

³³ Here, individual identification with the group appears to equal the process of collective imagining. This links in with social identity theorists described earlier, who argue that the group members must "think the group to be real", they need to have the capacity to imagine the nation, as they will never be able to know most of their fellow members. This however does not preclude the possibility that groups feel their identity as something very concrete and vital to them, something that they would fight and die for (Anderson 1983: 15 f; cf. Castoriadis 1975).

³⁴ The traditional meaning of 'canonisation' is 'declaring someone a saint', while its transferred meaning is 'authoritative approval, sanction or selection'. Cavalli describes *Verschrifilichung* as the 'externalisation of memory' (Cavalli 1991).

³⁵ In this thesis the terms 'canon', 'canonisation', and 'codification' are employed. The current Chapter presents two possible definitions of 'canon' and 'canonisation'. The etymological root of canon is the Greek word *kanōn*, meaning measure, standard, rule or guideline (Merriam Webster, 10th ed., 1993). 'Canon' has a strong Christian connotation, as it defines 1) a statement or body of statements concerning faith or morals proclaimed by the Church (e.g. a regulation or dogma decreed by a Church council); 2) the most solemn and unvarying part of the Mass; and 3) an authoritative list of books accepted as Holy Scripture. Additionally, a more secular use of the term exists: 1) a record of a series of items (as names or titles) usually arranged according to some system (e.g. Western *canon*, as the body of literature and art which is considered to define Western civilisation by widespread consensus); 2) a sanctioned or accepted group or body of related works; 3) an accepted principle of rules, a criterion or standard of judgement. Furthermore the term 'codification' has been introduced at the beginning of the thesis. It is an Enlightenment term that is widely used in the legal field, signifying the process of collecting and restating the law of a jurisdiction in certain areas (e.g. the *code civil*); in my understanding codification entails the reduction (and classification) of meaning to a broadly accepted code.

³⁶ Abrams & Hoog link group identification to stereotyping, by that they mean that (new) group members have to accept the stereotypic norms associated with the group identity; after a while this (new) knowledge about the stereotypic norms becomes *common sense* (Abrams & Hoog in Billig 1997: 66).

³⁷ In the German text, Assmann uses the poignant phrase of "Erinnern, um dazu zugehören." Giesen quotes the membership in the German history association (Germ., *Geschichtsverein*) during the late 19th c. as an example of this link between identity and membership (Giesen 1999: 212).

³⁸ Anthony D. Smith refers to this process of counter identity formation against an external 'other', as *ethnicisation*, or movement of ethnic resistance and restoration (quoted before).

³⁹ Here, Aleida Assmann refers to Klopstock's idea of a German "Gelehrtenrepublik" and describes how the educated middle-class intellectuals (*Bildungsbürgertum*) in 18th c. Germany became the visionaries and architects of German nationality (Assmann 1993: 40); cf. Greenfeld 1992: 293 ff, 358 ff; for the case of Poland, cf. Stuart Woolf 1994.

⁴⁰ Education was supposed to tie the people to the nation and was elevated to a profane religion (Germ., *Bildungsreligion*).

⁴¹ The term 'common sense' was coined by Geertz, who provided a detailed definition of common sense as 'cultural system' (Geertz 1973: 73 – 93).

⁴² Irwin-Zarecka also stresses the normative function of collective memory, by stating "it is imbued with moral imperatives - the obligation to one's kin, notions of justice, indeed the lessons of right and wrong that form the basic parts of the normative order" (Irwin-Zarecka 1994: 9).

⁴³ Levi-Strauss contended that groups internalise their historical knowledge to make it the 'motor' of their development and he coined the term *mythomotorik* for this (Levi-Strauss in Assmann 1997: 75, 78). Assmann uses myths and *mythomoteurs* interchangeably; cf. J. Assmann 1992: 39 - 62. *Mythomoteur* is a category also widely used by John Armstrong, who attributed to them a crucial role in the emergence of national identity; "(...) for it is myths, including *mythomoteurs*, that entrench a community with sets of values and symbols over long time-spans" (Armstrong, 1982: 283; Smith 1998: 186). On the function of myth see Schöpflin 1997: 19 - 35; and Törnquist-Plewa (1992) who holds that revived national myths (the miracle and insurrection myth) played an important role in the mass mobilisation of Polish society. For the identity-reinforcing function of history, see Lübbe 1979: 277- 292.

⁴⁴ The German 'vergegenwärtigen' literally means making it present. Nietzsche spoke of 'Vergangenheitsvergegenwärtigung', i.e. the ways or modes of recalling the past (Nietzsche 1995).

⁴⁵ Texts, such as canonical texts, are interpreted and in that way circulated. To illustrate the shift from ritual to textural coherence Assmann uses the example of the ancient Jews, where the shift took place, when after the destruction of the temple in 70 AD the community was based on the interpretation of founding texts by the Rabbis

⁴⁶ These collective enactments can be more or less conscious. According to Billig, even the national flag hanging from a public building can be considered part of these daily enactments of collective cultural identities (Billig 1997: 69; Smith 1996: 383 ff).

⁴⁷ For instance, in Estonia under Soviet occupation, opportunities to commemorate the nation collectively were limited to the realm of culture (song festivals) and sport events (Olympic Games); otherwise the maintenance of the national identity was limited to the private sphere.

⁴⁸ Oering, (1997: 1 ff) reminds us that it was during the 4-8th c. BC that myth (*muthos*) was increasingly seen as a form of speech opposed to the reasoned discourse of *logos*. Hence, it is in the local debates of ancient Greece where the dualism (which is still at work in our minds today) that equates history with truth and myth with fiction has its root. Why did this change come about? Oering, refers to Vernant (1990) who argued that the later privileging of *logos* over *muthos* was directly associated with an increasing emphasis on the written text over the tradition of oral poetry, and also connected to the democratisation of speech. Assmann refers to this 'shift' as the beginning of 'cultural memory' (Assmann 1997: 89 – 96, 140 ff).

⁴⁹ These are highly significant events which are epoch-making and foundational to the group's identity (Péguy in Bedarida 2000: 72; cf. Braudel 1998). On the function of myth for the identity defining process, see Burke 1991: 294 – 298.

⁵⁰ According to Polish myth, the Slavic nations trace their ancestry to three brothers who parted in the forests of Eastern Europe, each moving in a different direction to found a family of distinct but related peoples; a tale that accurately describes the westward migration and gradual differentiation of the early West Slavic tribes following the collapse of the Roman Empire. About twenty such tribes formed small states between A. D. 800 - 960. One of these tribes, the *Polanie* or *Poliane* ("people of the plain") settled in the flatlands that eventually formed the heart of Poland, lending their name to the country. Over time the modern Poles emerged as the largest of the West Slavic groupings, establishing themselves to the east of the Germanic regions of Europe. The starting date of Polish history is 966, when Prince Mieszko (963 - 992) - the first ruler of the *Piast* Dynasty - accepted Christianity in the name of his people. For mythmaking in Ukrainian history, see Wilson 1997a; Wilson 1997b; and Wilson 2000.

⁵¹ In brief, the story of the Book of Esther describes the condition among the Jews who continued to live under Xerxes of Persia. Xerxes married Esther, the Jewish daughter of Mordecai. Haman, Xerxes's favourite, persuaded the King to pass an edict by which the Jews in Persia were to be annihilated. Esther took the courage to save her people, when she, after receiving the news of the impending slaughter of her people, entered the King's Chamber, which was a capital offence. However, she was forgiven by the King, who promised her to grant her any request she may wish to make of him. One interpretation in the commentaries is that of Divine Providence: God used Mordecai and Esther to preserve them. The annual "Feast of Purim" is celebrated in memory of the deliverance of the Jews from the hands of Haman.

⁵² Cf. Helmuth Plessner's work on *Die verspätete Nation. Über die politische Verführbarkeit bürgerlichen Geistes*, published first in 1959, written already in 1935.

⁵³ See the discussion of the Estonian national epos *Kalevipoeg* in Chapter Three.

⁵⁴ The fact that Hitler named the invasion of the Soviet Union 'Unternehmen Barbarossa' illustrates how this myth was deeply inter-twined with the German collective memory (Flacke 1998: 103 f, 108 ff; cf. Borst 1979: 17 – 60).

⁵⁵ Schäfer 2003: 185 – 202.

⁵⁶ The story of Masada is both supported by archaeological findings and Josephus' account on the Wars of the Jews. At this point, I don't intend to enter into historical discussions about the validity of this narrative (Zerubavel 1995a; Zerubavel 1995b).

⁵⁷ Since the pre-state period military units continue the pilgrimage tradition to the ruins of Masada, where newly recruited soldiers give their oath to the flag; Landau's slogan: "never again shall Masada fall!" came to be the national slogan at these ceremonies (Zerubavel 1995a: 110 f).

Chapter Three:

Estonian history from the 19th c. to the ‘Singing Revolution’ – an overview

0. Introduction

This Chapter provides an overview of the main events of modern Estonian history. Preferably, this should be done through a neutral and unbiased compilation of historical facts. However, impartial and unbiased history-writing “on how it really was” is hardly achievable - a claim supported by my thesis, as I show how each generation of Estonian historians re-interprets historical facts and how national history writing can at times be highly politicised.

This Chapter presents the reader with the historical context in which to place the life story interviews analysed in the Chapters Five to Seven. This outline of historical developments from the late 19th c. onwards centres on Estonia’s political and cultural life. At times Chapter Three comes close to a chronology of Estonian self-discovery from the time of Christianisation; it concentrates on the process of Estonian nation formation over a period of roughly 150 years from a more apolitical category of “people from the country” (Est., *maarahvas*) to an Estonian nation (Est., *Eesti rahvas*).

To open this historical narrative I turn to the role that reformation played in the formation of a modern Estonian identity. Johann Gottfried Herder’s legacy on the Estonian cultural awakening is addressed; here, special attention is given to the genesis of the Estonian national epos, Kalev’s son (Est., *Kalevipoeg*). Subsequently, the impact of the Bolshevik Revolution and the First World War on Estonia are discussed, i.e. the different military occupations of Estonia, the War of Independence (1918 - 20), and the creation of the First Estonian Republic. In what follows the events of the Second World War in Estonia are expounded, such as the first Soviet year (1940 - 41), the German occupation (1941 – 44), and the second Soviet occupation beginning in 1944; this is done in greater detail, since the memory of these events has a strong bearing on the historical and political culture of Estonia today (e.g. battles over the codification of the official memory of events of the Second World War). Next, the effects of Stalinism in Estonia are highlighted, along with some of the political developments that may be subsumed under the headings ‘Khrushchev’s Thaw’, ‘Brezhnevite stagnation’, and Gorbachev’s policies of openness (Russ., *glasnost*) and reconstruction (Russ., *perestroika*) are delineated. Lastly, Estonia’s path to a renewed independence, commonly referred to as the ‘Singing Revolution’, is set down. In this Chapter,

I accentuate the changes, breaks and continuities in the process of national identification, rather than attempting to explore the origin and formation of the modern Estonian nation in its entirety.

1. Historical overview

Archaeological evidence indicates that the ancestors of the Baltic-Finns arrived in the northern Baltic region in the late Stone Age, i.e. 4000 – 1500 B.C. (Raun 1987: 7; Schmidt 1994: 28; Laur & Lukas et al. 2002: 21).¹ According to Raun, by the middle of the first millennium B.C. the Balto-Finns emerged as a cultural and ethnic group, distinct from the ancestors of the Latvians and Lithuanians south of the river Daugava. The Estonians probably separated from the other Balto-Finns by 500 A. D. (Raun 1987: 10). Estonia remained free of foreign rule until the German conquest in the 13th c. (Ibid.: 19).² In 1200 Bishop Albert von Buxhöveden of Bremen led a large crusading army, known as the Sword Brethren, to convert the indigenous population and thus established the north-eastern frontier of Latin Christendom; the entire territory designated for this endeavour was called Mary's Land (Est., *Maarjamaa*).³ From 1208 onwards, Estonians were forced into serfdom and were Christianised, commonly referred to in Estonian history books as “ancient fight for freedom” (Laur & Lukas et al 2002: 38 –52).⁴ German rule brought with it the new social structure of feudalism and the institutions of Christianity, which in turn impacted on Estonian identity (Raun 1987: 19). After Bishop Albert sought support from Denmark, the Danish armies took control of the Estonian mainland from their base in *Tallinn* (Estonian for Danish town). In 1219 the Danish King Valdemar II began his crusade against heathen Estonia. According to the legend, the Danborg flag descended from the sky after an initial defeat in Lindanise, right into the arms of the Danish archbishop who had prayed for God's help. The myth holds that, spearheaded by the flag, the Danes gained a victory over the Estonians (Andriansen & Jenvold 1998: 83 ff). From 1227 all of Old Livonia had been conquered except for the Island of Saaremaa where a revolt against the German-Danish power broke out in 1233. This resistance was temporarily successful before it collapsed due to a lack of a centralised political organisation on the Estonian side (Raun 1987: 16). Under the confederation of Livonia in 1290, northern Estonia came under the suzerainty of the King of Denmark, the Teutonic Order took control of central and southern Livonia, and the Church established the archbishopric of Riga and the bishoprics of Tartu and Curonia.⁵ However, it was the events of the last great Estonian uprising against foreign rule, which started on St. George Night (Est., *Juriöö Märs*) and lasted from 1343 - 45 (Miljan 2004: 5; Raun 1987: 20),⁶ that made the Danes sell their portion of Estonia to the Teutonic Knights.⁷ By the mid-16th c. the decline of the German Order created a political vacuum in Livonia, which was filled by the rise of the Muscovite State. The Livonian Wars (1558 - 1629) began with Ivan Grosny's invasion and

led to the final disintegration of medieval Livonia. The subsequent battle for control of the Baltic provinces between Russia, Denmark, Sweden and Poland lasted for two decades and devastated Baltic life; plagues and starvation haunted the Estonians.

If there was any victor in the Livonian Wars, it was the Baltic barons, who remained the land-owning elite throughout. After more than six decades of warfare Sweden emerged as the dominant power in the eastern Baltic, as Russia ceded all of Estonia to Sweden in 1629. The period of Swedish rule is commonly referred to as the “good old Swedish time” in Estonian oral tradition, due to greater rights of the Estonian peasants and improvements in the field of education: in 1630 the first gymnasium was established in Tartu, a year later the University of Tartu (*Academia Gustaviana*) founded, village schools were introduced for Estonian children (Raun 1987: 32 f).⁸ However, as the Swedes relied on the loyalty of the local Baltic barons, they granted them a ‘free hand’. Hence it did little to better the status of the ‘indigenous peasant population’ (Est., *murtsuks*), who had been increasingly impoverished under German feudal rule.

The role of religion and the Reformation

What role, then, did religion play as a factor of unity and opposition in the formation of an Estonian identity? As the lives of ancient Estonians were closely connected to nature, the Estonian folk-religion was based on a belief in animism, according to which spirits and fairies exist in nature - such as the spirit of the forest (Est., *metsik*), that of the meadow (Est., *murueit*), and of the water (Est., *näkk*). Apart from this, guardian spirits (Est., *haldjas*) were believed to exist. Many ancient Estonian villages had a sacred grove with idols to gods, sacrificial stones, and trees that served as a place of worship. The fact that the river that runs through Tartu is called ‘mother river’ (Est., *emmajögi*) and a ‘sacred lake’ (Est., *pühajärv*) is situated in Southern Estonia shows this close link between people and nature. Compared to the ancient religions of bordering peoples, Estonians knew only a limited number of ‘greater deities’, such as *Uku* and *Taara* (Raun 1987: 12 f; Schmidt 1992: 21 ff; Laur & Lukas 2002: 35).

At the emergence of Christianity the Catholic Church offered sermons only in a foreign tongue (i.e. Latin), therefore, even the simplest religious principles remained unknown to the common Estonian, and so pagan and Christian practices co-existed or simply merged.⁹ In 1523 the Reformation caught up with Estonia, and due to Martin Luther’s insistence that sermons and hymns be written in a language that the congregation could understand, Church

services were conducted in Estonian from the 1530s onwards; this gave a major psychological boost to the status of the indigenous peoples (Raun 1987: 24).

In the 1720s the spread of Pietism, which arrived in the Baltic littoral via the Moravian Brethren, encouraged an individualistic interpretation of the scriptures and preached Enlightenment beliefs regarding the equality of man. They found many open ears among local peasants, who rejected Lutheranism as being an institution of the Baltic German landed nobility (up until the end of the tsarist rule the Baltic Germans exerted control over the Lutheran Church through the appointment of pastors (Ibid.: 80)). To encourage individual Bible study, the Moravian Brethren recruited clergy from among the local populations and promoted peasant education, with the result that by the end of the 18th c. adult literacy in southern Estonia had climbed to 66 % - a higher rate than in Russia. This development coincided with the first *full* translation of the Bible in 1739 into the North Estonian dialect, which later formed the basis for standard written Estonian, raising the prestige of Estonian to that of a 'language of God', on a par with Latin or German (Ibid.: 32 f).¹⁰ Although the Moravian Brethren were banned in 1743, their ideas had taken root among the locals; in particular, their concept of the equality of man encouraged the Estonian people to see the worth and unique quality of their culture.

Russia's Western provinces

The period of Swedish hegemony in Livonia (1621 - 1721) came to a close with Russia's victory in the Great Northern War (1700 - 21) when in the Treaty of Nystad Estonia, Livland, Ingemanland and south-eastern Karelia were transferred to Russia.¹¹ Although Estonia (*Estland*) became an autonomous Russian province (Russ., *gubernya*) along with Livland and Curonia (*Kurland*), it remained within the German cultural sphere, as administrative, legislative and educational practices were not unified with the rest of the Russian empire. The treaty guaranteed Baltic German control over the local administration (Germ., *Statthalter*) and thus continued to stabilise their socio-economic power. The Estonian peasantry constituted more than 99 % of the rural population and viewed themselves as natives of the country (Est., *maarahva*), ethnically distinct from their German overlords, who by the end of the 19th c. constituted a numerical minority of 1 or 2 % of the rural *populus*. However, their numerical weakness was in an inverse relation to their actual power as the Baltic German landed elite (the so-called *Ritter-* and *Ständeherrschaft*), which rested upon medieval privileges (the *Privilegium Sigismundi Augusti* of 1561) within a status-bound social structure (Pistohlkors 1993: 170; Hint 1995: 627).

The abolition of serfdom by Tsar Alexander I (1777-1825) in 1816 - well ahead of the general emancipation of 1861 in Russia proper - did little to improve the lives of the Estonian peasantry. The peasant lost any historic rights to the land that his forefathers had worked on and became a contractual rural labourer at the mercy of the economic demands of the landowner (Miljan 2004: 97 f). In addition, the medieval privileges of the Baltic German landed elite restricted social mobility. Thus a series of peasant uprisings occurred across the Baltic territories in the 1840s and '50s;¹² which stand in clear continuity with the revolts of 1343-45; but right up to 1905 they can be described as an expression of social conflict along ethnic lines.

Tsar Nicholas' new peasant farm law (introduced in 1849) and the agrarian reforms of his successor Alexander II (1856-81) helped to support the spread of education and enabled farm purchases to begin in Livland and northern Estonia.¹³ Subsequently, a small class of peasants was prosperous enough to send their sons to the universities (Tartu had been re-opened in 1802), a development that was to be crucial to the emergence of an Estonian national movement and the crystallisation of the Estonian nation.

Herder's legacy in the Baltics

Herder drew inspiration from the Baltic folk-cultures during his stay in Riga 1764 – 69, when he posed the question in his *Journal of my Voyage in the Year 1769* of when the spirit of civilisation would visit these “wild little people” in the Baltic region.¹⁴ Although Herder was more concerned with cultural matters, he exerted a great influence on the peoples of Eastern Europe, as his writings provided a *stimulus* that spawned the creation of national consciousness and striving for cultural (and arguably political) autonomy. Many East Europeans attended his lectures in Riga, Königsberg, and Jena at the time. The original German texts were circulated among East European intellectuals and later translated into the vernaculars (Nisbet 1999: 126 f).

To Herder nations are language communities, as it is through language that the ‘consciousness of the nation’ (Germ., *Volksgeist*) is articulated (Ibid.: 116, 123).¹⁵ Herder’s thoughts on nationhood focused on those national cultures that did not possess an autonomous state, or whose cultural autonomy was at least endangered (as he saw the German culture suppressed by French influence) (Ibid.: 125 f). Herder valued folklore as the repository of the national spirit and “folk songs as the archive of the people, the treasury of their knowledge,

religion and theogony, and the cosmologies of their fathers' deeds and of events in history"; consequently, an oppressed nation could only recover its national identity through the rediscovery of its folklore (Herder in Nisbet 1999: 117). Western Enlightenment thought and the Herderian notion of *Volksgeist* in particular inspired the Estonian national awakening in the 1860s. Prior to this, it was the '*Estophiles*', a small group of *literati*, cultural enthusiasts and humanists, mainly of German background, who worked in the Baltic provinces as parish priests or private tutors, and who paved the way for the Estonian awakening by perceiving Estonians as a cultural community constituting a nation (Kirby 1995: 126 ff).

Among them was the pastor and journalist August Wilhelm Hupel (1737 – 1819), who disseminated Herder's idea that language - apart from a common heritage and culture - was the basic structural component of the Estonian identity. Philologists among these *Estophile* intellectuals studied the origin and development of the Estonian language, while morphologists and lexicographers refined and standardised it; all were instrumental in establishing the foundation of a language-based identity (Kirby 1995: 69).¹⁶ Another of these *literati*, Garlieb Merkel (1769-1850), was the first to apply the term nation (in the Herderian sense) to Estonians and Latvians. He believed in the rise, decline, and rebirth of nations, and cultivated the myth of a 'golden age', a glorious heathen past antedating the German and Danish conquests (Jansen 2000a: 75).

The Czech scholar Miroslav Hroch, who included the case of Estonia in his comparative study of the formation of 'small nations', characterises the period described above as 'phase A' of his tripartite model. However, Hroch argues that the scholarly work of these Baltic Germans and "Germanised men of letters" remained isolated (as it was not directed towards a wider public), because they lacked an interest in 'awakening' the Estonian national consciousness and were pessimistic about the possible future creation of an independent Estonian State.¹⁷

Raun refines Hroch's assessment to add that, while it was Baltic German *Estophiles* who began to study the Estonian language, they were joined (and surpassed) by ethnic Estonian intellectuals (Raun 1990: 133; cf. Jansen 1997). For instance, Friedrich Robert Faehlmann (1798-1850) who was one of the first Estonians to be educated at the University of Tartu was involved in the founding of the "Estonian Learned Society" (Est. abbr. ŌES) in 1838, which sponsored scientific research into the history and pre-history of Estonia, its language, literature and folklore.

1.1. The Awakening period (1857 – 80)

The ‘awakening time’ (Est., *äärkamisaeg*) - a term that implies a highly romantic notion - was initially a cultural awakening and only secondly an awakening of the national consciousness among Estonians (Est., *rahvuslik äärkamine*). However, this section attempts to show how the lines between a cultural and political nationalism are fluid;¹⁸ hence, researchers on the history of 19th c. of Estonia often use the term ‘national awakening’ and ‘cultural awakening’ interchangeably.

Estonians lacked their own *ethnonym* until the 19th c. and instead simply referred to the country in which they lived as ‘our country’ (Est., *meie maa*) (Kirby 1995: 70; Ludwig 1999: 17).¹⁹ In the 1820s the appellation ‘people of the country’ or ‘people from the farm’ (Est., *maarahvas*) found its reflection in the title of Otto W. Masing’s (1763 -1832) journalistic undertaking, the ‘Country People’s Weekly Paper’ (Est., *maarahwa näddala-leht*). It is roughly comparable to the strong regional identity demonstrated in the self-ascription ‘from here’ (Russ., *tuteshni*), relatively common to many regions of Central and Eastern Europe before the Great War. Correspondingly, the Baltic Germans described them as ‘people who live on the land’, as ‘non-German’ (Germ., *Undeutsche*) or the ‘greys’ (Germ., *Grauen*) (Raun 1987: 19).²⁰ Similarly, the fact that the Estonians have periodised their own history in accordance with the different periods of foreign rule - such as the Polish, the Danish, the Swedish, or the Russian - suggests that the Estonian self-conception has long been more other- than self-defined (Schmidt 1992: 31).

Overall at the time the Estonian *ethnie* was split between two provinces and its language was divided into two main regional dialects. So, until the 19th c. feelings of an Estonian national consciousness were practically all but non-existent. At least, we do not know how strongly a sense of ethnic community had been developed among the ‘people from the country’ prior to the emergence of a national consciousness.

German travellers to the eastern Baltic in the 1830s and 1840s, such as J. G. Kohl, described the peasantry as characterised by a low self-esteem. Hence, Kirby maintains that the primary task of the first generation of Estonian nationalists was to combat those ingrained feelings of inferiority and to create pride in belonging to the nation (Kirby 1995: 70). Hroch accounts for this ‘inferiority complex’ by categorising Estonia as a ‘small nation’. Small nations he defines in qualitative terms as nations lacking their own ruling class, dominated by an elite of a different nationality instead. These nations never constituted an independent political unit in the past or possessed a continuous tradition of cultural production in a literary language of their own. Finally, since Estonians were subjected to a ruling class over a long

period of time, they possessed only an incomplete social structure at the eve of the emergence of a modern national movement (Hroch 1985: 9 ff).

The origins of Estonian national consciousness and its bearers

It was only in the 1860s that a larger number of active ('home-grown') Estonian nationalists emerged who conveyed their national agitation in their Estonian mother tongue directly to the common man - notably the free peasant - via a flourishing periodical press; this corresponds to 'phase B' in Hroch's model.²¹ Education in the vernacular both at school and university level thereby became the cornerstone of the national movement (in this, rural elementary school teachers, national newspapers and voluntary organisations were all-important).²²

In 1857 under the more reformist Tsar Alexander II Johann Voldemar Jannsen (1819 - 90), an elementary schoolteacher and parish clerk, was the first to publish an Estonian language weekly, the 'Pärnu Courier' (Est., *Perno Postimees ehk Nääddalileht*, later *Eesti Postimees*), using the term 'Estonian people' (Est., *Eesti rahvas*) as a self-ascriptive category instead of 'people of the country' (Raun 1987: 55 f).²³ This is precisely why 1857 is the date to mark the beginning of the national awakening.

At that time new words entered the Estonian language, such as 'the nation' (Est., *rahvus*), the 'fatherland' (Est., *isamaa*), the 'home of the nation' (Est., *kodumaa*), as well as 'Estonian language' (Est., *eesti keel*) instead of 'language of the country' (Est., *maakeel*) (Raun 1990: 134; Jansen 2000a: 63 f; cf. Loit 1998a; cf. Feest 1998).

The first 'song festival' (Est., *laulu piidu*) was held in 1869 and the 'musical society' (Est., *Vanemuine*) was founded the same year (Jansen 2000a: 62). Activities following a consciously patriotic objective in the 1870s were the establishment of the 'society of Estonian literati' (Est., *Eesti Kirjameeste Selts*) and the first self-financed Estonian language secondary school named 'Alexander School' after the reformist Tsar Alexander II. Moreover, *Sakala*, a radical patriotic periodical oriented towards the peasantry, was first issued in the late 1870s by the journalist Carl Robert Jakobson (1841 - 82).²⁴ He delivered three patriotic lectures in Tartu (1868 - 70) in which he divided Estonian history into a time of light prior to the conquest, a time of darkness signifying the '700 years of serfdom', and a time of renaissance - dawn of a new era.

To Jansen, the leading scholar of the Estonian awakening, it was the modernisation of society in the second half 19th c. which transformed the 'ethnic community' into (what she calls) a 'cultural community' characterised by new forms of social relations, interest groups, voluntary associations, and increased social mobility. She contends that at the beginning of

the 1870s, Estonians were recognised as a ‘cultural community’ by a number of Estonian intellectuals (Jansen 2000a: 75).

Kalevipoeg – an ancient Estonian tale

Until the early 19th c. peasant folksongs and legends were at the heart of Estonian culture and identity; therefore one of the principal nationalist leaders, the pastor Jakob Hurt (1839 - 1907), collected over 45,000 folksong and 10,000 fables by means of public appeal, and issued the first collections of Estonian folklore between 1875 and 1907. Hence, much in the Herderian sense the folklore movement gained high importance in the struggle for national self-esteem and the reclaiming of cultural roots.²⁵

The Finnish model was inspirational and influential for Estonian intellectuals. Finns were regarded as closely related to Estonians and Finland held a much freer status within the Russian empire than did Estonia. Thus, Estonian nationalists aspired to similarly high levels of education, national culture and self-esteem (Jansen 2000a: 69). As the Finno-Ugric people share the same roots, the ‘Kalevala poetry’ holds a stock of lyric and magic poems common to them all. Therefore, it is incorrect to say that Estonians ‘mimicked’ the Finnish national epic. However, it can be said that linking the *Kalevipoeg* to the Finnish *Kalevala* helped compensate for a missing Estonian literary tradition (Hroch 1985; Branch 1994: 195 – 212). The publication of the so-called proto-*Kalevala*, compiled by Elias Lönnrot and published by the Finnish Literature Society in 1835 (the final version was published in 1849), inspired Friedrich Robert Faehlmann to propose the creation of a similar work around the legendary figure of *Kalevipoeg* to the Estonian Learned Society.

After Faehlmann’s death, Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald (1841 - 82) completed the task. Just as Lönnrot, who by creating a chronicle of a heroic age for the Finns hoped to provide the basis for Finnish national self-confidence, the Baltic German *literatus* Georg Julius Schultz-Bertram demanded in 1839: “Let us give the people an epic and a history”; “its reading”, he continued, “would be similar to telling a beggar that he was the son of a king” (in *Kalevipoeg* 1982: 279). Under the influence of Herder’s romantic thought, Kreutzwald, much like his contemporaries, believed that they had discovered the *Volksgeist* in folks songs, sagas and fairy tales of the common unlettered people (*Kalevala* 1985: xxxii f).

Kreutzwald did not craft the *Kalevipoeg* from one coherent whole, but created it from folk tales and songs, while believing that the “*Kalevipoeg* is - in form and content - the marrow and bones, flesh and blood of the Estonian people” (*Kalevipoeg* 1982: 293).²⁶ In his attempt to preserve the oral heritage, he was well aware that “these sagas and songs

constituted the only indigenous verbal monument to this people's past" (Ibid.: 300).²⁷ As the songs and poems from the *Kalevipoeg* were created and recreated over generations, they include elements from different periods, such as aetiological myths about the beginning of time, evidence of a societal organisation prior to the German conquest, and of Christianisation as reflected in a curious mix of old and new gods.

A further innovation stems from the fact that Kreutzwald presented this traditional material in the form of historical legends, placed in the period of the 13th c. - the 'golden age', at the outset of the German conquest - thus transforming *Kalevipoeg* into a guardian of his people (Ibid.: 286 f). As a result war features prominently in *Kalevipoeg*. Kalev's honesty, his stubborn unwillingness to submit to 'evil', and the principle of divine justice are among the main themes of the work (Ibid.: 294). Furthermore, the epic contains a critique of the Germans, using metaphors such as 'devils' for the lords of the manor and 'hell' for their estates (Ibid.: 288). Faehlmann and his contemporaries, while making wide use of the past, created a future-oriented epic; *Kalevipoeg* could be read as an appeal for self-determination, as it represents an attempt at role-reversal from victim status to that of a self-asserting nation. Kreutzwald writes that "the oppressions of war and deadly plague, the torture of hunger and chains of slavery, have bruised the Estonian people and devastated their land more than once; but all of these miseries were unable to erase from the minds of the people a memory left over from a distant age of happiness – from the days of *Kalevipoeg*". The quote shows how acutely aware he was of his role as 'national awakener' (Ibid.: xiii; Kirby 1995: 127).

It comes as no surprise that the publication of the work (between 1857 and 1861) faced many difficulties, including censorship (*Kalevipoeg* 1982: 281). As was common at the time, Kreutzwald conducted all his communication on the *Kalevipoeg* in German.²⁸ A change of mind is apparent in his criticism of Estonian intellectuals for their "ardent striving for German education and culture (...) which appears to have deadened them to all indigenous national feelings" (Ibid.: 293). Although Kreutzwald intended to publish his work in Estonian, the Estonian Learned Society demanded a bilingual edition. Hence, one of the things Estonian nationalists of the first generation campaigned against was the assimilation of educated Estonians, since for Estonians the choice had existed since the 1860s to be loyal to their own nationality or to become Germanised. Against this background, Hurt explained to his Estonian audience that nationality was determined by descent only, and that 'Estonian' did not mean 'peasant' just as 'German' did not signify a person of higher social status. This was necessary because until then the collective identity of Estonians was determined by and large by their

social standing as small farmers or peasants (as well as by their connection to the land, and a shared past as reflected in stories, songs and folklore) (Hasselblatt 1995: 68).²⁹

Resembling other myths of resurrection, such as that of Friedrich Barbarossa's mythical return from his resting place at the Kyffhäuser to re-erect the holy German Reich (an old myth from the 14th c. that experienced a revival at the time of the German unification 1870/71), Kalevipoeg ends with the hope that “one day an age will dawn when (...) the son of Kalev will come home to bring his children happiness and build Estonia's life anew” (Ibid.: 266).³⁰

To Raun the importance of Kalevipoeg lies in the fact that it affirmed the historical existence of the Estonian nation (Raun 1987: 77). Whereas the Kalevipoeg was initially compiled for an educated public, i.e. the learned societies who debated the Estonian awakening, it gradually became a symbol for nationalists and its influence on subsequent generations intensified (Kalevipoeg 1982: 282 f).³¹ To this day, sites in the national epic Kalevipoeg can be found in the Estonian landscape. In my interviews references to the Kalevipoeg epic were scarce; however, parts of the epic are traditionally performed in the song festival and the folk songs were sung in the ‘Singing Revolution’. Thus the Kalevipoeg may be viewed as being deeply rooted in Estonia's cultural memory.

According to Hroch nationalism as a mass movement emerged in Estonia between the 1880s and the '90s. This 'phase C' of his model is distinguished by a mass diffusion of patriotic attitudes, and by the people reacting directly to patriotic impulses. A significant manifestation of the increased politicisation of those national aspirations was a memorandum presented to Tsar Alexander III in 1881, which demanded civic rights for all Estonians and the right of patriotic leaders to participate in Baltic politics as legal representatives; another important request was for the unification of all ethnic Estonians in one territory, i.e. the redrawing of the border between the provinces of Latvia and Estonia on ethnic grounds. To Jansen this memorandum marked a conscious choice by Estonian nationalists for a political nationalism. At this point the idea of cultural sovereignty of Estonians had been increasingly politicised and transformed into the concept of political sovereignty (Jansen 2000a: 66).³²

Russification policies (1881 – 1904) - a stumbling block?

The mass movement came to a momentary halt with Tsar Alexander III's Russification, which encompassed new language laws and censorship of the national press, and which represented a serious blow to the Estonian national culture as it replaced Estonian (and German) with the Russian language in law courts and schools. Also, the Russian juridical

system was introduced. Despite Russification, three song festivals took place and the number of Estonian voluntary cultural organisations steadily grew. The use of Estonian in the unofficial sphere, together with the Estonian press, preserved a cultural nationalism; so that Russification strengthened an Estonian identity *ex negativo*. Jansen notes here that the Russification policies were not very effective, as the requirement to learn Russian did not lessen people's attachment to their native tongue. Quite the reverse; as will be shown in the Chapter Three, over the course of the 19th c. the Estonian self-definition emerged against their eastern and western neighbours *ex negativo* (Hasselblatt 1995: 68).

The fact that Russification mainly targeted the 'bastions' of Baltic German privilege raised the hopes of Estonian nationalists for an increased political freedom.³³ The so-called 'St. Petersburg Patriots' (consisting of radical Estonian nationalists) attempted to strengthen the Russian influence in Estonia to outdo the Baltic German domination. The Estonian public at the time regarded the Tsar as a wise ruler, who desired the welfare and even national emancipation of all peoples of Russia. However, this was not on the agenda of the Tsar, who wanted to assimilate the Baltic people, and ultimately Estonians were disappointed by Alexander III's reforms (*Ibid.*: 68 ff).

Social mobilisation - the 1905 revolt

Industrialisation provided possibilities for significant numbers of upwardly mobile Estonians, and by the end of 1905 industrial unrest was widespread throughout the large Baltic cities; in Tallinn a general strike broke out as early as January 1905. On November 27, 1905 Estonian nationalists organised the Congress of People's Representatives, which declared that the tsarist regime should be overthrown and committees of self-government formed in its place. Following the Congress, the political atmosphere became highly charged and the rural areas of *Estland* (and *Livland*) saw a full-scale peasant revolt directed against both the reactionary 'grey barons' and tsarist autocracy, during which hundreds of estates were burned and looted. When the Baltic German *Ritterschaften* called on the tsarist government to help quash the peasant uprising and restore order, Baltic German officers led so-called 'expeditionary corps' carrying out punitive measures, which caused an even greater alienation between Germans and Estonians (Pistohlkors 1993: 192).³⁴

Appalled by the harshness of the penal action taken by the imperial forces and disillusioned with both the Russian empire and the Baltic Germans, many Estonian politicians sought to take greater control of their own political future. Consequently, the call for national autonomy (based on a general franchise) was expressed at spontaneous meetings of

representatives of Estonian societies in Tartu (Jansen 2000a: 76).³⁵ Raun contends that until 1905 the Estonian national movement remained above all a cultural phenomenon, for until then only modest demands for autonomy as opposed to independent statehood were voiced (Raun 1990: 134; Raun 2003). It can however be argued that to claim national autonomy is already a politically motivated act.

1. 2. *The First World War*

The establishment of an independent Estonian State was made possible by the collapse of the old tsarist regime in February 1917 and the end of imperial Germany. Estonian nationalists began pressing Russia's provisional government for greater political autonomy; but even after the revolution of 1917 the majority of the Estonian national spokesmen did not demand independence, but opted for full autonomy within a democratic Russian federation instead. A mass demonstration in April of some 40,000 Estonians in St. Petersburg, in support of self-government institutions and the administrative unification of *Estland* and northern *Livland* into a single Estonian province, led to the full recognition of these demands by the provisional government (Raun 1987: 100).³⁶

After the October revolution the Bolsheviks gradually seized power in Estonia's provisional government, but the invasion of German troops in February 1918 prevented the consolidation of their power in Estonia. On the night of February 24, 1918, between the Bolsheviks' departure and right before the arrival of the German military, the salvation Committee of Estonia's provincial assembly (Est., *maapäev*) declared Estonia to be an independent and democratic Republic within its historical and ethnographic boundaries, and formed a new provisional government with Konstantin Päts as Prime Minister. Raun remarks "it was the threat of German occupation that galvanised Estonian thinking towards independence" (Raun 1987: 104 f). After the Estonians demanded independence and a redistribution of the land, most Baltic Germans shifted their loyalty to the German kin-state, fearing the loss of their status in Estonia. They now sought support for their privileged position through the 'Supreme Command' of the German Reich (Germ., *Oberste Heeresleitung, OHL*), where they lobbied for a German occupation of Estonia (Brüggemann 1995: 454 - 457). By March 1918 all of Estonia was under German military occupation, which involved the restoration of the Baltic German control with the aim of rapid 'Germanisation' of the entire area (Raun 1987: 106).³⁷ In the course of the negotiations at Brest Litowsk, a delegation of the *Ritterschaften* spoke as representatives of the Estonian

population, declaring that Estonians wished to be incorporated in a Greater Prussia or united with the other two Russian provinces in a Baltic Duchy. The Allies, while sympathetic to the Estonian cause, were unwilling to support the break-up of the Russian empire and thus withheld recognition. In fact a major contradiction after the armistice of November 11, 1918 was that the Entente asked the German troops (Germ., *Freikorps*) to remain in the Baltic region to ward off the Bolshevik threat.³⁸

The War of Independence (1918 – 20)

The German defeat left a temporary power vacuum in Estonia: on November 13, 1918 the new Soviet government declared the Treaty of Brest-Litowsk void and marched into the Baltic States with the objective of 'liberating' the Baltic people from the 'German imperialist yoke' (Rauch 1986: 57). A struggle for power in Estonia unfolded between the Estonian provisional government (who held State power since November 19, 1918), weak Estonian national forces, the Estonian Bolsheviks, the invading Red Army, and the German troops still in the country.³⁹ In November 1918 a 'defense league' or home guard (Est., *Kaitseliit*) was formed. Its membership was initially voluntary but became compulsory from January 1919 until the end of the War of Independence (Miljan 2004: 167 f). On November 28, 1918 the Estonian workers' union was established in Narva under Jaan Anvelt (Gerner & Hedlund 1997: 55 f). By December 1918 Soviet forces controlled half of the country. However, in January 1919 Estonian troops under General Juhan Laidoner and the German *Baltenregiment* (under Estonian command), with the help of British weapons and volunteers from Finland, managed to turn the tide and push the Russian troops back.⁴⁰ In the battle of *Cesis* (Est., *Võnnu*, Germ., *Wenden*) Estonian troops supported the Latvians and emerged victorious in their fight against the Baltic German *Landeswehr* and German *Freikorps* units.⁴¹ The complete German withdrawal from Latvia on June 23, 1919 has been celebrated as Victory Day in Estonia ever since; and it can be said that the War of Independence functioned as a national mobiliser with respect to the creation of an independent Estonian State.⁴² In support of the Whites, Estonian troops advanced into Russia and occupied the Russian town of Ivangorod opposite the town of Narva and the area of Petseri (Est., *Petserimaa*), which remained part of Estonia until 1940.

The international constellation, i.e. the defeat of both Russia and Germany, was favourable to the emergence of an independent Estonia. Weakened by the Civil War, the Soviet government was willing to agree to the Peace Treaty of Tartu in February 2, 1920, in which Estonian independence was guaranteed.

1.3. The Estonian Republic (1920 - 40)⁴³

Already in 1919 the ‘constitutive assembly’ (Est., *asustav kogu*) passed the constitution of the Estonian Republic as well as the law on the land reform, which entailed the radical expropriation of all the Baltic German landed elite. During independence Estonia operated under a radically democratic constitution modelled on the Swiss, German, French and American constitutions. In a time of widespread economic distress, the 1923 national elections witnessed the strengthening of both the extreme left and right. Communist activity in Estonia culminated in an attempted *coup* on December 1, 1924. The Estonian War of Independence Veterans’ League (Est., *Eesti Vabadussõjalaste Liit*) was initially founded as an ex-combatants’ interest group in 1929, but became politicised in the years of economic depression and constitutional crisis (1932 – 34).⁴⁴ With their anti-democratic agitation the extra-parliamentary EVL played a crucial role in the demise of Estonia’s parliamentary democracy; they employed the radical democratic constitution of the Republic of Estonia, with its provision for popular initiative, while appealing directly to the people (Raun 2001: 117).⁴⁵ As ‘creators’ of the Republic in the War of Independence, the Veterans claimed it as their duty to safeguard the welfare of the country; they saw their inheritance squandered by a fragmented, corrupt and ineffective parliamentary system. Consequently the EVL campaigned for “putting a master in the house” (Est., *peremees majja*);⁴⁶ it was a renewal movement, whose leaders envisioned an organic and ‘integral national community’ (Est., *rauhuslik tervik*), where all would be done in the interest of national unity (Kasekamp 2000: 32, 65). In October 1933 the EVL’s bill for a constitutional amendment was approved by a great majority, an amendment that provided the Estonian president with an independent, powerful executive.⁴⁷

‘The Era of Silence’

In the run up to the January 1934 elections, the EVL’s leader Gen. Larka outdistanced all his competitors (among them Päts) for the post of president. To counter this alleged ‘danger’ stemming from the right, Päts declared a state of emergency on March 12, 1934, dissolved the parliament, and postponed new elections until martial law would be lifted. The parliament approved of his action unanimously out of self-preservation (Raun 2001: 119). This period (1934 - 40) is commonly referred to as the ‘era of silence’ (Est., *vaikiv ajastu*) in reference to the silent existence of the parliament and the elimination of all party activity (Kasekamp 2000: 121, 157).⁴⁸ Although later investigations could not substantiate Päts claim of averting

the danger of the EVL's takeover and a lurking civil war, his justification seemed plausible to many at the time (Kasekamp 1999: 590; Pajur 2001: 169; Marandi 1991: 549 ff).⁴⁹ Directly after his takeover Päts disbanded the EVL, arresting 400 of its leaders and removing its members from local government, the militia and the civil service.⁵⁰

Consequently, civil and political rights were restricted and censorship of the press, the educational apparatus, and cultural sector was introduced.⁵¹ It may seem paradoxical, but Päts implemented many of those ideas which had previously been promoted by the EVL, thus rendering the latter superfluous (Kasekamp 2000: 156). Another factor that helped to consolidate Päts' powerful position was the rapid recovery of the economy. There was an ever so gradual return to constitutionalism in 1938, although political parties remained banned and the government continued to rule by decree.

Whereas Soviet Estonian historiography viewed Päts and the EVL as two competing forms of fascism, many contemporary and Western observers regarded Päts' *coup* as pre-emptive and legitimate, while pointing to the mildness of his authoritarian rule (i.e. the absence of executions and the general amnesty for political prisoners in May 1938). Other scholars dispute the benevolent nature of Päts' 'guided democracy', and see him as someone who seized the opportunity of fulfilling his own ambitions of fundamentally reorganising the political system into a nationalistic, authoritarian state, with no intention to return to democracy (Raun 2001: 119, 122 f; Isberg 1992).

1.4. Second World War in Estonia

After the Baltic entente, a regional alliance formed by the three Baltic Republics in 1934, had failed to become a military alliance, Estonia opted for a foreign policy of strict neutrality and signed non-aggression pacts with both the Soviet Union in 1932 and Germany in June 1939 (Raun 2001: 124 f). At the beginning of 1939 a Russo-German war was seen as the greatest threat by the Baltic States (Myllyniemi 1979: 36). The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact (abbr. MRP) divided the spheres of influence between Germany and Soviet Russia.⁵² Between its first agreement on August 23, 1939 and the second one, Germany attacked Poland (on September 1, 1939) and the Soviet Union occupied the eastern part of Poland (on September 17, 1939). With the second pact, the German-Soviet treaty of demarcation and friendship (on September 28, 1939), Stalin was given a 'free hand' in the Baltic States.

Already on September 14, the incident of the Polish submarine ORP Eagle (Pl. *Orzeł*) gave the Soviets a reason to accuse the Estonian government of failing to maintain their

neutrality.⁵³ Consequently, on September 24 Moscow pressured Estonia (as well as Latvia and Lithuania) to agree to a mutual-assistance pact, which permitted the stationing of 25,000 Soviet troops across Estonia (along with naval and air bases) (Raun 1987: 140). Faced with increasing Soviet military provocations, an Estonian representative met with the Armed Forces High Command (OKW) in Königsberg on September 25; the Germans made it clear that they would not help Estonia in the case of a Soviet invasion, and that due to its treaties Germany might even act as an aggressor against Estonia (Myllyniemi 1979: 59).⁵⁴ Päts, whose expressed premise was to secure Estonia's national survival, consented to the signing of the mutual-assistance pact (Ibid.: 60 f). In October 1939 Hitler called for the repatriation of the Baltic Germans to the *Warthegau*.⁵⁵ In June 1940 the Soviet Union presented ultimata to all three Baltic States demanding the establishment of new pro-Soviet governments and free access for Soviet troops. Päts complied to the demands, and on June 17 Soviet troops entered the country (Ibid.: 129 ff). After rigged elections, the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic (ESSR), under a new communist government headed by Johannes Vares-Barbarus, was proclaimed on July 21, 1940.⁵⁶ Thereafter, the new Estonian *Riigikogu* 'requested' of the Supreme Soviet that they be incorporated into the Soviet Union. Whereas Raun and other non-Soviet historians mark these events as Soviet incorporation (or annexation) followed by Sovietisation, Soviet historiography described the events leading up to the incorporation as revolutionary and the incorporation itself as a legitimate act (Raun 1987: 146; Myllyniemi 1979: 137 f).

The first Soviet year (1940- 41)

The wave of arrests during the first Soviet year, which began in July 1940, and culminated in the mass-deportation on June 14, 1941, is seen as the single most traumatic historic experience by Estonians.⁵⁷ In 1940, 48 members of the last Estonian government were arrested, of whom only 3 MPs survived.⁵⁸ About 11,000 Estonian citizens were deported to the inner regions of the Soviet Union, half of them on the night of June 14, 1941,⁵⁹ among them 415 Estonian Jews.⁶⁰ When compared to the other Baltic Republics, the mass deportations in Estonia amounted to the highest number (in relation to the general population numbers). Arguably, there is a *nexus* between the Soviet memory of the futile Finno-Russian Winter War (1939 - 40) and Finland's siding with axis powers in June 1941, and a pronounced hatred of Estonians based on Finnish and Estonian kinship (both belong to the Finno-Ugric people).⁶¹ A further reason for greater purges and deportations of Estonians may have been their support for General Yudenich and the Whites during the Russian Civil War (Vardys &

Misiunas 1978: 13). Also, during the first Soviet year the Estonian standing army was destroyed, officers were executed and/or deported, and 33,000 Estonian men were recruited into the Soviet army.⁶²

Stalin called for a scorched-earth operation in the face of the approaching German troops in 1941, which was carried out by so-called ‘shock battalions’ that fought side-by-side with the regular Soviet troops. Several thousand Estonians who had been mobilised into the Red Army deserted to the German side (Raun 2001: 158). In the resistance to the Soviet occupation (i.e. the mass-deportation; the waves of mobilisation into the Red Army and the shock battalions), Estonian anti-Soviet partisan units formed up (the so-called ‘Forest Brethren’ (Est., *metsavennad* or *metsavedlus*)), who fought a guerrilla war against these shock battalions and the regular Soviet army in the so-called ‘Summer War’ (from July – October 1941, i.e. prior to the full German occupation) (Myllyniemi 1973: 73).⁶³

The German occupation (1941 - 44)

Following the experience of the first Soviet year, the German army was greeted as ‘liberators’ and hopes were high that Estonian independence would be regained (Raun 1987: 157; Myllyniemi 1996). Alfred Rosenberg (1893 - 1946), a Tallinn-born Baltic German, became the Minister for the Occupied Eastern Territories (RMO) in July 1941.⁶⁴ He instructed Hinrich Lohse, *Reichskommissar* of the newly established *Ostland*, to administer the territory by means of “Germanisation (Germ., *Eindeutschung*) of the racially worthy elements, colonisation by Germanic peoples (Germ., *Germanisierung*) and exile of undesirable elements” (Myllyniemi 1973: 145-157; Raun 2001: 161). In the National Socialist conception of race, Estonians were inferior to the Germanic race. However, the fact that in 1942 - 43 Estonians were admitted into the ‘Hitler Youth Organisation’ (Germ., *Hitler Jugend*) under the name of ‘Estonian Youth’ (Est., *Eesti Nooret*) indicates that Estonians were considered to be of some ‘racial value’.⁶⁵

Estonia was placed under a ‘local self-government’ (Germ., *Zivilverwaltung*) headed by Hjalmar Mäe in September 1941 (and the German civil administration was officially inaugurated in December 1941).⁶⁶ Since the ‘self-government’ was under the command of the High commissioner of Estonia, Karl Litzmann, self-government is a rather euphemistic term. On their arrival the Germans soon disarmed the existing Estonian anti-Soviet partisan units and created an auxiliary police (Germ., *Selbstschutz*, Est., *Omakaitse*, abbr. *OK*) out of the ‘trustworthy’ elements of the former Estonian self-defense militia (Est., *Kaitseliit*), the ‘Forest

Brethren', and the former Estonian army and police personnel, etc. (Myllyniemi 1973: 227); eventually this numbered close to 40,000 men (Miljan 2004: 112).

The Holocaust in occupied Estonia

Many Estonians supported the creation of an Estonian branch of the Security Police and security service. The Estonian Security Police was to implement the Nuremberg laws (Gurin-Loov 1996: 302) needed for the confiscation of property and arrests, first of male Jews and later of female Jews, which began immediately.⁶⁷ In neighbouring Lithuania and Latvia, the Security Police tried to instigate pogroms against Jews and communists to give the impression of spontaneous cleansing actions of the native population (Germ., *Selbtsäuberungsaktionen*), but this was not so in Estonia (Myllyniemi 1973: 77).

Raun states that the OK had to secure the rear of the fighting forces and clean out any remaining troops of the Red Army (Raun 2001: 158), and this was indeed their official task. Myllyniemi and others highlighted that the OK's objective (under the command of SS Oberstrumbrandführer Martin Sandberger (KdS), head of the special detachment 1a of mobile killing unit (*Sonderkommando 1a der Einsatzgruppe A*) was to 'clear' the occupied territory of Jews, communist activists and anti-German partisans, thus carrying out the arrests and executions of the Estonian Jewry (Myllyniemi 1993: 76; Gurin-Loov 1994: 227).⁶⁸

Since the number of Estonian Jews was relatively small, Germans did not establish a ghetto.⁶⁹ In Tallinn Estonian Jews were hastily arrested by OK or the police and brought to the security police or police precinct, where they had to confess their Jewishness. Subsequently, they were sent to a prison and were either executed shortly thereafter or transferred to one of the forced labour camps (Gurin-Loov 1994: 224). Overall, the Germans depended on the collaboration of the locals (and their local knowledge) to 'track down' Jews, anti-German partisans and communists.⁷⁰ Clearly, there was a far greater hate of communists (and Russians) among the Estonians than of Jews (White 2000: 8). Mainly during the first month of the German occupation, the Russian minority of the south-eastern part of Estonia lived in fear of deportation (Weiss-Wendt 2004).⁷¹ Hence, Sandberger complained about the poorly developed racial viewpoint among the Estonians (Gurin-Loov 1994: 225). Nevertheless, the '*Judeobolshevik*' myth was alive among Estonians (cf. Levin 1994). The fact that some Jews volunteered for the 'shock battalions' to fight the invading Wehrmacht had contributed to this myth; in addition, several Jews had been involved in the nationalisation of properties during the first Soviet year, and held posts in the new government, the military and nationalised businesses (Gurin-Loov 1996: 300 f). Prior to the

German arrival large numbers of Estonian Jews were evacuated eastward along with communists, *apparatchiks*, and unionists, where they survived in the interior of the Soviet Union. Of the 1,000 Estonian Jews who had remained in Estonia, all were killed between August and December 1941 (Gurin-Loov 1994: 226 f).⁷² In the protocol of the Wannsee conference of January 20, 1942, Estonia is noted to be 'free of Jews' (Germ., *judenfrei*) (Gilbert 1995: 85).⁷³

The second phase of the killing of Jews in Estonia began in the fall of 1942 when approximately 15,000 Jews from Germany, occupied Lithuania and Czechoslovakia were deported to the country.⁷⁴ The old and sick were killed in the forests, while the young and strong were sent to prisons or forced labour camps. Many of them passed through Vaivare, Estonia's largest forced labour camp, to be deported further to smaller camps, of which there were around 20 (e.g. in Klooga, Lagedi, Ereda, Tartu, and Harku etc.).

The fate of those thousands of Jews who perished in occupied Estonia belongs to those historical facts that are 'forgotten' in post-Soviet Estonia.⁷⁵

Military mobilisations

In August 1942, after a German victory at the eastern front became increasingly unlikely, German authorities began to recruit Estonians into the Waffen SS (a unit called the Estonian SS Legion). The response remained limited, as only 500 'volunteers' had signed up by October 1942, so that units of the Estonian security police were ordered to serve in the Legion (Keegan 1981: 223 ff; Myllyniemi 1973: 229 f). Already in November 1941, Hitler consented to the creation of an Estonian *Schuma*-battalion of 9,000 men that would also serve at the front (Myllyniemi 1973: 228).⁷⁶

The head of the SS Heinrich Himmler (RFSS), was well aware that Estonians would need an incentive to fight in the Wehrmacht, such as the re-privatisation of property or greater autonomy (Myllyniemi 1973: 206).⁷⁷ Since Hitler was not willing to grant Estonia autonomy, the mobilisation needed a cover up as 'work service' (Germ., *Arbeitsdienst*);⁷⁸ in 1941 all Estonians aged 18 – 45 were called for work service, in 1943 all aged 15 – 65 (Myllyniemi 1973: 231 - 242).⁷⁹

In March 1943 the German authorities turned to the first total mobilisation, calling on all Estonian men born between 1919 – 24; a later mobilisation that year called on all men born between 1919-25.⁸⁰ Those mobilised could choose between serving in the Legion, in Wehrmacht support services, and work service in the military industry (Myllyniemi 1973: 232). By December 1944 about 14,000 Estonians served in the Estonian SS Legion, the

Estonian Brigade, the *Schuma*-battalion and other smaller national units (Myllyniemi 1973: 255). To avoid the German draft over 5,000 Estonian men, the so-called 'Finnish boys', fled to Finland illegally to volunteer for service in the Finnish armed forces instead; many - between 2,000 - 3,500 of them - returned to defend their homeland in August 1944 (Raun 2001: 166).

A final mobilisation for military service in February 1944 resulted in an unprecedented number of 38,000 men. A total of 50,000 – 60,000 Estonian men in arms helped stop the Soviet advance for about six months, stabilising it along the Narva River until July 1944 (Raun 2001: 159).

What was the reason for this sudden rush to arms of thousands of Estonians, one may ask; the reasons provided by the literature are the fiery speech of the last Prime Minister of Estonia, Jüri Uluots, in support of total mobilisation, motivating Estonians to fight for their country - i.e. the main incentive being hatred and fear of Bolshevism (though this is not explicitly stated). I also came across an indication that in autumn 1943 Himmler had promised Mäe renewed independence for Estonia in return for an additional 6,000 Estonian men to fight in the SS Legion (Kasekamp 2000: 138; Myllyniemi 1973: 247, 253).

By the late summer of 1944 about 70,000 – 100,000 Estonians fled to the West, primarily to Sweden and Germany, to evade a second Soviet occupation (Raun 2001: 166). The Red Army recaptured Estonia by September 22, 1944 and Estonia was (involuntarily) incorporated into the Soviet Union. By January 1945 Estonia had lost 10 - 25% of its pre-war population through deportations, military and civilian fatalities, political executions, emigration and territorial transfer.⁸¹

1.5. Stalinism, Thaw and Stagnation (1945 – 85)

In 1944 Estonia was transformed into a Soviet Republic in its economic, administrational, and political structure.⁸²

The Stalinist era (1944-53) was marked by mass repression, and saw a pro-independence 'guerrilla warfare' with about 5,000 Estonian men underground.⁸³ There was intense industrialisation in Tallinn and the North East - the by-product of which was the massive immigration of a Russian-speaking workforce and environmental pollution due to the exploitation of natural resources, such as phosphate, oil shale and uranium.⁸⁴ The forcible collectivisation of 93 % of all Estonian farms into 2,213 *kolkhozes* took place between 1948-50. In 1949 60,000 Estonians were deported, among them 20,713 farmers on March 25, 1949,

who passively resisted collectivisation ("liquidation of the kulaks as a class").⁸⁵ Already in the summer of 1945, 342 Baltic Germans who had remained in Estonia were deported and in 1951, 259 Christian believers were also deported. In a purge of so-called 'bourgeois nationalists' in 1950/51, the Estonian national-orientated ECP nomenclature was replaced by returning 'Russified' Estonians (Estonians who had lived in Russia and Russians) and large numbers of the remaining native intelligentsia were dismissed.⁸⁶

With Khrushchev (1952-64) the ESSR experienced de-Stalinisation and thaw (i.e. Khrushchev's attack on Stalin's cult of personality at the 20th Congress of the CPSU in 1956). In the post-Stalin era, Estonia (and Latvia) had the highest living standard in the Soviet Union (i.e. 'Soviet Consumerism'). Initial hopes raised by the thaw were also reflected in a rise in the number of ethnic Estonians in the ECP; the long term First Secretary Johannes Ivan Käbin (1905 - 99) was regarded as a pro-Estonian mediator between Moscow and Tallinn by many Estonians. Moreover, overall decentralisation allowed for necessary reforms, for instance in the agricultural sector. In the course of liberalisation, most of the deportees could return from the camps in the mid-50s, and a renaissance in cultural life was noticeable in the 1960s. The 'opening' of the new Tallinn - Helsinki ferry line in 1965 and the fact that small numbers of Estonians were allowed to travel to the West increased the sense of freedom.

1.6. Path to Independence (1987 – 91)

"Will the people disappear?" was the widespread concern of Estonians in the late 1970s in response to Brezhnev's (1966-82) enforced Sovietisation policies and the overall demographic situation.⁸⁷ The older generation of Estonians increasingly feared that the memory of a free Estonia would be forgotten once and for all.

In the early 1970s a small group of Estonian dissidents drafted a memorandum to the UN in protest against the continuing Soviet occupation of Estonia.⁸⁸ In October 1980 the so-called 'Letter of the Forty' was addressed to the editors of the CP organ "People's Voice" (Est., *Rahva Hääl*), in *Sovietskaja Estonia* and *Pravda*. The Letter was the reaction of forty well known Estonian writers and intellectuals to the use of force against a spontaneous demonstration of secondary school pupils a month before, calling for an Estonia free from Russian rule (Raun 1987: 196). It also contained concerns about the future of the Estonian nation and was met with a wide public response.⁸⁹

Some five years later Gorbachev's twin policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika* catalysed a 'new awakening' (Est., *uus õrakamisaeg*) in Estonia, over the course of which initiatives and

societies cropped up, representing the *nucleus* of an emerging civil society. Estonia has had a long-standing tradition of rich associational culture, and some of these formerly non-political associations, which continued to exist in Soviet Estonia or were founded after 1944, strove to maintain different aspects of national and essentially non-Soviet culture. In the late 1980s the work of some of these associations took on a political dimension, as they helped to reconstruct Estonia as an independent political nation. Among them were folklore groups, such as the musical society; the Literary Association (Est., *raamatühing*); local history groups (Est., *kodu ruulemine*) and the 'Estonian Heritage Society' (Est., *Eesti muinsuskaitse selts*, abbr. *EMS*), as well as the Green movement (Est., *Eesti looduskaitse selts*) (Aarelaid-Tart & Tart 1995: 153 f).⁹⁰

'Singing Revolution'

Gorbachev's call for the unveiling of 'blank spots' in history instigated an interest in the revelations on the secret protocols of the MRP, which constituted perhaps the greatest taboo of all time in Soviet History; even after the 20th Congress of the CPSU their existence had been consistently denied. In fact the MRP was a 'ticking time bomb' that provided a point of departure for the independence movement. It represents the traumatic memory and essential fear of Estonians of being sold out in a bargain between Germany and Russia and of being let down by the Western Allies, as was the case in 1945.⁹¹ An expression of national unrest was the annual 'calendar demonstrations' in all three republics, which publicly commemorated their illegal incorporation and the mass deportations, in order to discredit the official Soviet interpretation of 'voluntary incorporation' of the Republics into the Soviet Union in 1940.⁹² The motor behind the demonstrations in Estonia was the 'Estonian Group for Making Public the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact' (Est., *Molotov-Ribbentropi-Pakti Avalikumise Eesti Grupp*, abbr. MRP-AEG), who organised political meetings in Hirve Park (in Tallinn) to discuss and commemorate the signing of the MRP in August 1987.⁹³ In the following year the secret supplementary clause was published in *Rahva Hääl*.

Whereas in 1987 only a few thousand Estonians participated in the demonstration, the movement gained momentum, with hundreds of thousands people demonstrating in the following year. Further demonstrations in 1988 marked the anniversary of the Tartu Peace treaty (1920), and 10,000 celebrated Estonian Independence Day in Tallinn on February 24. The Estonian Heritage Society arranged celebrations of Estonia's cultural history in April 1988, which 30,000 attended. At the 'Baltica Festival' in June 1988 the three national flags were raised together for the first time (Lieven 1994: 112). During the summer of 1988

increasing numbers of Estonians flocked to the Singer's ground to sing for freedom, reaching numbers up to 30,000.⁹⁴

On April 13, 1988 Edgar Savisaar announced the formation of the People's Front (Est., *Eestimaa Rahvrinne*, abbr. RR), which initially supported Gorbachev's reforms while promoting Estonia's autonomy within the confederation of the Soviet Union. However, gradually their objective began to shift towards full national independence. The huge demonstrations organised by the People's Front came to influence the ruling CPE, so that in 1988 the First Secretary of the CPE, Karl Vaino, was replaced by Vaino Väljas, an Estonian reformist.⁹⁵ In this situation the Estonian Supreme Soviet passed a declaration of sovereignty in November 1988. A month later the First Secretary Väljas declared the demands of the people and the People's Front to be those of the party. In May 1989 the Supreme Soviet of the Estonian SSR formally asked the Soviet Union Congress of People's Deputies to investigate the problems related to the MRP (Lagerspetz 1996: 72 f). It was in commemoration of the MRP, on August 23, 1989 that 2 million Balts formed a continuous human chain (Est., *Balti Kett*) from Vilnius via Riga to Tallinn, paving the way for the 'Singing Revolution'.⁹⁶

In sum, in this period historical taboo topics, memories, myths and symbols of the pre-Soviet period turned into major vehicles to destabilise the communist regime. References to the past were used to secure mass support for the Estonian independence movement.

'Parade of Sovereignties'

A major consequence of *perestroika* for Estonia was that competitive elections for party and State positions were introduced in January 1990. Consequently the 20th Congress of the ECP voted to break with the CPSU. Some days later Estonians elected a new Supreme Soviet, which on March 30, 1990 declared the transition period to full independence. At that time parallel political structures had emerged in Estonia, so that national and Soviet authorities governed alongside one another.

Lithuania was the first former Soviet republic to kick-off the 'parade of sovereignties' in March 1990; Estonia and Latvia followed suit on the March 30 and May 4, 1990 (Gerner & Hedlund 1993: 43). After the demonstrations in Vilnius (and Riga) had been violently smashed by *Omon* troops in January 1991, Yeltsin travelled to Tallinn, where he met with Baltic leaders, while appealing to the Russian soldiers in the Baltic republics not to use arms against civilians, warning them that they might have to fight as Russian soldiers against attacks by Soviet troops.

Yeltsin became President of the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Republic (RSFSR) in May 1990 and in the summer of 1990 he walked out of the last congress of the CPSU, declaring that he no longer saw any possibility of working with the party. On June 12, 1990 the RSFSR announced that its laws were above those of the Soviet Union. In the following year Yeltsin became the democratically elected Russian President; during the campaign he called for Gorbachev to step down. Yeltsin had the democratic forces in Russia behind him, whereas Gorbachev had come to represent the CPSU.

An abortive *coup d'état* was launched to stop the new Union treaty, which was meant to replace the Soviet Union with a much looser union of sovereign republics and preserve the residual powers of the CPSU. The conspirators had detained Gorbachev, but their plans to arrest Yeltsin failed. As the military did not support their action, the *coup* leaders gave up after three days and Gorbachev resigned as General Secretary.

The failed *coup* in Moscow functioned as catalyst for Estonia's full and immediate independence, suggesting that Soviet power was at an end: On August 19, a Soviet military commando unit landed at Tallinn airport. A day later volunteers formed protective shields around the Estonian Parliament Building, the radio and TV station. On that day the Estonian Supreme Council adopted a resolution declaring full and immediate national independence (recognised by Yeltsin's Russia four days later). Although the Soviet military commandos did take over the TV tower without bloodshed, they left the building and Estonian territory as soon as the news of the aborted *coup* became public (Davies 1997: 1125 – 1127; Gerner & Hedlund 1993: 166 – 170).

Estonia had been an unwilling member of the Soviet Union for almost half a century, but regardless of the undesired nature of the relationship, Estonian society was profoundly affected by Sovietisation policies on many levels; the demographic legacy of a Russian-speaking community that amounts to 32 % of the total population is only the most obvious example.

Endnotes of Chapter III:

¹ This is the first period documented by a large number of artefacts. The oldest written record of Estonia is that of the Arabic geographer al-Idrisi of 1154, see www.ibs.ee. Around 98 A. D. Tacitus, in *Germania*, refers to the "Aesti" (Lat., *Aestorum gentes*, Tacitus 1959: 39 ff); it is however disputed whether "Aesti" refers to the ancestors of the Estonians or rather the Baltic people, i.e. the ancestors of the modern day Latvians and Lithuanians. It can however be ascertained that the root of the word 'Estonian', as in Estonian man or woman (Est., *eesti, eestlane, eestlana*), can be traced back to the Germanic word for the East (Germ., *Ost-*); unambiguous evidence for the usage of the root word 'est-' can be found in runic inscriptions dating from 1000 - 11000 A.D.

² On the eve of the German conquest the population of Estonia numbered 150,000 – 180,000 and grew gradually to around 250,000 towards the middle of the 16th c. *The Chronicle of Henry of Livonia*, which includes the first lines of written Estonian, is the unparalleled source for the German conquest of Estonia (cf. Brundage 1961).

³ The Sword Brethren or Order of the Knights of Christ (*fratres militiae Christi*), founded in 1202, ceased to exist after being defeated by the Lithuanians in 1236. After that they were known as the Teutonic Knights; this order of the Teutonic Knights had been founded in Jerusalem in 1189 (cf. Christiansen 1980).

⁴ The term 'freedom fighters' is used again in the War of Independence (1918-20) and during WW II.

⁵ The alternation of foreign rule is reflected in the fact that Estonian places have had a number of different names over time; Tartu was once called 'Yuryev' after the Kievan prince Yaroslav and later renamed 'Dorpat' by the Baltic Germans.

⁶ In 1343 four Estonian kings were nominated, who were murdered thereafter in an act of treachery. The uprising was centred in Harjumaa, Läänemaa and Saaremaa, which were the main areas of Baltic German settlement. It was a violent, affair as it involved the killing of nearly all Germans who remained in the countryside, as well as the subsequent slaughter of thousands of Estonians.

⁷ The Danish sell-off that followed enhanced the power of the Teutonic Knights in medieval Livonia. The power of the Teutonic Knights was finally broken in the battle of Tannenberg (or Grunwald) on July 15, 1410 by Polish-Lithuanian joint forces; for the legend of Tannenberg in Poland (Molik 1998: 301 ff).

⁸ Literacy was highly aided by the public primary school system that was established during the 'Swedish time'. Notably, Bengt Gottfried Forselius advanced the elementary education system and operated a teacher seminary.

⁹ An early exception to this is constituted of several monastic orders, such as the Dominican brothers, who taught in the local languages (i.e. in German and Estonian).

¹⁰ According to Raun there is some evidence for a Catholic work dating back to 1517 and a Lutheran one of 1525, but there are no copies left (Raun 1987: 24). Hastings argued that once a people acquire a vernacular literature they could then be considered a nation (Hastings 1997). By 1850 adult literacy was high in Estonia and Livonia – probably close to 90 % of the Estonian population over 10 years of age could read – but only 77 % could write and thus there was little Estonian-language based literature apart from translations of the Bible (Raun 1987: 55).

¹¹ During this great Northern War the Estonian population was halved due to the great plague in 1710 – 13.

¹² 1854 saw the last Estonian peasant uprising with the so-called *Mathra* War (cf. Simmonds-Duke 1987).

¹³ In 1866 local self-government for peasant communities was introduced and *corvée* labour abolished. In 1877 a small Estonian middle class was able to participate in an urban self-government as well (Jansen 2000a: 68 ff).

¹⁴ He included a number of Estonian folk songs in his *Stimmen der Völker in Liedern*, first published in 1778/9 (cf. Gaier 1990).

¹⁵ The term 'Volk' for national community carried populist overtones, for in Herder's time 'Volk' was more connected with the common people.

¹⁶ Johann Heinrich Rosenplänter (1782-1846) launched the journal "Contribution to a more detailed knowledge of the Estonian language" (Germ. original "Beiträge zur genaueren Kenntnis der estnischen Sprache"), which was largely read by clergymen in the Baltic provinces. He demanded that all clerics, estate owners and bureaucrats speak correct Estonian.

¹⁷ A schism existed between the *Estophiles*, as one camp aimed at resurrecting the Estonian *Volksgeist* from prehistoric artefacts that existed prior to the invasion of the Danes and Teutonic Knights, while others, more pragmatic in outlook, saw it as their duty to raise the general level of education among Estonians.

¹⁸ Cf. Hutchinson 1987.

¹⁹ A number of scholars write of 'Estonians' of historical periods in which this people still lacked its own *ethnonym*. These are cases of historians reading history backwards or of national history writing.

²⁰ Many Estonian surnames were chosen by the German overlords, which can be seen as a form of humiliation as they were often chosen in an arbitrary fashion. By forbidding the indigenous population to choose traditional names that symbolise continuity with the past and embeddedness in the locality, it ultimately served the same function as Stalin's policy of population exchanges – namely, the severing of ties with regional identities and the local community.

²¹ Notably both Hroch and Jansen prefer the term 'patriot' (or patriotic agitation) to national movement or national leader.

²² Since the time of the cultural awakening the educational system was given great importance for the consolidation of the nation (cf. Laul 1985).

²³ The root word *eesti-* was introduced by the Estonian Friedrich Robert Faehlmann in the 1840s. Via his paper, Jannsen helped to further establish the wider use of the word *eesti-* and of the terms for an Estonian man or woman (*eestlane*, *eestlanna*).

²⁴ Jakobson and his followers called for radical political changes, whereas Jannsen and Hurt stood for a clerical-conservative position.

²⁵ On the significance of the oral tradition (and oral testimony), see Chapter Five.

²⁶ Ants Oras remarks that Kreutzwald never referred to the work as a national epic; rather, the subtitle was an ancient Estonian tale (Est., *üks ennenuistene Eesti jutt*) (Kalevipoeg 1982: 266). Yet in his 1857 preface Kreutzwald refers to Kalevipoeg as the national hero (Kalevipoeg 1982: 300).

²⁷ The name Kalev is first recorded also by al-Idrisi in 1154. Estonian folk tales designate Kalev as a giant of enormous powers, whereas in folk songs it is merely a respected family name (Kalevipoeg 1982: 277); but before Kreutzwald's endeavour less than half of this traditional material had previously been connected to the figure of Kalevipoeg. Ethnographic research of the 20th c. discredited the folkloristic authenticity of the Kalevipoeg, bringing it closer to mythical fiction instead (Kalevipoeg 1982: 284).

²⁸ As described earlier, at the time of the Estonian awakening, German was the everyday language of the local nobility that comprised the urban upper class (and the landed elite) and of the educated and was thus associated with high social prestige, while Estonian was spoken by the rural majority.

²⁹ Following Hurt's line of thought, Ado Grenzstein in his newspaper *Olevik* defined nation as a community united by common descent, race, language and home country, by similar physical and mental characteristics, and in most cases also by education and a common history (in Jansen 2000a: 65).

³⁰ In 1817 the romantic Friedrich Rückert wrote his Barbarossa poem: "He has taken down with him the glory of the Reich, but he shall once again return with her in his own time" (Germ. original "Er hat hinabgenommen des Reiches Herrlichkeit. Und wird einst wiederkommen mit ihr zu seiner Zeit") (Flacke 1998: 108).

³¹ The fact that 700 copies out of a total of 2,000 of the 2nd edition of 1862 were still unsold two years later indicates that the public's interest in the epic increased rather slowly.

³² Already in 1864 a 'petition movement' that campaigned for the use of the Estonian language in courts and public offices and the equality of social groups had been directed to Tsar Alexander II.

³³ Russification was a direct consequence of the unification of Germany in 1870/71, as the St. Petersburg government feared the Baltic Germans' strengthened sense of national belonging would reduce their loyalty to the Tsar. Between 1845-48 about 65,000 Estonians in northern Livland converted to Russian Orthodoxy, fuelled by rumours that the Tsar was offering free land to colonists (Raun 1987: 45). In the late 1880s Russification also included several attempts at persuading Estonians to convert from Protestantism to Russian Orthodoxy in an endeavour to unite all subjects of the Russian empire and to undermine the power of the Lutheran Church. (Raun 1987: 80; cf. Thaden 1981; Karjahärm 1998).

³⁴ As a matter of fact the epicentre of the 1905 revolution in the Baltic provinces was the Latvian countryside, where democratically elected executive committees replaced the peasant communes and exercised considerable power. Between December 1905 and May 1909, 700 – 900 Estonians and Latvians were sentenced to death and more than 8,000 imprisoned or exiled to Siberia, while in Lithuania 2,900 people were arrested; in this, even peasant floggings took place, but numbers vary considerably in this matter (Pistohlkors 1993: 192).

³⁵ In 1905 a national-minded group called 'Young Estonia' (*Noor Eesti*) was formed, which aimed to liberate Estonia from a narrow Russian or German influence and to open up to Western Europe instead (Piirimäe 1995: 75).

³⁶ Decree released on April 12, 1917 as part of the Bolshevik nationality policy that allowed nations to separate.

³⁷ During the German military occupation Estonian societies and newspapers were closed down; the activity of Estonian political parties was banned and the representatives of the Estonian provisional government imprisoned. The Estonian national military units were dispersed and the Bolshevik organisational network destroyed.

³⁸ Article XII of the *Compiègne* Armistice, 1918 (cf. Venner 1974; Rauch 1986: 60).

³⁹ Based on the fact that there was an Estonian Bolshevik movement with a national leadership, Soviet Estonian historiography referred to this period as a 'Civil War' (Est., *kodusõda*) or 'Class War' (Est., *klassisõda*), whereas non-Soviet historians viewed it as a War of liberation (Est., *vabadusõda*) (Raun 1987: 111; Brüggemann 2001: 812).

⁴⁰ President Päts had been hesitant to call on the Baltic Germans to volunteer in the protection of the 'joint homeland', as it was obvious that the Germans would not participate in the War of Independence out of mere altruism (Wrangell 1928: 6). Between 1914 – 17 approx. 100,000 Estonian men were conscripted into the imperial Russian army, and 10,000 killed. In May 1919 the Estonian Bolshevik units were dismissed from the Red Army as being no longer trustworthy.

⁴¹ In contrast to the *Baltenregiment* in Estonia, the *Landeswehr* was an independent unit under direct German command of Rüdiger v. Goltz.

⁴² On the symbolic significance of this victory, see section on formative historical events in Chapter Six.

⁴³ There are different forms of periodisation possible since the Estonian declaration of independence was declared February 24, 1918, but independent statehood was only accepted by Soviet Russia on February 2, 1920 (Tartu Peace Treaty).

⁴⁴ The derogatory soubriquet for a member of the EVL was *Vaps*. Their ideology consisted of a militant nationalism, anti-Marxism and anti-Semitism (Marandi 1991: 521, 548; Marandi: 1997: 225 – 237; Raun 2001: 116, Gurin-Loov 1996: 299). Due to the negative light that Päts shed on the EVL and because Hjalmar Mäe, a former leader of EVL, headed the Estonian self-administration during the Nazi German occupation, the Veterans movement is commonly regarded as the Estonian variety of European inter-war fascism (Nolte 1965: 12; Griffin 1995: 215-216 f). Similarly, Soviet historiography saw them as agents of 'German fascism' (Kasekamp 2000: 3). However, Kasekamp concludes that the EVL was not a genuine fascist movement; for instance, he writes that anti-Semitism was only a marginal concern for them (Kasekamp 1993: 267). Whereas Myllyniemi writes about the EVL's good relations with the national socialist movement among the Baltic Germans in Estonia (Myllyniemi 1973: 30), others describe how the leaders of the EVL vehemently distanced themselves from the Baltic Germans and Nazi Germany (Marandi 1991: 539 f; Kasekamp 2000: 75 f).

⁴⁵ The EVL had a broadly based support that cross-cut all class lines, unlike the political parties that could not bridge class, urban and rural differences (Kasekamp 1999: 596).

⁴⁶ This and Päts' subsequent authoritarian rule highlight that inter-war Estonia was (still) a highly paternalistic society.

⁴⁷ Most importantly, with the amendment the Estonian president could dismiss and appoint his cabinet and had veto powers over the legislature. He could dissolve the state assembly and call for new elections any time. In the state of emergency he could pass laws by decree (Raun 2001:117 f).

⁴⁸ The national unity did not last very long. In November 1936 Jaan Tõnnisson (Päts' long term antagonist) among others addressed a memorandum to Päts demanding that he end martial law and return to civil rights and democratic traditions (Raun 2001: 120). The opposition to this authoritarianism was called 'the Spirit of Tartu' (Est., *Tartu vaim*) (Pajur 2001: 173).

⁴⁹ Other *post facto* justifications were the 'return to order', the 'renewal of the nation', 're-education' and 'healing' of the Estonian state body from a mass psychosis or rabies (Pajur 2001: 172). Part of the renewal was the promotion of national costumes, customs and songs, the 'Estonisation' of names, and a newly written national history (Pajur 2001: 183 f).

⁵⁰ At that time the EVL numbered about 60,000 members (Marandi 1991: 546). After they had been accused of an alleged coup in 1935, Päts finally broke the EVL's backbone (Pajur 2001: 170 f).

⁵¹ In support of his regime, Päts created the 'Estonian Fatherland League' (Est., *Isamaaliit*) as the sole state party and members of the so-called 'National Front' were about the only candidates running in the elections (Raun 2001: 122;

Kasekamp 1999: 598). The political elite of post-Soviet Estonia chose - in the process of national restoration - to use names from the Päts era, such as the *Isamaa* party or the National Front (Est., *Rahvarinne*) (cf. Pettai 1993).

⁵² Cf. Myllyniemi 1979; Haffner 1994; Davies 1997: 996 – 1003; Mendeloff 2002; Lipinsky 2000.

⁵³ In the course of the Polish September Campaign of 1939, the Polish submarine *Orzeł* was in Baltic Sea coastal waters; looking for shelter for their sick captain, they chose the neutral seaport of Tallinn on September 14. However, the Germans insisted that the Estonians detain the Polish crew members, who managed to escape some 4 days later.

⁵⁴ By the second half of September the Red Army had stationed some 160,000 troops on the Estonian border.

⁵⁵ On October 18, 1939 the first repatriation ship left the harbour of Tallinn. In 1939, 13,000 Germans left Estonia and 50,000 Latvia. During the last wave in January 1941 another 66,000 individuals of German origin left the three Baltic States, among them many Estonians and Latvians (Myllyniemi 1973: 45; Loeber 1972; Kangeris 2001; J. Kivimäe 1995). The *Warthegau* was the largest administrative district of the Reich (Gutman 1990: 1633 f).

⁵⁶ The election procedure was humiliating in that it was guarded by the Red Army (Oras 1948). Officially a total of 84.6% participated in the election and 92.9% voted for the communist candidates (Myllyniemi 1979: 135).

⁵⁷ In the Soviet lingua, the deportations were referred to as “administrative exile”.

⁵⁸ Today a plaque attached at the side wall of the Estonian parliament building, commemorates all those MPs that were arrested and deported during the first Soviet year.

⁵⁹ A day after the signing of the MRP, the NKWD issued the request to purge (the Baltic States) of all anti-revolutionary and anti-Soviet elements. This affected leading members of anti-revolutionary organisations, members of the police, prison officials, higher state officials, land owners and industrialists (in connection with expropriations), offices of the former armed forces, members of the tsarist *Ochrana*, Russian emigrants and Whites, clergymen, diplomats, emigrants, foreign nationals etc. – all together with their families (Myllyniemi 1979: 143). With 19,000, Raun gives a much higher number (Raun 1987: 154; cf. Pohl 2000; Krepp 1981; Kott & Strods 2002). In June deportation both bishops and clergymen of the Lutheran and Orthodox Church were deported and many others joined the flight to the West in 1944 (Raun: 1987:156, 168). After 1944 all religious literature was banned and the Theological Institute in Tartu closed; however, the number of Lutheran clergy remained stable, about 70 – 80 (Raun 1987: 188, 218 – 219).

⁶⁰ Counting the arrests prior to that Gurin-Loov gives the number as 600 Estonian Jews deported to Siberia (Gurin-Loov 1996: 301). The reasons given for the arrests were manifold, such as membership in a Zionist organisation or ‘exploitation of hired labour’. 95 Estonian Jews died in camps or exile (Salo 2002: 3 f; Öispuu 2001 a). In July and August 1940 all Jewish institutions and Zionist organisations were shut down by the Soviets and Jewish factories and businesses were nationalised.

⁶¹ On the official level the Estonian government remained neutral in the Finno-Russian Winter War, but some hundred Estonian volunteers came to support the Finnish army. On the other side, Soviet planes flew bomb raids from bases in Estonia (Myllyniemi 1979: 36, 90-97; Davies 1997: 1003). This is certainly a soft spot in the Estonian collective memory, since Finnish troops had supported Estonia in the war of independence.

⁶² By 1942 20,000 Estonians fought in the national units of the Red Army and participated as the 8th Estonian Rifle Corps in the Red Army’s conquest of Estonia from the winter of 1944 onwards (Raun 2001: 160).

⁶³ The term ‘Summer War’ is reminiscent of the ‘Finnish Winter War’ as it is the Estonia *pan don* of resistance against the Soviets; e.g. it was a source of pride that they liberated Tartu from the Soviet army *before* the arrival of the Germans. Cf. Laar 1992; on partisans, see also: Ch VI.

⁶⁴ The Reichskommissariat Ostland included the Baltic States and Belarus.

⁶⁵ On the *Landesdienst* of the Hitler Youth organisation (Germ. abbr. HJ), see Bundesarchiv NS 26, Bd. 358, p. 179. In the spring of 1941 Rosenberg felt that the Estonians had already reached 50 % Germanisation through Danish, Swedish and German influence, and were thus the most Germanic of the three Baltic peoples (Raun 2001: 161). In 1942, Himmler categorised the Baltic people as being “of the same kind, but not of the same blood” (Germ. original “*artverwandte, nichtstammesgleichen Blutes*”), while stating the possibility of ‘Germanising’ them (Germ. original “*einheitschungsfähige Menschen*”), i.e. aiming at their denationalisation (in: Abschrift im Bundesarchiv R 43 II, Bd. 721a). A special “anthropological commission” was set in Berlin up for this purpose (cf. Leibbrandt 1942).

⁶⁶ In May 1941 Mäe and others founded the ‘Estonian liberation committee’ (Est., *Eesti Vabastamise Komitee*) that called for the help of Germany (Myllyniemi 1973: 107 ff; Myllyniemi: 1979: 152; Kangeris 1994: 182). Mäe, the Estonian ‘quisling’ and former leader of the EVL, offered his co-operation to the German authorities in 1941, indicating his acquiescence to a partial German colonisation of Estonia, and that under his tutelage Estonians would accept close ties with Germany (Raun 2001: 162). Three out of the five Estonians in the directorate of the civil administration had left Estonia as part of the resettlement of Baltic Germans, only to return as German citizens (Kasekamp 2000: 134 – 138).

⁶⁷ In most of the literature I came across some confusion of terms; this is due to the fact that under German occupation parallel structures existed, of the German Security Police (Germ., *Sicherheitspolizei*, abbr. *Sipo*) and German security service (Germ., *Sicherheitsdienst*, abbr. *SD*) in Estonia and the Estonian branch, which was in effect under German ‘supervision’ (Myllyniemi 1973: 117).

⁶⁸ The commanding officer of the mobile killing unit A (of the *Sipo* and the *SD*) was Walter Stahlecker (BdS). The mobile killing unit A was attached to the army Group North (Germ. abbr. *HGr Nord*) and consisted of 1,000 men, who operated in East Prussia, the Baltic States, and all the way to Leningrad. A total of four SS-mobile killing units were established before the invasion of the Soviet Union to operate in the rear of the fighting forces. They were composed of German SS and police personnel under the command of *Sipo* and *SD* officers. These mobile killing units were commonly assisted by large forces of German police battalions and local auxiliary police battalions.

⁶⁹ Although the first Jews settled in Estonia in the 14th c., Estonia did not belong to the designated Pale of settlement, it was not until the 19th c. that Tsar Alexander II allowed the so-called ‘Nicholas Soldiers’ and their descendants (e.g. ‘cantonists’, merchants, artisans and those of higher education) to settle in Estonia. The first two congregations were formed in Tallinn (1830) and Tartu (1866). In 1934 4,434 Estonian Jews were counted (0.4% of the total population) (Raun 2001: 165); in that same year a Chair of Judaica was established at the University of Tartu; also a number of Jewish secondary schools and a

gymnasium existed. Overall 11% of the Jewish population had received a higher education. Estonian Jews enjoyed the law of cultural autonomy from 1926 – 40. In the 1930s, Gurin-Loov describes some anti-Semitic currents. At that time the Estonian Jewry saw a strong Zionist movement as well as a growing communist movement after the late 1930s (Gurin-Loov 1996: 298 f; Gurin-Loov 1994; Lane 1995; Dohrn 1994).

⁷⁰ Cf. Dean 2003. An organisation for the rescue of Estonian Jews did not exist, and only 3 – 5 Estonian Jews survived the German occupation. Rescue attempts were limited to Estonians petitioning for the release of their Jewish friends and colleagues from prison, in which they stressed that these people were not Communists and were loyal to the state (Gurin-Loov 1994: 225, 231 f; Gurin-Loov 1996: 305 f).

⁷¹ In the Nazi conception of races the Russians were to be treated as 'sub-humans' (Germ., *Untermenschen*). However, in August 1941 an attempt by OK to deport the Russian population of the coastal villages of the Peipus Lake (around 40,000, 64 % of total population of the region) was thwarted by the German authorities (Weiss-Wendt 2003).

⁷² There are slightly different numbers given for the total number of Estonian Jews killed in Estonia: *The Encyclopaedia of the Holocaust* gives the number as 1,500 – 2,000 (Gutman 1990: 448 – 450); Raun gives 1,000 - 2,000 (Raun 2001: 165). With the advance of the Red Army some camps were 'evacuated' via the Baltic coast to Stutthof, while others were liquidated, such as Klooga and Lagedi, where about 3,100 inmates were killed on September 18-19, 1944 (Gurin-Loov 1996: 304; White 1999; Kruus 1962; Birn 2001; Lundin 2000).

⁷³ *Ereignismeldung* der UdSSR (des Chefs der Sipo und des SD), Nr. 155, 14.01.1942, Bundesarchiv Berlin, R-58/220.

⁷⁴ More precisely: 2,052 Jews from Theresienstadt, Frankfurt and Berlin in early fall 1942 and about 10,000 Jews from Vilnius, Kaunas, Kaiserwald between August and October 1943.

⁷⁵ Already during the Soviet period a memorial was erected for Jews and non-Jews who had been executed in Kuresaare (Saaremaa); also, memorial stones could be found on Jewish cemeteries in Estonia. On September 1, 1994 a memorial for all Jews who perished in Estonia was erected at the Klooga site (Gurin-Loov 1994: 227, 234). Today, the number of Jews in Estonia is approximately 3,000, of which 1,000 are Estonian Jews who are also Estonian citizens and 2,000 are Soviet or so-called 'Union Jews' that settled in Estonia after the Second World War. There was no revival of Jewish culture in the ESSR; however, since anti-Semitism was stronger in Moscow and Leningrad, Jewish intellectuals came to work at the Baltic universities. In 1988 the Jewish Cultural Society was re-established in Tallinn (Gurin-Loov 1996). For a discussion of the memory of the Holocaust in Estonia, see Chapter Seven.

⁷⁶ In the fall of 1941 the auxiliary police (OK) mentioned earlier was reorganized in two types of units: stationary OK based in each of the 15 Estonian provinces and the police battalions that were deployed outside of Estonia (namely in Russia and Belarus). It is precisely these Police battalions that are also known as *Schuma* or *Schutzmanschaften*. Many members of OK later fed into the SS units; see section 1.4. in Chapter Seven.

⁷⁷ There was great disillusionment among Estonians when the Germans did not return the property seized by the Soviets, and rather controlled the Estonian economy (exploitation of resources) instead. For many leading Estonian political figures it was clear in 1941 that the Germans did not plan to restore an independent Estonian State or the national army (Myllyniemi 1973: 85f, 114, 134 –144). For many leading Estonian political figures it was clear in 1941 that the Germans did not plan to restore an independent Estonian State or the national army (Myllyniemi 1973: 85f, 114, 134 –144). One could argue that the memory of the Baltic German elites who did not support an independent Estonian Republic before 1920 should have prevented Estonians from believing that Nazi Germany would facilitate the restoration of an Estonian State.

⁷⁸ Legally, military mobilisation was conditioned upon the independence of the state in question to guarantee the voluntary nature. Another of such attempts to occlude the involuntary nature of the German occupation was the fact that Germans devised the name "Estonian Legion", implying the auxiliary or voluntary nature of that organisation.

⁷⁹ By 1943 about 30,000 Estonians and Russians did their *Arbeitsdienst* in Nazi Germany. One Estonian interviewee, born in 1925, related that many Estonian young men fought in the army rather than leave home to work in Germany; and that eventually it was clear that they would have to fight anyway (Iivo, interview, Uppsala, 17.07.02).

⁸⁰ The 1943 mobilisation resulted in the recruitment of 5,300 men into the Estonian Legion and 6,800 into the German Wehrmacht as support service (Myllyniemi 1973: 233). In the autumn of 1943 a verbal promise of Estonian independence was made by Himmler to Mäe, for which he demanded an additional 6,000 Estonians for the SS Legion as SS *Einsatzkommando*; 3375 were recruited, but autonomy remained an empty promise (Kasekamp 2000: 138; Myllyniemi 1973: 247, 253).

⁸¹ As numbers are politics, they seriously vary in this point. Raun gives the number as 6,000 people who were killed in Estonia by the Nazi Regime, and lists Jews, Communists and alleged Communists (Raun 2001: 165), while not mentioning the 15,000 POW and 800 Gypsies that perished in Estonia.

⁸² For a detailed picture of the Soviet period of Estonia, see Misiunas & Taagepera (1993), Taagepera (1993), and the more general work of Gordon B. Smith 1992.

⁸³ Those Estonians who had served in the German army and did not manage to escape the country in 1944 and members of the OK constituted the main bulk of the anti-Soviet partisan movement, the so-called Brotherhood of the Forest. Consecutive mobilisations by the Soviets in the fall of 1944 and in spring 1945 had brought more Estonians to the guerrilla movement. Equipped with abandoned German arms and captured Soviet munitions, they stayed in the Estonian forests until the mid - '50s. They suffered a fatal blow from collectivisation, so that the later phase of resistance, 1949-56, was largely passive and characterised by the hope for allied intervention (cf. Laar 1992); see Chapter Six.

⁸⁴ Cf. Kallas 2002.

⁸⁵ Cf. Feest 2000.

⁸⁶ Before 1945 the ECP consisted overwhelmingly of ethnic Estonians. By 1946 the 'Estonian share' had been reduced to 48.1% due to the influx of so-called 'Russified' Estonians or Russians into the party (e.g. Veterans from the Estonian Rifle Corps) (Raun 1987: 170 ff); on the so-called Russified Estonians, see Chapter Six.

⁸⁷ Many Estonians experienced Sovietisation as Russification and equated Russians with Soviets (cf. Kallas 2002).

⁸⁸ Estonian dissidents had formed the 'Estonian Popular Movement' in 1970 and the 'Estonian Democratic Movement' in 1972. In 1979 four dissidents signed the Baltic Charter; on dissidents in Soviet Estonia, see Chapter Six.

⁸⁹ See Chapter Six.

⁹⁰ See Chapter Six.

⁹¹ On the moral dimension of history, see Chapter Seven. On the MRP, see Mendeloff 1999, 2002.

⁹² The first "calendar demonstrations" took place in Latvia (Dreifelds 1996: 20).

⁹³ Cf. Kenéz 1990.

⁹⁴ In September 1988 the founding congress of the People's Front also took place on the Singers' field (Gerner & Hedlund, 1993: 80 f).

⁹⁵ Karl Vaino's (born 1923) tenure as leader of the Estonian SSR was that of a man regarded by Estonians as Moscow's man in Estonia. He had asked Moscow for military support in June 1988 in response to the popular movement

⁹⁶ The term 'Singing Revolution' suggests that this revolution was of a peaceful nature, while linking it to the Estonian struggle for cultural self-assertion and the long-standing song festival tradition that originated in the first awakening period (cf. Zubiaga & Ibarra & Barcena 1995; Johnston 1992b: 95 –103).

Chapter Four:

Estonian National identity and the Changing Nature of Estonian Nationalism

0. Introduction

At the world exhibition in Hanover - the *EXPO 2000* - the self-concept promulgated in the Estonian pavilion was connected to the Estonian countryside, agrarian produce, animal wildlife, and folklore; but are these still the prevailing markers of modern Estonian national identity? In this Chapter I point to the bases of Estonian identity, such as language, folklore and songs, the territory, and the influence of the German and Russian 'other' in the process of Estonian identity formation.

In the previous Chapter I enquired into the changing nature and role of Estonian nationalism, with a particular focus on the first awakening of the 1860s and the path to renewed independence taken in the late 1980s. This Chapter takes an analytical angle on Estonian history in that it further explores the various social, political, and cultural aspects of Estonian national identity and Estonian nationalism. In this way Chapter Four is a direct continuation of the previous Chapter.

1. On Estonian national identity

In my thesis I am concerned with the subjective beliefs in and different interpretations of Estonian national identity, rather than to establish whether the Estonians possess a ‘navel’ or not. In other words, I am not exploring *when* exactly the Estonians became a self-aware ethnic group, or *when* their self-conception as Estonians took root. Precisely this question has been discussed by Ernest Gellner and Anthony D. Smith in the prominent ‘Warwick debate’ in 1995, where Gellner argued that Estonians did not possess a ‘navel’, as they lacked any ethnic self-consciousness at the beginning of the 19th c. To him, Estonians created nationalism *ex nihilo* in the course of the 19th c. and constitute an example of the successful creation of a vibrant national culture in the modernist process (Gellner 1996: 369).

Smith on the other hand points to the ambivalence in Gellner’s modernist claim, since the latter states that nationalism makes use of the past (Smith 1996: 375). Smith argues that Estonians do have a ‘navel’ in that they had an ethno-cultural identity *before* the dawn of modernity and the age of nationalism. The Estonians as people existed with an identity separate from the ruling class. They lived on a more or less clearly confined territory with a rich folklore and distinctive vernacular, all available for later ‘political use’ by Estonian national leaders from the 1860s onwards. Following Smith’s definition, Estonians did not possess a national identity until the late 19th c. (or even not until 1918), as national identity involves “some sense of political community based on common institutions and a single code of rights and duties for all the members of the community” (Smith 1991: 9). Similarly, Jansen, an Estonian historian who has specialised in the period of the Estonian awakening, holds that the roots of the *modern* Estonian nation and the striving for self-determination began in the 19th c. (Jansen 2000a: 77).

The time of the Estonian awakening has been illustrated in detail in the preceding Chapter, where I reverted to Hroch’s tripartite model of the formation of small nations. Smith’s theoretical analysis of popular mobilisation is also applicable to the Estonian awakening of the 1860s. In his terms we can speak of a ‘vernacular mobilisation’ of the Estonian peasantry by a small circle of educator-intellectuals, through popular appeal to the *ethnie*’s vernacular culture, language, customs, and traditions (A. D. Smith 1991: 61 - 68; A. D. Smith 1998: 193 f).¹

Estonian identity is strongly anchored in the countryside, as the majority of Estonians had been peasants until the early 20th c.; also throughout the alternation of foreign rulers, Estonians maintained their relation to the land, as the territory is what remained to be of continued existence to them.

Anthony Smith holds that the homeland, as an ancestral land of saints and sages and historic battles, constitutes a repository of historic memories, and as a source of collective identity aids national reassertion in times of foreign domination (A. D. Smith 1997: 11 – 18; A. D. Smith 1991: 9). Similarly, Halbwachs pointed out that landscape functions as a *lieux de mémoire*, providing a group with a spatial framework in which it can locate and then recall or recollect memories of the past. All this is based on the notion that memories of a shared past - as symbolised and crystallised in certain landmarks - form an integral part of ethnic or national identity. In this vein, Unwin points to Estonian pagan or shamanistic traditions that survived Christianisation, and that in this sense Estonia is still a country of sacred sites and spirits (Unwin 1999: 168 f).² Jansen writes that during the Estonian awakening the landscape was linked to the history of the community and became a symbolic witness of the suffering of Estonians, with churches, castles and ruins figuring as symbols of aggression (of the foreign rulers). Part of the message of the national campaigning in the late 19th c. was that Estonian peasants should cultivate the land for the well-being of the nation and no longer for the German landlords (Jansen 2000a: 64). Finally, it appears that the term 'awakening' itself is a metaphor taken from nature.³

In inter-war Estonia president Päts promoted traditional values connected to a romantic notion of the countryside, the farmstead, and the territorially bound peasant (Est., *asunik*). The "invention of tradition" is exemplified in the Estonian Song Festivals, which from 1934 onwards were performed by choirs in traditional peasant dress; previously, it was common practice that people turned up in their best clothes (Lieven 1994: 112 f).⁴

Applied to the situation of Estonian-Russian inter-ethnic relations, we see that institutions of Soviet power were concentrated in the capital of Tallinn. The Russian-speaking community consisting by and large of uprooted migrants, who made up half of Tallinn's population, and formed the overwhelming majority in Estonia's north-eastern industrial centres of Sillamäe and Narva; by contrast, the countryside was composed mainly of culturally rooted Estonians. The love of the countryside and the desire for its preservation were expressed in the very first Estonian mass-protests in February 1987, against the planned increase of phosphate mining (Est., *Eesti Fosforiit*) and oil shale extraction in the country's

north-east; the latter had been disastrous for the environment and people's health, and typified the old Soviet pattern of colonial style exploitation of natural resources. This green activism possessed ethnic overtones, as an increase in phosphate mining meant the further influx of a Russian-speaking workforce.⁵ Also illustrating this close connection to the countryside is the fact that most Estonian families have a summerhouse with a piece of land, which provided them with low-cost food supplies in times of socio-economic 'transition'.

The Song festivals

There is a common saying that "when an Estonian boy meets an Estonian girl they will set up two choirs"; a men's and a women's choir, as every tenth Estonian sings in one.⁶ Since 1869 the song- and dance festival (Est., *laulu ja tantsupidu*) has taken place every fifth year, just outside Tallinn. The founders' intent was to use an interactive performance to forge a sense of solidarity and national consciousness among the participating masses. The figures in the 20th c. have approximately 25,000 singers in the choir and 100,000 to 300,000 people in the audience, so that a third of the nation is congregating. As Estonia is one of the smallest nations, the idea of a "super-family" becomes almost palpable (A. D. Smith 1992).

It all culminates when the audience and choir jointly sing the final song 'My Fatherland is My Love' (Est., "*minu isamaa on minu arm*"), which was written by Lydia Kõidula, and which all Estonians regard as the second national hymn after the official hymn, 'My fatherland is my fortune and happiness' (Est., "*minu isamaa mu õnn ja room*").⁷ Although party leaders had forbidden the singing of Kõidula's lines in 1969, in an act of defiance the then 200,000 people sang it anyway - except for the conductor (Odehnal 2004).

The role of language

"Sprache ist mehr als Blut"
- Franz Rosenzweig⁸

Towards the middle of the first millennium the Estonian language was already splitting into the north and south Estonian dialect (Raun 1987: 8 ff). As outlined earlier, the emergence of Christianity and particularly the Reformation were coupled with the formation of a standard written language. One of the first Estonian-language books, a fragment of the Lutheran

catechism, was published by Simon Wanradt & Johann Koell in Wittenberg in 1535. With this the standardisation of Estonian had begun.⁹

As discussed in the previous Chapter, national activists became increasingly concerned with the Estonian language; in the 1850s it was still a language of peasants and not yet used as the medium of higher education. Around 1900 Estonian standard language-building had assumed the character of a collective undertaking, as could be seen in four linguistic conferences organised between 1908 and 1911 by the two leading Estonian societies, in Tallinn and Tartu (Raag 1999a; 1999b; 1990). The Estonian language became a central symbol of Estonian nationalism in the 19th c. and after 1918 also of Estonian statehood. Estonian standard language-building took place in the crossfire of German and Russian cultural and linguistic influences. Consequently, an Estonian push for cultural autonomy or political independence and the consolidation of independent statehood were often coupled with a longing for a 'purism' of the Estonian language; such was the case in the 1930s, when the language was systematically 'cleansed' of foreign loanwords (Raag 1999b: 28, 33).¹⁰

The fact that Estonians have exhibited a distinctive oral tradition of folklore and songs over the centuries parallel to the forging of a high culture out of existing Estonian dialects - which was at least initially a Baltic German project – leads me to discuss the ways in which spoken Estonian functioned as a (secret) code during times of military occupation.¹¹ As the Estonian identity is largely language-based, the language legislation constituted a fiercely debated topic in the atmosphere of a nationalising state.¹²

Estonian literature

As I base my thesis on the evidence found in life story interviews with historians in Estonia, I do not explore the role of literature as a bearer of counter-memories during times of foreign rule to any great extent. However, the body of literature produced by Estonian writers in exile and the novels from the time of the *inter-bellum* period constitute a compelling *lieux de mèmoire*, and their analysis would shed further light on the cultural memory of Estonians; another is of course fine art.¹³ It can be argued that in times of Soviet rule, when Estonian history was highly politicised, Estonian fiction was considered to hold more truth than the Soviet Estonian history textbooks or the official political propaganda.¹⁴ One example for this is Lennart Meri's *Silver-White* (Est., *Hõbevalge*) from 1976, a historical, ethnographic, geographic and literary reconstruction of prehistoric Estonia. Also, Estonian authors, among them Lennart Meri, Jaan Kross, Jaan Kaplinks, and Hando Runnel to name perhaps the most prominent ones, played an important role during the second national awakening.¹⁵

Merit Ilja remarks that Estonian fiction in the years 1988 – 91 “shows a marked tendency to return to the past, one of the aims stated was to retell and reconstruct history.” She describes how the Forest Brethren, the mass deportation of 1949, the situation of the returnees from Siberian labour camps in the mid-‘50s, the conditions of Soviet life, and the moral choices that people had to face belonged to the first topics to be tackled in Estonian fiction during that time. According to Ilja, the fiction of the 1990s has been “largely self-centred and extremely nationalistic, speaking of the self, the home country, family and friends” (Ilja 1994: 31, 34).

*The east-west border is always wandering,
sometimes eastward, sometimes west,
and we do not know exactly where it is just now:
in Gaugamela, in the Urals, or maybe in ourselves,
so that one ear, one eye, one nostril, one hand, one foot,
one lung and one testicle or one ovary
is on the one, another on the other side. Only the heart,
only the heart is always on one side:
if we are looking northward, in the West;
if we are looking southward, in the East;
and the mouth doesn't know on behalf of which or both it has to speak.*

- Jaan Kaplinks (1987: 9)

2. A small nation between *Slavonia* and *Teutonia*: Estonians, Germans, and Russians

One of the most significant historical facts about Estonia is the alternation of foreign rulers for over 700 years. This was due to the fact that the north-eastern Baltic region was a political interest zone for many of its neighbours, be it the Swedes, the Danes, the ancestors of the Latvians, the Poles or the Lithuanians. Hence, historically the Baltic region constitutes a ‘shatter zone’ (Armstrong 1982), where the parallel existence of different *ethnies* and national groups has been characteristic and where Estonian ethnic identity has been repeatedly contested. Only in more modern times did the north-eastern Baltic region crystallise as a focal point of political tension in the power struggle between the German and Russian empires; consequently, the fate of Estonia depended largely on the outcome of the competitive relation between these two powers. In order to achieve independent statehood the Estonians had to get rid of a ruling elite that was in each case ethnically different; a feature that makes it indispensable to investigate the role of the German and the Russian as ‘other’ in the process of Estonian national self-assertion (*ex negativo* definition).

What impact did the Germans and Russians have on the process of the Estonian awakening and the national liberation movement that culminated in the emergence of the Estonian

Republic in 1918?¹⁶ The periods of German and Russian rule are invariably painted as those of ‘occupation’, threatening the formation of Estonian national identity and statehood. Yet why did the Estonians succeed in mobilising support for independence following the 1917 Revolution, when so many other nations of the Russian empire failed to do so? Might their success suggest that German and Russian rule in fact provided a framework conducive to the development of national identity?¹⁷ I elucidate how the ‘other’ is portrayed by the Estonians: were Germans and Russians seen as ‘awakeners’, ‘modernisers’, ‘liberators’, ‘foreign occupiers’ or ‘colonial oppressors’? For the period preceding the first Estonian Republic this is explored in relation to the Baltic Germans, whereas in the second movement for independence, beginning sometime in the 1980s, the relation with the Soviet or Russian ‘other’ is explored.¹⁸

2.1. *The German ‘other’*

Germans as ‘awakeners’ of the national culture

As the German ‘other’ brought feudalism and serfdom to Estonia, he is portrayed as a ‘coloniser’. Yet he might also be considered an ‘awakener’, as the aforementioned *Estophiles* among the Baltic Germans helped to forge an Estonian ‘high culture’ by forming the modern Estonian language out of the regional vernaculars (Jansen 2000a: 62) - an involvement that left its imprint through thousands of German loanwords, which still exist in modern Estonian.

The initial belief in a mission to bring Christianity to the Baltics (once held by the Sword Brethren) was supplanted by the Germans, who regarded themselves as a ‘vehicle of culture and civilisation’ (Germ., *Kulturträger*).¹⁹ Intrinsic to this spirit of colonialism was the underlying assumption of being at a higher evolutionary stage with regard to culture, which in turn served to legitimise the powerful position of Baltic Germans in the region.²⁰ Nevertheless, Germans did not attempt the forced cultural assimilation (or ‘Germanisation’) of Estonians and Latvians (as was the case for Russification); quite the opposite is true as Baltic Germans were adamant about maintaining the German language as a boundary marker between ‘master and servant’. As elsewhere in Eastern Europe at the time, language functioned as a social marker, and in Estonia, social mobility involved the command of German; hence those Estonians who managed to climb out of servitude into the ranks of artisans or professionals ran the risk of abandoning their mother tongue (Kirby, 1995: 54). Moreover, upwardly mobile Estonians who had a command of German were dismissed as

‘wannabe Germans’ (Est., *kadakas saksa*, direct transl. ‘juniper German’), which reflects the overall attitude of haughtiness displayed by the local Baltic German nobility and clergy vis-à-vis Estonians, and the impossibility of breaking the exclusive ring of German cultural prestige.²¹ It moreover demonstrates how the relation to the German ‘other’, particularly in the field of culture, was that of a love-hate relationship, resulting in identity splits and feelings of inferiority on the side of the Estonians.

The majority of *Estophiles* viewed the Estonian process of self-assertion as a predominantly cultural awakening, driven primarily by the ‘idea of education’ (Germ., *Bildung*);²² they opposed a politicised version of Estonian nationalism, which might turn into a threat to their domination. Hence, they propagated Herder’s thoughts, but not Kant’s ideas of the autonomous will as the good will, or Fichte’s contention about the political self-determination of cultural units.

Confronted with the peasant emancipation and the effects of increased industrialisation, the Baltic German landed elite utilised regional dominance to impede the modernisation processes of the agrarian system, as they wanted to preserve the old hierarchy.²³ Consequently, the former cannot be regarded as ‘modernisers’, neither in socio-economic nor in political terms. It can be ascertained that the persistent ‘colonial attitude’ that characterised the actions of the Baltic Germans until 1918 was coupled with a paternalistic notion inherent in the historical role of a feudal master, pastor, teacher or physician.

Baltic Germans: threat or midwife to the Estonian Republic?

In the historical developments leading up to the establishment of the first Estonian Republic previously delineated, the awkward role of the Baltic Germans became apparent. Here, the Baltic Germans promulgated the myth of serving as a ‘midwife’ to the first Estonian Republic, as they helped to draft the Estonian constitution, and volunteered to protect the ‘common fatherland’ (Germ., *Heimat*) against the ‘Bolshevik threat’. However, the German occupation during WWI irreversibly discredited this claim in the eyes of Estonians, as substantiated in G. E. Luiga’s statement: “What they [the Germans] have done in the course of 700 years we can forget, but what they now have done in the last seven months, to forget this is impossible” ([transl. from Germ.] Luiga in Brüggemann 1997: 17).²⁴ Estonians came to view all Baltic Germans as a ‘fifth column’ and a threat to the newly established Republic. Thus, the first step taken by the new Estonian government was the radical expropriation of the Baltic German elite, which reflected the rigorous determination of the new Estonian State to break the power base of the old ruling class (Vasara 1995: 480). Secondly, through the Law of

Cultural Autonomy (1925), the power and influence of the former Baltic German elite was strictly confined to the less threatening realm of culture. While a first wave of Germans had left Estonia after 1918, the so-called 'repatriation' of the Baltic Germans in October 1939 to the *Warthegau*, which was initiated by the Nazi government, put an end to their presence in the region. Moreover, the German occupation (1941 – 44) impacted upon the Estonian portrayal of the Germans, especially after it became obvious that Nazi Germany did not support an independent Estonia either.²⁵

To this day the 'Baltic German heritage' in Estonia is reflected in the administration and education system. The oldest Estonian student organisation (Est., *Eesti Üliõpilaste Seltsi*, abbr. *EÜS*), founded in 1870, used the German language until 1918; and as mentioned before, the Estonian language holds countless German loanwords.²⁶ Similarly, the architecture of Estonian towns shows German and Hanseatic traces. However, this inheritance is no longer present in the day-to-day historical consciousness of Estonians. After 1991 references were made to the historical German heritage in the course of Estonia's westward orientation (viz.- European Union), but these were of 'emblematic' character.²⁷

In sum, due to the 'Janus-faced' role assumed by the Baltic Germans in Estonia - as bringing about both serfdom *and* a standardised high culture - their contribution to the Estonian awakening has been (deliberately) 'forgotten' by Estonians. In place of the German 'other', the Russophone community (and neighbouring Russia) appears to be of a far greater significance for the formation of an Estonian identity after WW II.

2.2. *The Russian 'other'*

Russians as 'modernisers' and 'liberators'

The fact that the Estonians did not demand their sovereign statehood before 1918, but instead envisioned an autonomous Estonian province, indicates that pro-Russian currents had existed among Estonians. This is primarily due to the peasant emancipation, in which tsarist Russia assumed the role of a 'moderniser' and helped to transform Estonia from an exclusively agrarian society into one with growing economic power and an emergent middle class. With the enforced Russification of the 1890s, Tsar Alexander III aimed at weakening the Baltic German elite by encouraging the upward social mobility of Estonians. In this way Russification provided Estonians with the opportunity to take up professional and administrative positions.

A second reason for the pro-Russian attitude is to be found on the political level, as Estonians used the parliament in St. Petersburg as a platform for political debates in the 19th and early 20th cs. In October 1905 the Tsar's *manifesto* granted new civil rights, such as freedom of speech and assembly, and permitted the creation of political parties 'faithful' to the new regime. In response, Jan Tõnisson established the first legal party in Estonia (the Estonian National Progressive Party).²⁸ Hence, Russification helped to 'unshackle' the Estonians from the tight grip of the Baltic German *Ritterschaften*. For the 20th c. however, the myth of Soviet Russians as 'liberators' can be divulged to be propaganda.

Sovietisation: Russians as exploiters

The Soviet system was experienced as exploitation, although it was meant to modernise the supposed 'Estonian backwardness' (Gerner & Hedlund 1993: 60 f; Bollerup & Christensen 1997: 66).

For many Estonians 'Sovietisation' amounted to cultural colonisation and deprivation, phasing (Germ., *Gleichschaltung*) of all societal spheres, and repression through the military apparatus and KGB. It also meant command economy, rapid urbanisation, and shock industrialisation, which included the exploitation of natural resources and the destruction of the eco-system;²⁹ its side-product was the mass-influx of Russian-speaking immigrants to work in the heavy industries.³⁰ For the countryside, Sovietisation pushed for the collectivisation of farms (so-called *de-kulakisation*), causing the loss of property and - particularly in the early years - impoverishment.³¹ In the Estonian SSR a cultural division of labour existed, inasmuch as the Russian-speaking community mainly worked in the industrial sector whereas the Estonians were employed in light industry, agriculture, or white collar jobs (Bollerup & Christensen 1997: 71).³²

With the experiences of the first Soviet occupation (i.e. the arrests and deportations), Estonians came to view Soviet aggression as synonymous with "Russian aggression"; while the Russian-speakers came to represent the repressive Soviet regime after 1941; an identification with long-standing implications on policy-making in Estonia to this day.³³

A superior attitude of the 'elder brother'

Kolstø states that the majority of Russians had been indoctrinated to believe that they had the moral and historical right to control and *Russify* the whole of the Soviet Union (Kolstø 1995: 16). When an Estonian addressed a local Russian in Estonian, he oftentimes received the

answer “speak a human language”, i.e. speak Russian. The reply this provoked (on the Estonian side) was, “why don’t you go back to your Russia?” (Kallas 2002: 59, 64). In this context, the question of culture becomes pertinent.

I contend that the main difference in the way the Soviet Russian and the Nazi German subjugations were experienced by the Estonians stems from the fact that Russia is generally regarded as possessing a ‘lower culture’. Hence, Russia is not only the ‘other’, but also the ‘uncivilised’ and ‘Asiatic other’, while Estonia constitutes the historic Western borderland between civilisations, setting Orthodoxy vs. Christianity.³⁴ Other dualisms that came up in the interviews with Estonian historians (and which will be discussed in subsequent Chapters in more detail) are that of ‘dirty’ vs. ‘clean’, loud behaviour vs. reserved manners, a protestant work ethic vs. ‘lazy bones’. All that was built during the Soviet period was considered *vene väärk*, which is Estonian and means literally a ‘Russian thing’ that is malfunctioning; similar attempts at distancing can be noted in recent literature on Estonia, where the country is occasionally presented as belonging to Central Eastern Europe (David J. Smith 2000: xi).³⁵ Apart from this mistaken analogy, there are other facts that set Estonia apart from Russia, such as the 45 year earlier abolition of serfdom in Estonia; the conversion to Christianity in 13th c. Estonia; the experience of Lutheranism and the Reformation, which brought literacy and education to the Estonian masses; and lastly the fact that the Estonian alphabet uses Roman and not Cyrillic characters - a tangible linguistic expression of Estonia’s connection with Western Europe.

Russians as ‘traitors’: the Interfront

In response to the formation of the Estonian People’s Front (Est., *Eestimaa Rahvarinne*, abbr. RR), a Russian popular protest movement was initially constituted under the name of ‘Interfront’ (Est., *Interrinne*) in June 1988. With this movement the worst apprehensions of those Estonians who regarded the Russian-speakers as a ‘fifth column’, ultimately disloyal to the Estonian cause of independence, came true. In fear of discrimination, ‘Interfront’ rallied protests against Estonian economic separatism, the restoration of a capitalist system, and against the new language law.³⁶ Also in June 1988 the ‘United Council of Workers’ Collectives’ (Est. abbr. TKNÜ) was established, and declared its solidarity with ‘Interfront’ soon after. Both organisations were powerful, as they had hundreds of all-union enterprises standing behind them and good contacts with Moscow (Gerner & Hedlund 1993: 107-114). The Estonian Supreme Soviet’s declaration of independence in May 1989 was immediately contested by yet another “Committee for the defence of Soviet power and civil rights in

Estonia.” Examples of provocation from the Soviet Russian side were a mass gathering to commemorate the annexation of Estonia in 1940, general strikes at all-union factories in August 1989, and the rallying for a separation of north-east Estonia.³⁷ On May 15, 1990 the Estonian parliament was attacked by ‘Interfront’ demonstrators, who intended to take down the tricolour and replace it with the red flag. Prime Minister Edgar Savisaar called on the Estonian people to protect their parliament and about 20,000 answered his request; also in January 1991, concrete block barricade were built around *Toompea* to protect the parliament (Gerner & Hedlund 1993: 148). Immediately after the Declaration of Independence and the abortive *coup* in Moscow (all described in Chapter Three) the government of Estonia outlawed the ‘Interfront’ (of the TKNÜ, and the ECP).

According to the 1989 census the Russian-speaking community amounted to 471,000 of Estonia’s total population. Taken as a whole, the Russian-speaking community was marked by passivity, and it is noteworthy that only 29 % of the Russian population supported the orthodox Soviet line (Gerner & Hedlund 1993: 108). Another survey conducted at the time shows that whereas one-third of non-Estonians supported independence, another third favoured the status quo, while the remaining third was indifferent (Ilves 1991: 80 f, in Bollerup & Christensen, 1997: 62). After 1991, this overall inertia remained a distinctive feature of the Russian-speaking community in Estonia; here Bollerup & Christensen argued that Russian speakers were led more by economic rather than by ethnic interests as they felt that their economic interests were still best served in an independent Estonia (even though questions of citizenship and voting rights were problematic), and because they lacked a distinct ethnic base, which might have helped them to forge a mass protest movement (Bollerup & Christensen 1997: 67, 71 ff, 208, 212).³⁸

3. The Changing nature of Estonian nationalism

Eastern and western nationalism

An exploration into the nature of Estonian nationalism brings us to the typology initially presented in Hans Kohn’s book The Idea of Nationalism (1944), i.e. the dualism of ‘Eastern’ vs. ‘Western’ nationalism that still underlies many theoretical and empirical studies in the field today.³⁹ This ideal-typical opposition posits an organic, ethno-cultural, mythical and romantic notion of the national community as opposed to a civic, inclusive concept of a political community of citizens based on voluntary membership. As this is an analytical

distinction, we have to bear in mind that in modern nations, territorial, civic and ethnic elements exist simultaneously, and modern nations blend and transcend the two sets of ideal types (A. D. Smith 1991: 11 ff; A. D. Smith 1998: 125 f). This contention is relevant in the Estonian case, in that the genealogical concept of the nation as one of common descent has prevailed in Estonia since 1991.

National revival in the 1980s

Many scholars point to the fact that the drama of Soviet disunion started in the Baltic States, and that Estonia, as the first Soviet republic with a national revival, was almost 'responsible' for a landslide of national movements in the other republics (Bollerup & Christensen 1997: 60 –74, Gerner & Hedlund 1993: 7). The fact that national revivals occurred almost simultaneously in Eastern Europe suggests some general conditions that favoured the formation of national movements as opposed to other group formations. How then can we explain the resurgence of nationalism among Estonians in the late 1980s? Clearly, any attempt to explain the phenomenon of an Estonian national movement will also shed light on the break-up of the Soviet Union.

Many Estonians describe the Soviet period as "years of dependence", implying that ethno-national sentiments were 'simply 'frozen' and (re-) emerged once a thaw set in.⁴⁰ Gorbachev's twin policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika* removed obstacles to the formation of national movements and re-introduced freedom of expression, allowing critics to de-legitimise the system by exposing its faults. In this process each Soviet citizen lost the sense of self-esteem and meaning, in particular the Russian-speaking community, but the post-war generations of ethnic Estonians did as well.⁴¹

In the theoretical Chapters, I pointed to the 'connective structure' of national identity, which provides the individual with an orientation in the present and a purpose for the future, an aspect that makes national identity highly desirable in a situation of cataclysmic change. Secondly, a socio-political 'transition' makes people more responsive to the egalitarian myth conveyed by nationalism, so that people believe that all members of the nation will have an equally good life after independence is achieved.⁴²

Thirdly, as the modern world is still one of proclaimed nation states, it is national identity that functions as a political claim to the right of national self-determination and a state of one's own;⁴³ a claim that can be substantiated by a titular or national language (Fishman 1996).

In their comparative study of different East European national revivals and ethnic conflicts, Bollerup & Christensen point to the following structural conditions for the Estonian national revival: 1) the existence of an ethnic base, 2) inter-ethnic relations with the Russian-speaking community, 3) perceived economic deprivation,⁴⁴ 4) cultural deprivation, 5) exclusion from the ranks of political power, and 6) the liberalisation of formerly oppressive laws as the trigger factor.⁴⁵ So far I have explored the role of the German and Russian ‘other’ (i.e. corresponding with point 2 of the list above). In what follows, I turn to some of the other facets highlighted by Bollerup & Christensen, such as the perceived economic and cultural deprivation, the exclusion from the ranks of political power, and the role of Soviet institutions. Above all I argue for the role of ethnicity and (cultural) memory in the Estonian national revival, which Bollerup & Christensen subsume under their first point, i.e. an ethnic base.

The role of collective (cultural) memories

What effect did the collective memory of the time of awakening and of the first Estonian Republic (1920 - 40) have on the continuation of national culture during the military occupations and Soviet rule? Were they necessary preconditions for the national revival and successful restoration of independence in 1991?

Lagerspetz argues that the first awakening of the 1860s, initially a cultural nationalism devoid of any claim for national independence, provided a powerful basis for independent Estonian statehood in 1918. In turn, the memory of the first Estonian Republic figured as a prominent political symbol in Soviet Estonia. Furthermore, an analogy to the time of the first awakening was made in meetings of pro-independence organisations during the 1980s; noticeably, the term ‘Singing Revolution’ itself harks back to the movement for cultural expression during the 1860s when the first song festivals were held (Lagerspetz 1996: 67-70).

All of this supports the case that certain collective memories can be a powerful point of reference in the process of nation formation. The notion that certain collective memories are identity-reinforcing during times of foreign rule, and that they have a strong impact on political processes of national self-assertion, is explored further in Chapters Five to Seven.

An ethno-cultural conception of Estonian identity

In the first line of the Estonian constitution the Estonian term ‘*Eesti rahvas*’ is employed to signify the “Estonian people”. We read: “Unwavering in their faith and with a steadfast will to

secure and develop a state which is established on the inextinguishable right of the Estonian people [*Eesti rahvas*] to national self-determination and which was proclaimed on February 24, 1918 (...).⁴⁶ From the historical overview and discussion so far, we can conclude that the ethno-cultural concept of Estonian identity, as based primarily on language and culture (codified in the Estonian folklore, songs, as well as literature), is more strongly developed than the state-bound, civic side of the Estonian identity. Further, the etymological proximity of the Estonian word for ‘people’ or ‘folk’ (Est., *rahvas*) and the Estonian word signifying ‘nationality’ and ‘nation’ (Est., *rahvus*), points to the fact that an ethnic understanding of the Estonian nation is deeply rooted in the Estonian self-understanding (Loit 1998: 221). To recap, both ‘*rahvas*’ and ‘*rahvus*’ signify a community of people of a shared descent, history, language and culture, but the difference is that ‘*rahvus*’ holds an additional meaning, as it also connotes ‘a community forming a political system’.

In sum, the term ‘*rahvus*’ was a neologism only introduced into modern Estonian by the aforementioned F. R. Kreutzwald (the author of the national epos *Kalevipoeg*) in the late 19th c. to accommodate for the changing political developments.

As has been delineated earlier, both the civic and ethnic concepts had co-existed since the late 19th c., but restrictive politics and adverse conditions of foreign rule made Estonian nationalists revert to an ethno-cultural concept of national identity. Hence J. Hurt, one of the foremost national leaders, concluded in the 1870s that “statehood and state organisations are very important for the welfare of the people, but they do not constitute the nation or change it” (Hurt in Jansen 2000a: 66). However, at times Estonian politicians made the case that Estonia had existed as a political entity for centuries, thus strengthening the (historical) right of Estonians to a state of their own. Just after the signing of the Baltic-Soviet cooperation pacts and the Soviet attack on Finland in 1939 – a time when the independence of the Estonian Republic was in peril – Prime Minister Jüri Uluots employed this line of argument:

“Contrary to previous opinion, it must now be regarded as proven that the territory of Estonia has been populated by people of Estonian origin for thousands of years. Consequently, the territory of Estonia is the Estonians’ primeval place of settlement, their historic ‘vital space’. (...) in terms of ‘sovereign countries’, mid-13th c. Estonia was a confederation, in the modern sense of the word. Several centuries later it is precisely this confederative aspect which remained characteristic of the political organisation of Estonia, until finally, in 1917, she achieved political unity (...) the Estonian State is neither of recent date, nor the result of ephemeral events, but rather a political and social creation, the roots of which stretch from ancient times right up to the present, across many historic transformations” (Uluots in Gerner & Hedlund 1993: 55 f.).

In retrospect, we may then ask which other collective identities were on offer when the Soviet bloc began to crumble. Here, we can ascertain that one reason why Estonian political leaders opted for an ethno-cultural concept of their nation over a civic or territorial one in the 1980s, is exactly due to Estonia's short tradition of independent statehood (in that the *inter-bellum* period may not have been sufficient time to consolidate a state-bound identity among the citizens of Estonia). Furthermore, it needs to be considered that Estonians (unlike the Lithuanians) had no state or principality of their own prior to 1920, historical facts that aided the process of state building in neighbouring Lithuania.⁴⁷

Moreover, in Lithuania Catholicism (once a means of Polonisation) and the Church had become a historical part of the national identity, much more so than the Lutheran Church had done for Estonians (and Latvians). Mainly due to the historical predominance of Baltic Germans in the administration of the Lutheran Church, it was considered a German institution until the 20th c. and "appeared to have been perceived as an alien one by the local people, both in its structure and in its content" (Parminig 1977: 30). In the case of Lithuania, the Catholic Church was thus another important unifying factor (apart from the historical duchy) as the 'bastion' of Lithuanian nationalism and of anti-Soviet dissent (Bourdeaux 2000). The Catholic Church has been a central force in the opposition against state suppression providing a subculture and a space for non-conformists in Soviet Lithuania (Johnston 1992a: 133; Raun 1987: 52, 366; Törnquist-Plewa 1992).⁴⁸

The Soviet (institutional) legacy

Bollerup & Christensen assess that Russian speakers were the dominating nationality in the Estonian SSR, in that they effectively controlled key party and state institutions. The native Estonian elite was under-represented in the ruling organs of the CP, both on all-union and republic levels. Up until June 1988 the post of the First Secretary had been exclusively filled by Russian Estonians, as they were considered more reliable by Moscow. The 'Slavic' national group dominated the upper echelons of the CPSU and Estonians felt politically deprived in their own Republic;⁴⁹ yet at the same time they despised the political institutions of the Soviet system (and participating in them) (Bollerup & Christensen 1997: 69 f.). As will be discussed in more detail in subsequent Chapters, the public sphere was highly politicised in the Soviet Union, so that an ethno-cultural identity was maintained in the private sphere by many families and close circles of like-minded friends as an 'oppositional identity'. Here, reverting to an ethno-cultural identity was an act of dissent, as it meant the rejection of all ideology and to some extent of all politics, too.

In this sense, the Estonian ethnic identity provided an ‘apolitical’ and ‘uncorrupted’ category that allowed identification with the past while circumventing the day-to-day reality of Soviet Estonia. Moreover, it can be assumed that under the Soviet system state institutions in general were symbols of oppression for many Estonians and not to be trusted. This distrust lived on and provides a further reason why the Estonian nation is defined to a lesser degree in civic, i.e. constitutional terms, but in ethnic terms instead.

On the other hand, national identity *was* a highly politicised category (and not apolitical at all) in that Soviet anti-national policies attempted to repress any nationalist movement while propagating a ‘withering away’ of all national differences and the creation of a unified *homo sovieticus* (Gerner & Hedlund 1993: 45). Here, one needs to refer to the well-known fact of the co-existing but mutually opposing Soviet policies, of the flourishing of nations and of the merging of different nationalities (Brubaker 1996: 17).

In my opinion it is Brubaker who convincingly explains the paradox that Soviet and post-Soviet nationalisms did not in fact occur despite the Soviet Regime’s repressive policies, but rather because it institutionalised territorial nationhood and ethnic nationality as fundamental social and cognitive categories. The Regime ascribed national territories as homelands to particular ethno-national groups in a system of national republics of titular nations.⁵⁰ Consequently, they presupposed the existence of ethno-cultural nations. Moreover, personal nationality as based on ethnic descent (Russ., *natsional’nost’*) was institutionalised and functioned as a legal category in the internal passport system. Although the category of personal nationality was meant to increase the regime’s control of access to higher education and certain professions (i.e. quota system), it simultaneously helped to engrave the national category in each individual’s consciousness.⁵¹

In sum, Brubaker argued that inexorable tensions arose long before the 1980s from the discrepancy between the constitutional fiction of nationhood and its repression on a daily basis (which stems partly from the two opposing Soviet policies outlined above).

An ex negativo national identity

The dramatic changes in the demographic situation of post-war Estonia, due to the massive influx of a foreign workforce and the ‘fear of becoming a minority in one’s own country’ as well as an overall negative experience of suffering and humiliation during the Soviet regime, made many Estonians opt for an ethno-cultural boundary marker. When faced with an

external threat (real or perceived), such as cultural colonisation, or political or economic deprivation, both the canon and common sense (i.e. cultural memory) of a national group adjusts by becoming more exclusive, i.e. with a heightened ‘us and them’ distinction based on ethnicity, culture, and language.⁵²

Bollerup & Christensen refer to Kellas, who argues that nationalism can be a result of cultural deprivation, which “is experienced when discrimination or insult takes place on account of a person’s national identity, language (including accent), religion, habits, taste, and so on.” This discrimination “can also be experienced collectively (...) when linguistic or educational usages are imposed officially on all citizens by the state” (Kellas 1991: 69); all of which were the case in Soviet Estonia.

The fear of (cultural) assimilation constitutes an enduring aspect of Estonian identity (Kionka & Vetik 1996); it was not just a perceived threat, for generally Estonians needed to use Russian when addressing public authorities. In fact, the threat unified Estonians in (national) resistance and helped them to maintain an *ex negativo* national identity.⁵³ The appeal made to all Estonians that their cultural identity was in danger provided an effective way to mobilise the masses, enhance group solidarity and cohesion.⁵⁴

One way to restore national pride was the refusal of Estonian national leaders in 1991 to accept the demographic changes that had occurred in the past 50 years, and to conceive of their country as a bi-national or bi-cultural one; and this although the Russian-speaking communities add up to 32 % of the total population, and in the north-east Estonian towns even up to 97 %. Instead, they tend to refer to the Russophone population as a ‘minority’, as immigrants, settlers, aliens or non-citizens.⁵⁵ Also, due to the demographic situation Estonian politicians decided principally against a territorial conception of Estonian national identity, as a territorial option which bases national identity on the place of residence would have included large numbers of non-Estonians into the political process of restoring post-Soviet Estonia.

Estonian ‘rationalism’: a rational form of nationalism

Based on the host of policies that were passed in Estonia in the early 1990s, which were meant to rectify perceived inadequacies and historical wrongs, some scholars regard Estonia

as a “nationalising state” (Brubaker 1996: 55 – 78).⁵⁶ Here, ethnicity and language were employed as strong political claims for independent statehood and political power in post-Soviet Estonia.

As alluded to earlier, in the period of 1987-92 the ideal for which nationalists strove was the restoration of Estonia as it existed prior to the Soviet annexation, disregarding the drastic demographic changes since 1941. In 1989, in the course of the first wave of language legislation prior to independence, the Estonian Supreme Soviet declared Estonia to be the single state language and the Estonian national flag the official state flag. Estonian was to become the new *lingua franca* and a principle of social hierarchisation (i.e. language requirements for certain professions).⁵⁷ The preamble to the Estonian language law stated that “in Estonia, the ancient territory of the Estonians, the state shall accord special attention and protection to the Estonian language. Through the institution of Estonian as the official language, a firm foundation had been laid for the preservation and development of the Estonian people and its culture.”⁵⁸

Secondly, and with the objective of maximising the Estonian proportion of the population living in Estonia, a new immigration law was launched in 1990 that restricted immigration by determining that the annual immigration was not to exceed a quota of 1 % of Estonia’s total population (Bollerup & Christensen 1997: 61).⁵⁹

Estonia’s ‘restorationist path’

Once Estonian national activists had understood that the Soviet authorities would not agree to their legalistic argument that they wanted exercise their republic’s constitutionally briefed right to leave the Union, they chose the ‘path of institutional restoration’ instead.⁶⁰

This meant the re-establishment of legal continuity with pre-war political institutions.⁶¹ However, most important was to mark the non-recognition of the Soviet Union’s illegal annexation of Estonia by stressing that the inter-war republic had continued to exist *de jure*. This approach is reflected in the work of the ‘Estonian Citizens’ Committee’ which organised ‘parallel elections’ to the ‘Congress of Estonia’ in February 1990 (just before the official elections to the Supreme Soviet) and which argued that only citizens of the inter-war period and their descendants ought to be in charge of Estonia’s future. The actual impact of the

‘Estonian Citizen’s Committee’ on official policy-making at the time became evident in the fact that the citizenship law of 1938 was reinstated in 1992, according to which only citizens of pre-war Estonia and their direct descendants were granted ‘automatic citizenship’ (Bollerup & Christensen 1997: 72, 209).

The citizenship law effectively disenfranchised the majority of Russian-speakers (i.e. denaturalised the Soviet era immigrants and their families), who were from then on characterised as “aliens”. This effected a further polarisation along ethnic lines, while turning a blind eye to those Russian-speakers who had been in support of independence, such as the Russian democratic movement founded in August 30, 1990. The citizenship policy in question produced effective and almost immediate changes in the ethnic composition of the electorate, so that the constitutional part of nation state building, i.e. the referendum on the new constitution and the first post-independence parliamentary elections in June 1992, were an ethnic Estonian endeavour.⁶²

Kaplinski characterises this legalistic course against the Russophone community and the pragmatic juridical argumentation for the re-establishment of Estonian statehood as ‘rationalism’, in contrast to all irrational forms of (hot) nationalism.⁶³ At another place Kaplinski explains that ‘Estonians have difficulty communicating emotionally, but that this is how Russians want to communicate. (...) Russians think that Estonians are icy and hostile, and Estonians think Russians are childish and hysterical.’⁶⁴

In sum, after 1991 the nature of nationalism changed to the extent that it even opposed liberal democratic principles with regard to the treatment of non-dominant ethnic groups in the new state.⁶⁵ However, on the whole the Estonia nationalism is characteristic of a small nation, as it is non-expansive but rather protective of the core nation.⁶⁶ A sense of consolidation set in at the earliest in 1994, i.e. with the withdrawal of Russian troops, and after the referenda on the secession of the north-eastern part of Estonia were warded off (Wettig 1993; Hallik 2002: 82). Clearly, questions of integration, assimilation and multiculturalism continue to be debated topics in Estonian society.

4. Chapter summary & outlook

I have illustrated that the Estonian national identity is mainly defined in ethno-cultural terms. Some of the reasons why an ethnic conception of national identity was favoured are found in the Soviet institutional legacy, in the absence of trust in all state institutions, as well as a lack

of a longstanding tradition of independent statehood. Since the 1860s, Estonian nationalism has thus been a state-creating and empire-subverting force (cf. Mann 1995: 44 – 64); a divisive ethno-linguistic nationalism (speaking with Hobsbawm (1991)). In sum, Estonia can be described as having a nationalism characteristic of a small nation, non-expansive and rather protective of the core nation. I have shown how ethnicity and language are employed as strong political claims for independent statehood and political power in post-Soviet Estonia. Although the debate on national identity appears more past-orientated, the so-called ‘restorationst path’ was really about the present and is the proposed ‘roadmap’ for Estonia’s future.

Endnotes of Chapter IV:

¹ Anthony Smith distinguishes two routes to nationhood: one by bureaucratic incorporation of an aristocratic or urban-based elite (lateral or vertical *ethnie*) into a territorial nation, and the other by vernacular mobilisation of a demotic *ethnie* by local intelligentsia into an ethnic nation. As has been discussed earlier, this small circle of educator-intellectuals consisted increasingly of Estonians, while in the initial phase the so-called *Estonophiles* of Baltic-German background played an important part. As further reading on the nature of the Estonian national identity, see Ruutsoo 1995: 167 – 179; Ruutsoo 1993: 95 – 105; Petersoo 2001; Roos 1993; Kirch & Laitin & Pettai 1994; Valk 2001; RYPE report 2001, Aaskivi 2001.

² On the role of religion, see Chapter Three.

³ On notions of national revival, awakening, resuscitation and resurrection in Central and Eastern Europe and the metaphors used to depict the relationship between a nation’s past, present and future, such as the mythological metaphor of springtime implying a nation’s self-generated renewal, see Pearson 1993; on awakening metaphors: Aleida Assmann 1993: 13-35.

⁴ Experts of the Estonian national museum laid out correct rules for the costumes for each region. On Päts’ promotion of national values, see Chapter Three. Cf. Hobsbawm and Ranger (Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983) on the invention of traditions, such as the Highland tradition in Scotland, the cultural revival in Wales, the Boy Scouts rituals, and May Day celebrations etc.

⁵ Green activists received a substantial backing from the Estonian Lawyers Association, the Estonian Academy of Science, the Estonian Teachers’ Congress, Estonian Churches, etc. (Gerner & Hedlund 1993: 47 f, 70 ff).

⁶ Siim, interview, Berlin, 17.04.04.

⁷ Kõidula’s real name was Lydia Florentine Jannsen (1843 - 86) daughter of Johann Voldemar Jannsen. Her alias, ‘Kõidula’, means “of the dawn” (cf. Puhvel 1999).

⁸ “Language is thicker than blood”.

⁹ In 2000 President Lennart Meri dated the Estonian book back to 1525, stressing that “without the Estonian book we would not be Estonians” (*Estonian Review*, 17. – 23.04.00).

¹⁰ For Estonian national activists Finland soon became an alternative model to Germanisation or Russification; up to modern times Finnish has been viewed as a ‘purer’, historically more correct language, and a model for an Estonian linguistic renewal (Raag 1999a; Raag 1999b: 35); on the modernisation of the Estonian language, see Kurman 1968.

¹¹ See Chapter Six.

¹² This link will be shown later in this Chapter. On language normalisation in post-Soviet Estonia, see Laitin 1992; Jonsson 1999.

¹³ Cf. Rosenfeld & Dodge (eds.) 2002; Helme 2000.

¹⁴ This argument is supported by Vilma, an Estonian historian born in 1921 (Vilma, interview, Tallinn, 11.06.02).

¹⁵ On one of the most prominent Estonian writers Jaan Kross, often made a detour via the historical novel to critically assess his own time; see Salumets 1998, 2000; Kirss 2000.

¹⁶ In the Chapters Six and Seven the re-interpretations of the German and Russian ‘other’ against the background of the experience of the Second World War are expounded.

¹⁷ I return to this argument in Chapter Six.

¹⁸ In the context of this thesis, the focus will be on the role of the Baltic Germans living on Estonian territory; however, the role of the German kin-state also needs to be considered; cf. Hiden 1970; Garleff 1976.

¹⁹ Wolff (1996) describes the inventing and re-mapping of the frontiers between Eastern and Western European civilisation through political geography and cultural cartography as an artificial construction by the 18th c. Enlightenment. An example can be found in J.-J. Rousseau, who prescribed national institutions and a ‘national physiognomy’ for Poland in order to form and consolidate a Polish national identity.

²⁰ As demonstrated in a quote from Georg Dehio: “We should not forget that the Estonians and Latvians have no culture of their own and will hardly ever possess one” (transl. from German, Dehio 1927); and see Lieven 1994: 133.

²¹ The Estonian word *Kadakas saksa* is similar to William Labov’s notion of ‘broken language’ (Labov 1980); see Epilogue.

²² On “Herder’s legacy in the Baltics”, see Chapter Three.

²³ As mentioned in the previous Chapter, by the late 1860s social mobility of Estonians came into conflict with the medieval Baltic German privileges, a social conflict along ethnic lines. In 1888 a wage system was not adopted in Livonia to restrict rural mobility (Pistohlkors 1993: 196).

²⁴ The collaboration of the *Ritterschaften* with the OHL made Estonians identify the Baltic Germans as a real threat to their cause of nation building (Uibopuu 1990). Although the *Baltenregiment* in Estonia fought under Estonian command, a 'concerted action' to protect the homeland was not much more than a myth held up by the Baltic Germans to legitimise their place in the young Republic.

²⁵ Cf. Myllyniemi 1997 on the impact of the Nazi German occupation on German-Estonian relations.

²⁶ EÜS was founded by Estonian-minded students who pursued nationalist objectives; its blue-black-white tricolour subsequently became the national flag in 1918. From 1940 EÜS was forbidden, but its members continued to meet underground until it was restored in 1988.

²⁷ For further reading on the Baltic Germans, see for example: Schlaub 1997; and *Nordost-Archiv*, Vol. IV, No. 2, 1995.

²⁸ In the same year the Latvian Social Democratic Workers' Party was founded.

²⁹ E.g. centrally controlled large-scale extraction of oil shale and phosphate.

³⁰ Cf. Köll's (2000) paper on the oil shale district of north-east Estonia and Soviet industrialisation, where she stated that so-called 'shock industrialisation' gave rise to waves of migration due to the lack of manpower in Estonia. Until 1953 the influx of the Russian-speaking work force amounted to approx. 40,000 p.a.; and during the 1950s of approximately 20,000 p.a.

³¹ Most of this has been noted in the section on Soviet Estonia in Chapter Three.

³² Cf. Mettan & Williams 1998.

³³ On the equation of Soviet with Russian, see Chapter Six.

³⁴ Cf. Neumann 1996; Ruutsoo 1995: 13 – 16.

³⁵ On this analogy, see Chapter Six.

³⁶ In 1987 90 % of all industry and agriculture was controlled by the ministries in Moscow. From 1987, IME (Est. abbr. for *Ise Majanduse Eesti*) or self-managing Estonia was both an economic and political protest against this control. *Ime*, in Estonian, means miracle, and stands for the belief that Estonia will achieve relative economic prosperity more quickly without Russia; see Gerner & Hedlund 1993: 77 ff.

³⁷ A referendum for the separation of the north-east of Estonia finally failed in 1993.

³⁸ For further reading on the Russian-speaking minority in Estonia, see Laitin, *Identity in Formation. The Russian-Speaking Populations in the Near Abroad* (1998); on the new Russian *diaspora*, see Kolstø 1995; Kolstø 1996; Pettai 1995; Kirch & Kirch et al. 1993; Wiegandt 1995; Heidmets & Lauristin, *The challenge of the Russian Minority: Emerging Multicultural Democracy in Estonia* (2002); see also: Vihalemm 1999; and on inter-ethnic relations and ethno-politics, see for example: David Smith 1998; and Velliste 1995.

³⁹ It can be found in Anthony Smith's work on the different routes to nationhood described earlier in this Chapter. Friedrich Meinecke put forward the dichotomy between largely passive cultural nations (Germ., *Kulturnation*) and active, political nations (Germ., *Staatsnation*) (Meinecke 1969: 10). Based on Friedrich Engel's distinction of old or 'historic nations' and 'nations without history', Hobsbawm distinguishes good emancipatory mass-democratic movements (such as the French Revolution) from divisive, negative, ethno-linguistic nationalisms (Hobsbawm 1991). Here the case of Estonia as a small, late-coming nation would fall under the latter category, as would all nation states that first emerged at the time of the First World War, after the collapse of the three great empires. See also: Sugar 1994: 3 – 54.

⁴⁰ A sub-title taken from Misiunas & Taagepera 1993.

⁴¹ In an opinion poll conducted in 1988, 78 % of Russian-speakers in the Estonian SSR identified themselves as citizens of the Soviet Union, whereas 15 % identified themselves as members of a national group (Bollerup & Christensen 1997: 65). As is illustrated in the interviews conducted with the younger generation of Estonians, those who participated in the 'Baltic Chain' were endowed with national pride; thus the independence movement helped restore a sense of national pride, which had been dwindling in times of foreign rule. See Chapters Five and Six.

⁴² On the similarities and differences between the ideology of socialism and nationalism, see Gellner 1988.

⁴³ Among other instrumentalists, such as Michael Billig and John Breuilly, Rogers Brubaker remarks that it is not a world of nations, but a world in which nationhood is pervasively institutionalised in the practice of states and the workings of the state system, see Brubaker 1996: 21.

⁴⁴ Brubaker (1996) gives a fuller picture of the situation. He points to the privileges that Russophone residents in non-Russian republics enjoyed, but he also mentions that the titular nations profited from affirmative action programmes and other preferential treatment policies. Consequently, each side resented the other. Although the standard of living in the Estonian SSR was among the highest compared to the other republics, Estonians complained about their backwardness, blaming it on the involuntary incorporation of their economy into the all-Soviet Union economy. Since the inter-war time they have compared themselves with the other small Scandinavian countries, which after 1944 resulted in feelings of economic deprivation (Bollerup & Christensen 1997: 68 f.).

⁴⁵ Apart from Estonia the authors looked at Moldova, Croatia, and former Czechoslovakia.

⁴⁶ "Kõikumata usus ja vankumatus tahtes kindlustada ja arendada riiki, mis on loodud Eesti rahva riikliku enesemääramise kustumatul õigusel ja välja kuulutatud 1918. aastal 24. veebruaril (...)." This is based on a personal email correspondence with Professor Raimo Raag (03.10.05), who kindly helped to clarify these terms.

⁴⁷ Lithuania had a historical duchy which at times included parts of Poland.

⁴⁸ The Church and Church traditions as sites of counter-memory came up in the interviews and will be discussed in Chapter Six.

⁴⁹ In 1981 Estonians constituted 51 % of the total members of the CPE.

⁵⁰ These national territories were 'quasi nation states', with fixed territories, a name, a titular language, the constitutional right to secede, legislation, administration, cultural and political elites, and scientific institutions.

⁵¹ Smith remarks that apart from defining 'nation' as category, form and event, Brubaker fails to give credit to the fact that a nation is a powerful social reality, a lived and felt community to its members (Smith 1998: 77).

⁵² That the Baltic universities operated increasingly in the titular languages as early as 1990, making it difficult for Russian speakers to apply, illustrates how language can serve as a (cultural) boundary marker. In the course of de-Sovietisation Russian officials were dismissed on the grounds of the new language law, according to which all those employed in the state bureaucracy were required to have a good command of Estonian within four years (Bollerup & Christensen 1997: 210); cf. Rajangu 1994. The terms 'canon' and 'common sense' are introduced in Chapter Two.

⁵³ A poll conducted in 1988 revealed that only 38 % of the Russophone community in Estonia had a good command of Estonian, while 92 % of the Estonians spoke Russian (Bollerup & Christensen 1997: 70).

⁵⁴ For the concept of group solidarity, see Hechter 1987.

⁵⁵ The 'Aliens Law' was introduced in July 12, 1993, which classified non-citizens as 'aliens' and obliged them to seek residence permits, and was adopted. However, the usage of the term 'minority' is problematic, as the Russian-speaking community constitutes around 32 %; it is more accurate to speak of a qualitative minority instead. I adopt the term 'Russian-speaking community' throughout the thesis; it is a group that is unified by language only, of different ethnic background; a group that consists of immigrant workers from all over the former Soviet Union and of the small historic Russian community in Estonia.

⁵⁶ Andrus Park speaks of the 'Estonisation' of the political establishment and system after 1992 (Park 1994: 74). Hallik agrees on the category of a 'nationalising state' for the Estonia of the early '90s (Hallik 2002: 65-68).

⁵⁷ Hobsbawm holds that linguistic nationalism is about power, politics and status (Hobsbawm 1990: 111); likewise Hallik 2002: 71 f.

⁵⁸ As translated in Järve 2002: 99. This shows how much importance Estonian politicians attributed to the protection of the 'majority language', and hints at their deeply ingrained fear of cultural extinction and possibly also their inferiority complex. With this law, the national language is emphasised to substantiate the claim for authenticity and the right to national independence. Cf. Fishman who holds that a national language supports the claim for authenticity (Fishman 1996: 159 f).

⁵⁹ Since the beginning of the '90s, 110,000 non-Estonians immigrated, that is 18 % of the non-Estonians living in Estonia in 1989. See Hallik 2002: 68 f.

⁶⁰ Estonian dissidents publicly demanded Estonia's self-determination in a demonstration in August 1987 in Tallinn, while referring to § 72 of the USSR constitution (Taagepera 1993: 125; law text in: Gordon B. Smith 1992: 358).

⁶¹ Stukuls has shown how in the political discourse in post-Soviet Latvia the inter-war period was equated with normality (here Skultans uses the term "normalcy"). Thus, the path to normality can be identified as a national road, paved with the imperative of protecting and retaining the norms, symbols and practices of the nation (Stukuls 1997).

⁶² Hallik speaks of a 'non-representative democracy' (Hallik 2002: 72). In the September 1992 elections, 689,319 citizens of the republic of Estonia were registered as voters and 67.8% of them participated in the elections (Park 1994: 73 f).

⁶³ The rational approach might have contributed to the fact that conflicts between Estonians and Russian-speakers were mostly of a non-violent nature (David Smith 1999; Pettai 1993).

⁶⁴ Kaplinski 2002.

⁶⁵ That nationalism opposes democracy is put forward by Steven L. Burg (Burg 1994: 162 - 166). The view that nationalism is neutral is maintained by W. Raymond Duncan & Paul Holman, Jr. 1994: 1.

⁶⁶ On small or mini-nations, see Alapuro 1985; Leitsch 1991: 149 – 158; Park 1995; Ruutsoo 1997.

Chapter Five:

On Methodology

0. Introduction

In this Chapter I argue for the life story interview (i.e. for oral history in general and the biographical methods in particular) as a helpful research method for capturing the rather ephemeral concepts of national identity, collective memory, and historical culture in societies that endured long-term foreign rule and momentous socio-political change. In these societies oral testimony played an important role, as trust was given more to the spoken word than to the written word during times of foreign rule; jokes, allusions, and anecdotal evidence were also part of the counter-accounts, which were transmitted mostly orally.¹

Next, a number of reasons for the choice of historians (and other members of the intellectual elite) as my group of respondents are listed. Historians make for an interesting case, since they almost inevitably embody the contradiction of being a contemporary witness with subjective stories to tell on the one side, and a professional historian on the other. In light of what has just been said, further support for conducting life story interviews with historians can be found in the fact that ‘communicative memory’ (i.e. *ego histoire*) and ‘cultural memory’ (i.e. *grande histoire*) are both revealed in the interview.² Other peculiarities which occur in interviews with historians are their dislike of being turned into ‘objects’ of research, and that they conceptualise their personal life experience much more than members of other societal groups.

I then illustrate how narrative identity is constructed in the interview via an interactive process, which depends on the interviewee and the interviewer’s verbal and non-verbal rapport, and is thus highly situational (e.g. cultural differences, limits of understanding).³ As self-reflexivity is all-important, I portray the average interview situation and my experiences therein (during my fieldwork stays). Lastly, the interview questionnaires, in which an attempt was made to turn the theoretical concepts (of collective memory and national identity) into analytical categories, are briefly discussed.

Applying Karl Mannheim’s (Mannheim 1928) concept of generations, I single out four distinct generational contexts (G 1 – G 4) among my respondents, and delineate the

characteristics of each generational context in some detail (i.e. the formative experiences for each generation).

Then in Chapters Six and Seven I illuminate history production, codification of collective memory and historical culture in post-Soviet Estonia, based on the interview data.

Finally, in the epilogue I come back to the idiosyncrasies of collective memory and identity in Estonia. At least five ways in which the respondents remember, relate, and cope with their personal stories (e.g. loss of meaning and regaining of meaning, making sense) are singled out. As it is through ‘talking about the past’ that the respondent constructs his (narrative) identity, these six types of transmission provide insight into the different post-Soviet identities existing in Estonia today. Here, particular attention is paid to the phenomena of hybrid identities in Estonia.

1. Oral history: life story interviews

The primary source of my research consists of biographical interviews with over 40 members of Estonia's intellectual elite. The interviews were conducted in 1996, 2001 and 2003, and vary from one-and-a-half to four hours in length. Most of the interviewees are professionally trained historians of Estonian, Russian, and Estonian Russian background, living in Estonia or abroad; who work in schools, at universities, in museums, in journalism, or in politics; and who partake in the discourse on Estonian history. Among their number are philologists, sociologists, political scientists, and psychologists, as well as some amateur historians.

In Soviet Estonia, the state claimed a monopoly on 'Truth' and the custodianship of memory; it was thus individual lives that bore witness against the state. Skultans points out that great importance was attached to personal testimony, such as family memories (as sources of trust and truth) for the preservation of national identity (Skultans 1998: 28).⁴ As the spoken rather than the written word was trusted as the 'bearer of truth', Estonia, much like other countries that had experienced long-term foreign rule, has a distinct oral tradition. Fentress & Wickham explain the decline of oral traditions as a 'source of truth' as being caused by the ascendancy of literacy in the West; however, this needs rethinking in the context of the countries of Eastern Europe that experienced long term occupation (Fentress & Wickham 1992) - particularly as Estonians had maintained a strong oral tradition (e.g. folklore, songs, tales) parallel to the forging of a high culture in the 19th c.⁵ Here, long before the military occupations of the 20th c., a dichotomy existed between the language of the peasants and that of the landlords. As will be illustrated in ensuing Chapters, oral testimony is connected to the counter-narratives in the private sphere, e.g. subversive and critical jokes and anecdotes in times of foreign rule.⁶ Therefore, I chose the spoken word, i.e. the interview, as the appropriate research method.⁷ The interview gives the respondent space and freedom to air speculations, attitudes, and allusions, as nothing needs to be immediately documented.

The methodology employed is based on the biographical interview, the so-called life story method (Germ., *lebensgeschichtliche Interviews*);⁸ a method which is increasingly applied as a means of recording the fundamental reorientation of the post-socialist or post-Soviet societies.⁹ In these in-depth interviews, I stuck to a set of questions (Germ., *leitfadengestützt*), so that the interviews are guided and not entirely open-ended, while the questions are formulated in a rather open fashion designed to generate narrative. This is also accomplished by adopting an interested, empathic, and sympathetic stance towards the narrator's story telling.¹⁰

Why the life story? Over the course of telling one's life story the construction of identity becomes apparent, as does the impact that certain formative past events had on the respondent's identity and outlook. In short, the biographical method aims to elicit *how* the respondent interprets his world, i.e. his personal treatment of history and the interpretive and explanatory systems he developed in the course of his life. This method can account for the subjective dimension of changes in mentality and outlook.

In practice, I wanted to educe how historians made sense of historical change and the loss of meaning this can entail. The respondents were asked for their personal memories of formative past events, their interpretation of historical reality, and their self-understanding as historians, how the years of occupation, the Soviet period, and the political transition affected their interpretation of the past and their personal lives (questions of identity re-configuration).¹¹

Critics may point out the big difference between lives lived and lives remembered. I intend to solve this 'dilemma' by focussing on *how* the interviewee remembers rather than *what* he remembers (although it is important to take note of what is mentioned and what is omitted).¹² This is reflected in my questionnaire, where I ask first how events were experienced in the past and only second for their present interpretation.

The aim of life story interview is not to prove the interviewee wrong; it is rather to learn about his strategies for coping with change, i.e. the loss of meaning and ultimately how he made sense of it all. Thus, I do not intend to judge, falsify, or verify the information entrusted to me. Hence, questions of authenticity, credibility, or plausibility are not raised, and I avoid questions that give the impression that I doubt or criticise what has been said.

I chose to interpret the biographical interviews by contrasting (or confronting) the accounts with regard to the different ways in which the past is narrated.¹³ Some may argue that the respondents recall their lives in retrospect, and that with hindsight the interpretive frame changed, so that they may now interpret things very differently than they did at the time.¹⁴ Still others may complain that the method is based on memories, which are never simply stored in a neutral medium, but instead change over time and through increasing life experience. One's memories are also influenced by images from the media as well as books we read or personal recollections of others. Memory can be fallible or distorted, and people often simply forget.¹⁵

It is most enlightening to note that in the Turkish language (a great story-telling people) a special grammatical case exists to denote 'hearsay knowledge' (i.e. second hand memories) as distinguished from personal, first hand experience; unlike in Estonian, German

or English, where it remains unclear (from the case alone) what is sheer story telling and what is the respondent's first hand experience.¹⁶

Ankersmit writes that "personal recollections and the facts of history are inextricably linked together" (Ankersmit 1998: 191), emphasising the inseparability of the observer and that which is observed (Gaddis 2002: 10). The biographical method concerns the personal life story and the individual interpretation of historical reality. The biographical interview is thus a means to go beyond this subject-object dichotomy, as it allows the historian (as historical subject) to speak about historical reality.¹⁷

In the following Chapters a lot of space is allocated to 'personal voice'; this is because the original interview transcripts always seem to be so much more revealing, authentic and rich than all the researcher's attempts at interpretation and over-interpretation.¹⁸

2. Historians as respondents

Because historians play a pivotal role in the process of national restoration through their rewriting of the national narrative, I chose them as my group of respondents. The more so as the historians' oral testimony provides fresh insight, as the (written and spoken) word was strictly censored in Soviet Estonia. They faced new, further constraints on their work after 1991 in the climate of a 'nationalising state'. Thus, the more subjective accounts of Estonia's recent past (by professional historians) remain largely unwritten. It seems important to preserve the accounts of the older historians; the same is true for the recollections of narrators of mixed background and the young generation, which are often under-represented in the discussions on Estonia's recent past. Also, the spoken as opposed to the written word allowed them a form of unpremeditated, plain expression. Koselleck remarks that historians of the older generation constitute an interface or gateway between the past as absolute history and the recent past as contemporary history, where the battle over interpretation and definition is an ongoing one (Koselleck 2000).

Pille, an Estonian psychologist (and sociologist), born in 1971, asked at the outset of our interview:

"One thing I want to be sure about is whether you would like to hear my professional opinion as a psychologist, or my personal opinion as a human being, or as an Estonian. I could give you two different stories. I could talk as a psychologist and quote different theories, or I could talk about feelings, and people and real life. What would you like me to do?"¹⁹

Based on the understanding that an individual's life story impacts his or her interpretation of (national) history and that, in turn, the official history provides the interpretive framework for his or her personal understanding, I focused on the historians' personal life story in the interviews. This is of particular interest, because world historical events often dramatically affected personal lives in Estonia.²⁰ Here, the older generation of Estonians often found itself caught in the 'wheels of history'.

There are biographical narratives, which display a personal periodisation, and in which (world) historical events are merely adumbrated; on the other hand, official (world historical) events can structure and determine the biographical story, so that the personal details merely flesh out the *grande histoire* (Lucius-Hoene & Deppermann 2002: 63).²¹ The interviews with historians are multi-levelled: as my respondents speak both as professional historians and as contemporary witnesses, a tension inevitably arises between 'personal stories' (anecdotal evidence of the contemporary witness) and 'expert talk' (as part of the academic domain of history).²² Hence the respondents personify the tension between story and history (i.e. a tension with regard to questions of validity of sources and the authority to define the past).

When professional historians assert their impartiality and objectivity this may be to cover up a hidden scholarly insecurity. In a somewhat personal statement, Ankersmit points out that "deep in their hearts historians know that, despite their emphasis on the necessity of accurate investigation of sources and on prudent and responsible interpretation, history ranks lowest in scientific status of all the disciplines taught at university [and thus they] feel more insecure about the scientific status of their discipline than do the practitioners of any other field of scholarly research." (Ankersmit 1998: 183). Part of this is caused by the fact that the domain of history uses natural language, which "opens it to all types of inroads", and prevents it from being confined to specialists alone (Gallerano 1994: 91).²³

This subjectivity of historians gives rise to certain sensitivities that I encountered in the interview situations, i.e. the insistence of some respondents that history is a scientific discipline while oral history is not; or that there is a historical truth, and history can be 'right' or 'wrong'. The respondents frequently felt uneasy about being turned into objects of research, and some suspected that my approach almost automatically put their codes for representing the historical past into question.²⁴

Another feature of interest in the biographical interview of historians is the specific inter-relation of cultural and communicative memory. If we view memory as communication, then communicative memory is what has not (yet) manifested or solidified in the cultural memory. It is then in the telling of personal life stories that the intertwined levels of

‘communicative memory’ (*ego histoire* or the personal life story) and ‘cultural memory’ (intellectual conceptualisation of the world as codified in works of literature, monuments, and artefacts, and impersonal great narratives) become apparent.²⁵ The historian also represents the cultural memory in that he or she has been a chronicler of the past, a writer of annals, and a custodian of archives.

3. The interviews

It is important to bear in mind that the interview is *not* a text but is the spoken, evanescent word, highly contingent on the particular situation. With regard to the transcripts, I initially left them just as they were spoken, with all repetitions, *onomatopoeia*, and grammatical mistakes. However, for the quotations that appear in the Chapters I did correct the language, while trying to stay as close as possible to the original wording.

In this section the process of (re-) construction of narrative identity in the interview is clarified. Secondly, the design of the questionnaire is discussed as a further step in the process of operationalisation of my research questions and argument. Finally, some reflections on self-reflexivity are presented.

3.1. (Re-) construction of narrative identity in the interview

Social dimension

In the course of a biographical interview both the interviewer and the interviewee partake in the production of the ‘source’, which is the respondent’s interactively or mutually constructed narrative identity. We can thus speak of the listener as co-author.²⁶ According to Rüsen: “human individuals conceive of their identity in terms of the historical narratives that they tell themselves about their past” (Rüsen in Ankersmit 1998: 192).²⁷ In relating the past, memories are processed, and personal experiences are put into words and made comprehensible. Self-reflection is also induced, which can lead to crisis or to the strengthening of identity (Lucius-Hoene & Deppermann 2002: 31 f).²⁸

The respondent does not merely recount his life by stringing together an accumulation of events. Rather, he is anxious to represent and create coherence, 'emplotment' (H. White 2000), a logical narrative structure and sense; it is interesting how he accomplishes this. A chronological order normally exists; however, streams of memory, temporal disparities, leaps in time, recourses, anticipations, and *nexus*, frequently occur (Lucius-Hoene & Deppermann 2002: 21 f; Carr 1997: 7 - 25). Basically, the narrator has two temporal dimensions at his disposal: the first person narrator or that of the narrated self. He can go back and forth between them, and position himself in the narrative (Lucius-Hoene & Deppermann 2002: 196 – 212). Slow motion, fast motion, omissions, interruptions etc. are other temporal means available to the narrator (Ibid.: 24 f, 136 ff).

3.2. *Operationalisation: the questionnaires*

I had visited Estonia many times since 1994 and could draw on many contacts there when it came time to do my fieldwork. Also, since I had absorbed the writings on Estonian history and the political developments, I knew the names of many historians that I was going to interview from their writing, or I had met them before at conferences. Estonia is a small country, where you can just call people once you get there; it is rather uncommon to make arrangements far in advance. On the whole, the respondents were quite accessible, although some were puzzled as to what I was after (why not go to the archives, or read their latest book?). I intentionally left it very open as to what exactly I wanted to ask about. I merely informed them in writing (email or post) of my interest in Estonian cultural history. Moreover, I did not disclose at that point that I wanted to record the conversation. Some respondents were very cautious, and wanted to know exactly why I needed the interview and how I would protect their identity; others did not mind me using their real name. One respondent commented that, if I made the interviewees anonymous, they might not feel accountable for the information they disclosed to me. For the sake of consistency I gave all my respondents fictitious names, hoping this would encourage them to be forthright about the more delicate issues in Estonia's historical culture - such as questions of complicity with the system. At the outset of the interview I asked for permission to record them. I guaranteed their anonymity and protection of their personal data. I explained to them that the information

would be used solely for my academic research. A number of interviews unfortunately fell through, since I worked on a tight schedule and some of the respondents (e.g. the politicians) did as well. I had a single negative response to my request for an interview, that from an older Russian historian who had emigrated to Sweden. He called me up just to tell me “he had neither the time nor the wish to talk to me.”²⁹

In preparation for the interviews my knowledge of Estonian history was essential. It was similarly important to know some biographical facts about my respondents.³⁰ This knowledge functioned like a matrix, and helped me to detect inconsistencies, omissions or breaks in the narrative straight away, allowing me to request immediate clarification at a suitable point within the course of the interview (without interrupting the flow and logic of the narrative).

Particularly with the older generation of historians (or in the cases when I encountered defensive reactions), I assumed the role of a student, who is slightly naïve but with great inclination to learn more about Estonian history (also to avoid expert discussions). Ideally, the interview situation is characterised by an asymmetric communication, i.e. the researcher is there to listen and at times guide the interview, whereas the respondent does most of the talking.

The questionnaires

Generally, the opening question should tip-off early childhood memories. In his or her answer, the informant should be able to talk about his or her biographical development, turning points and changes in his or her life experiences.

The questionnaires provided in the appendix are the versions used for the interviews with ethnic Estonian historians and Estonian exiles. Clearly, the questionnaire is ideal typical, in that the order of questions changed at times; nor did I always cover the entire set of questions. Hence, it was no more than a guideline, my ‘hidden agenda’. Also, with experience I altered the wording of some of the questions.

In more detail, to ask about the role of history (memory, and culture) in Estonia seemed too vague a question. Therefore, I instead asked what the parents told the respondent about the inter-war period, the War and post-war years. Also, I asked whether that knowledge caused conflict in school or at university; whether the respondent encountered any schoolteachers (or later, professors) who conveyed a more authentic and critical account of Estonian history. I asked them if dissent was at all possible within *academia*. I enquired if the respondents knew of any cases where a professor of history had to leave his post because he

was too critical. Another question concerned the initial motives for the choice of studying history (although they were aware of the constraints and compromises this path would entail). I also enquired if they were able to transmit alternative accounts of Estonian history and how (once they were teaching). I then revealed my own research question of whether and how the Estonians were able to maintain a sense of cultural identity during occupation and foreign rule. I asked them to identify what the carriers of counter-history were to them. I asked for their view of émigré Estonian historians' roles in maintaining and furthering Estonian culture, and in the political developments in the 1980s and '90s. I did not ask the respondent to single out events which inspire national pride, as that would have been asking the obvious; it appeared from the interviews with Estonians that questions of national pride are connected to their cultural survival as a distinct nation. Also, I did not directly ask my respondents how they saw justice as being done with regard to the wrongs they had experienced during the Soviet period; instead, I asked them if they knew of court cases of lustration against collaborators during the last decade.³¹.

In most interviews, I enquired as to when the Soviet occupation ended; and I wanted to know *who* had been re-writing history since 1991, and which events had been uncovered in this process. In many interviews I pointed to the *problematique* that Estonian history textbooks are (more or less literally) translated for Russian pupils without bearing in mind cultural differences in understanding and historical interpretation, and that through these textbooks Russian schoolchildren acquire a negative image of themselves. In the follow-up question I asked them to identify controversial topics and taboo issues that existed during the Soviet period and in post-Soviet Estonia. I requested that they identify turning points or paradigm shifts in the (re-) interpretation of Estonia's recent past, and I raised the issue of sources of conflict in the Estonian society today and of its future development. Finally I enquired which events of Estonian history they would make mandatory in their children's history textbooks.

In sum, this set of questions allows one to bring forth (personal) identifications and a personal periodisation, subjective explanations, emotional reactions, and (intellectual) conceptualisations of the past (e. g. 'counter-memory', importance of traditions and descent, the idea of progress, exemplary significance of past events, etc.). They also make apparent the different dimensions history or historical experience can have for an individual (e.g. orientation daily life, politics, and culture, etc.).³²

If the Estonian exiles belonged to the older generation, I asked when and why they had left Estonia; I asked for memories of flight during the Second World War. With the younger I asked for memories and stories, transmitted by the parents (and grandparents), of inter-war Estonia and of the War. I enquired how they defined their own identity, and how it had changed over time. I wanted to know how they preserved their national or cultural identity (language, literature, societies etc.). I asked about their difficulties in adapting to their new host country. I asked who the carriers or bearers of Estonian cultural identity during the period of Soviet Estonia were; also, I was interested in their understanding of the role they themselves played during times of the Soviet occupation (economic help, contacts with Estonian dissidents, radio transmission, etc.). I asked about conflicting visions of history and present-day politics *between* Estonians abroad and in Estonia, and where the differences lie between the Estonian exile communities in Sweden, Germany, Canada, US (and about internal divisions within the respondents' community). Another question concerned their first experiences returning or travelling to Estonia. I asked how they perceived the political changes, whether they got involved in post-Soviet Estonian politics, and how they viewed the debates on history in Estonia since the late '80s.³³

I based the interviews with local Russians (and immigrant Russians) largely on the same set of questions used for ethnic Estonians. When I asked for memories of collective suffering and resistance, their answers obviously differed from the interviews with ethnic Estonians. I asked them to define their own identity in Estonia, how they viewed Estonians, and for their perception of the re-writing of history since the '80s and of the development of inter-ethnic relations (e.g. questions of integration and assimilation).

I also used the same set of question for the interviews with respondents of Estonian Russian background. I included questions such as if they went to a Russian or Estonian kindergarten or school, about the dominant language spoken at home, and about conflicts among parents and relatives due to cultural differences. Again, I spent time asking for perceptions of problems of inter-ethnic relations in Estonia.

3.3. *On self-reflexivity*

Self-reflexivity must begin before applying theoretical concepts and analytical categories that have been developed largely in and for the West European context to an Eastern European society.³⁴ Extra caution is needed to avoid the imposition of inappropriate categories. It is

important to identify where differences in the understandings exist. I attempt to show necessary redefinitions (or alterations) of concepts, such as of 'nation', 'national identity' and 'collective memory', in the context of Estonia.³⁵ The other issue that needs addressing is, to what extent the respondents have already internalised the 'western discourse' about them, i.e. which expectations on my part they anticipate. The construction of narrative identity in the interview is highly situational and depends on many factors, such as communicative aims and skills, mutual expectations, the institutional context and overall conventions, etc. This makes the researcher's self-reflexivity essential (Lucius-Hoene & Deppermann 2002: 32). As mentioned earlier, it is the ethical responsibility of the researcher not to pre-empt, judge, or jump to conclusions. In this, good conduct means continually reflecting and challenging one's own conclusions.

The interview setting

I conducted the interviews at the respondents' workplace (e. g. offices), in cafés or at their homes. The problem in public spaces was that the anonymity of the interviewees could not be guaranteed, in addition to an often-high noise level or other disruptions. To visit them in their homes had a great advantage, as it provided me with much additional (non-verbal) information about their (private) lives.

'Language Babel'

The languages in which I conducted the interviews were English and German; particularly with the older generation of historians it was German. I had two interpreters for those respondents who were only confident to speak Estonian or Russian (in such cases, both the narrator and the interpreter were recorded on tape). I contend that, to catch all the nuances and the cultural code of a language (with all its idioms and implied meanings), one has to live in the country and language community for some time. Thus, even though I know some Estonian, I would not have been able to understand all the intricacies conveyed in the interviews. By indicating my knowledge of the history, culture and language, I felt that I opened doors nonetheless, since I demonstrated my effort and willingness to learn about and acknowledge their way of life.

In the interviews I encountered various limitations of understanding. These were caused by cultural differences, generation gap, as well as linguistic misunderstandings. Experiences that respondents found almost impossible to convey were those of terror during the War and post-war years, the conditions of living under occupation, and the degree of accommodation one had to perform to get by in the system.³⁶ Certainly there were attempts made on both sides to establish some form of mutual understanding, to bridge the gaps, even if through such mundane methods as indicating that he or she used a similar recording device, or that we were born in the same year.

The respondents often voiced opinions that I would have wanted to protest against or oppose, but I had to maintain a position of interested tolerance regarding the informant's personal opinion and perspective; this goes back to the non-judgmental and impartial stance the researcher is required to take.

I was frequently asked what motivated my research interest and whether I had family ties in Estonia, i.e. whether my family background was Baltic-German. What made information about my own background important to the interviewee? I always said no, and affirmed that I was led solely by academic curiosity; however, it soon became clear that my German background placed me in a 'non-neutral' position. I realised that this may well have induced some of my respondents to react in certain ways, in their choice of stories and in their interpretation of past events. Particularly with the older generation of Estonian historians, with whom I often communicated in German, I witnessed pro-German avowals.³⁷ In those cases where the interviewee took me for British (or Swedish), more critical tones regarding the historical role of Germany in Estonia were expressed. In those cases where I was taken for British, the respondent would choose examples from the English cultural realm or history to further my understanding of his line of reasoning (e.g. Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth, or Cromwell's Glorious Revolution). Another respondent, who also presumed I was British, said that, as someone from England, I could not comprehend social upheaval and war-like situations.

As they considered me an outsider, the respondents often felt obliged to explain the historical or political reality to me in simplified terms. In doing so, they had to reduce complexity which was an interesting side effect. Also, being questioned by a foreigner may

have allowed them to relate complaints and criticism to me more freely than they would have done to a fellow Estonian.

“Work of memory, memory as work”

In some interviews, when the respondent touched on emotionally charged issues or traumatic memories that had been bottled up for a long time, I came to feel like an ‘unprepared therapist’. I had learned not to back down when I encountered an initial defense mechanism, nor did I try to fill silence if it occurred; rather, I bore through it and sat it out, even if it was uneasy. Oftentimes, the most interesting facts or interpretations were voiced after longer pauses (it put the respondent in the position to talk, since I did not). Likewise with traumatic experiences: I did not gloss them over, but was encouraging and attentive. According to my self-understanding, conducting life story interviews (particularly with participants of the older generations) is a form of ‘memory work’ (Rosenthal 1995: 167 f; Ricoeur 1999).³⁸

4. Generational group memories

Because of the ethnic antagonism prevailing in Estonia, I initially chose my respondents based on their ethnic background (i.e. Russians and Estonians); but I soon came to understand that there are divisions *within* the ‘collective memory’ of ethnic Estonian intellectuals (something not represented in the official national narrative of post-Soviet Estonia). Therefore, I aimed to get different viewpoints from *within* the Estonian group of historians by interviewing different age groups, Estonians living abroad, as well as Estonian Russian and Russian respondents.

The following interview with Ülle-Mai, an Estonian sociologist, informed my choice to explore the generational dimension of memory and identity further.³⁹ To the question, would she term it a ‘Soviet occupation’ until 1991, she replied that there are “several social times in Estonia, and in one time line, it was truly occupation all throughout. It was [an occupation] in the memories of those who were teenagers or older at the beginning of the 1940s. In their minds it was an occupation the whole time.” Contrary to this viewpoint, Ülle-Mai, born 1948, distinguishes different phases of ideological, mental, and economic occupation.⁴⁰

Karl Mannheim (1893 – 1947), a philosopher and sociologist who grappled with questions about social change and social continuity, saw the generational factor as crucial for the social dynamics; he was one of the pioneers in scrutinising this phenomenon (Kettler, Meja & Stehr 1989). He defines generation not in biological terms (i.e. a quantitative birth cohort that spans over 25 – 30 years) but in sociological terms, as formed by collective historical experience (particularly during the formative years of youth).⁴¹

He distinguishes between the ‘location of a generation’ (Germ., “*Generationslagerung*”), including all people born around the same time and into the same historical community and socio-historical space, and the concept of ‘generational context’ (Germ., “*Generationszusammenhang*”), designating more than just the mere presence of members of the same age group at a certain time and place (Mannheim 1928: 309). Members of the ‘generational context’ constitute a community of destiny (Germ., “*Schicksalsgemeinschaft*”) through their participation in the *Zeitgeist*;⁴² it is the collective experience, for instance, of fighting side by side in the Great War that functions as a unifying point of identification for a respective generational context (Ibid.: 313).⁴³

Mannheim writes that a heightened socio-historical dynamic brings forward the constitution of a generational context, and speaks of aerae and nascent socio-historical structures (Germ., “*dem aufgelockerten, werdenden Neuen*”); because in this case, conventional and traditional ways can no longer answer the pressing questions of the time, and the situation gives rise to new impulses and demands new answers (Ibid.: 310).

In Mannheim’s thinking, members of a generational context cannot yet be considered a generation. A generational context can generate different ‘generational units’ (Germ., “*Generationseinheiten*”) (Ibid.: 311). These generational units are distinguished by differences in basic intentions, reaction to pertinent questions of the time, i.e. their ‘generational style’ or *entelechy* (such as an axiom, an episteme, or a paradigm) (Ibid.: 316 f.).⁴⁴ Mannheim illustrates this point with the example of the conservative and the liberal youth in Germany, who both debate the same socio-historical problems (and thus belong to the same generational context), but process their experiences differently and come to different conclusions.⁴⁵ When relating this back to what has been said earlier, it is precisely the biographical method which enables the researcher to obtain information about an individual’s experiential patterns, interpretive frameworks, handling of the past, and political orientation. Once the traits have been established for the individual it is then possible to look for collective patterns (i.e. an *entelechy*) within a wider group. A generational context only qualifies as a generation if it produces (and is informed by) such a generational *entelechy*

(Ibid.: 319). Mannheim concedes that not every generational context produces a new generational *entelechy* (Ibid.: 318), but that instead members of a generational context participate in already existing *entelechies*, which had been brought to fruition by a preceding or succeeding generation (Ibid.: 315).⁴⁶

Research design

I initially identified four generational contexts (G 1 – G 4) among the historians (or intellectuals more generally) in post-Soviet Estonia.⁴⁷ As Mannheim stated, age, ethnic background and local identity are a set of ‘natural factors’, which taken on their own fall short of accounting for the complexity of historical change (or collective identities, I should add) (Ibid.: 320, 329). I attempt to examine if, in these generational contexts, we can single out different generational units by their specific ways of remembering and interpreting the past.

Ricoeur called it an ‘ethic of memory’ specific to each group. He uses the term ‘ethic of memory’ for the actual process of remembering, i.e. the action of remembering which encapsulates three different aspects: 1) ‘memory work’ (the pathological-therapeutic level), 2) the ‘duty to remember’ (the ethical-political approach), and 3) the ‘praxis of memory’ (the pragmatic level). The last aspect comprises the narrative of personal and collective identity, which, as Ricoeur maintains, are often connected to claims of identity and to uses and abuses of history (Ricoeur 1999: 5 – 11). While conducting and analysing the life story interviews, I could find that all these three levels came into play.

From the discussion so far, it emerged that historical experience, political interest, socio-economic *milieu* etc. (factors that Mannheim located in the middle strata of a society) all inform a group’s identity. Hence, what Mannheim referred to as *entelechy*, I simply call group identity or a group’s specific way of remembering and telling the past. Evidently, generational units can cut across ethnic boundaries and local identities, and unite different age groups.

My respondents were born between the 1920s and the mid 1970s; they were either educated in inter-war Estonia and worked throughout the Soviet period (‘War generation’, G 1), or they emigrated in the early 1940s and continued their careers abroad. Some of the interviewees had received all of their academic education in Soviet Estonia (‘Khrushchev generation’, G 2 and the ‘Brezhnev generation’, G 3) and then had to adjust to the new political conditions and ideological changes from the late ‘80s onwards (some had already gone through this process in the 1960s). And lastly, there were the younger historians, who had commenced their university studies in newly independent Estonia (‘Gorbachev generation’, G 4).

In what follows, I list which events or collective experiences shaped each generational context (G 1 – G 4), and quote examples of their self-description as a group or generation (or description of their generation by others). As always, this is an ideal typical construction of the four co-existing generational contexts in post-Soviet Estonia, but as will be illustrated they cannot be neatly separated from each other. Rather, they inter-relate and overlap, shaping Estonia's 'historical culture'. To avoid any confusion of terms, I would like to make clear that I did not analyse the transmission of stories and memories *within* families (i.e. inter-generational transmission);⁴⁸ instead I concentrated on the various ways in which different groups within the intellectual elite of post-Soviet Estonia narrate the past.⁴⁹

The subsequent sections deal with the four generational contexts (G 1 – G 4) among historians in post-Soviet Estonia in some detail. While the main focus is on Estonian historians, they are then contrasted with the experiences of Estonian exiles, local Russians, the Russian-speaking community, and lastly of Estonian Russians. Not all of these five groups can be discussed for every generational context, and the order in which these different groupings come up varies.

- 1) (Ethnic) Estonian historians
- 2) Local Russian historians (historic Russians)
- 3) (Soviet) Russian historians (Russian-speaking immigrants)
- 4) Estonian Russian historians
- 5) Estonian exile historians (Estonians abroad)

4.1. War generation: the 'lost generation' (G 1)

Estonians

The so-called "War generation" was born in the 1920s and '30s (i.e. before WW II), and has personal (childhood) memories of the inter-war period (schooling and sometimes university education).⁵⁰ For members of this age cohort the past is filled with the painful experience of loss and even trauma. It is a generation frightened by the War years and Stalinist terror (e.g. repressions, mass-deportations, and forced collectivisation). A significant part of the men of this generation had to make 'consequential choices' during the War years (or were at times left with no choice), such as conscription into the Red Army, fighting as anti-Soviet partisans or in the German army, flight to Finland or elsewhere abroad, as well as degrees of

accommodation to the Soviet regime.⁵¹ In addition to memories of the War, they may carry traces of the War as war injuries and physical scars.⁵² Faced with a real threat to their lives up to the early 1950s, Estonians of this generation preserved their personal counter-accounts in opposition to the official Soviet version of historical reality. Hence, they display a tendency to over-idealise the inter-war period as the ‘golden age’ in Estonia’s history.⁵³ Estonians of this generation present the sharpest private-public divide in their memories.⁵⁴ The stress on education and the importance of moral values are other features that shaped this generation.⁵⁵ Pille, born 1971, remembers the highly moralistic stories she found in children’s books from the inter-war period.⁵⁶ Vilhelm states that, for him and those born in the 1920s, these values were something palpable and real. He recalls how his father

“was a ‘man from the first awakening’ [Est., *esimine äärkamisaeg*], by that I mean totally altruistic, working in a number of non-profit associations and enterprises. In the 1920s he returned from the War, still a young man; he established a co-operative dairy farm (...). I asked him once, why he did not do something for himself instead, and he replied that this would have been the easiest of things, but that he had not even given it a thought. (...) Candour, conscientiousness, [values] today’s people are lacking. I do not want to say the youth; (...) we always tend to complain about the younger.”⁵⁷

He adds that already in the 1960s and ‘70s these high moral standards and communal values were devalued or re-evaluated and had lost their original meaning.

Ülle-Mai, born into the next generational context, recalls from her own school days in Tallinn that many of her teachers “from the first Republic were (...) carriers of that mentality.”⁵⁸ And she goes on to describe: “to be active, to be honest, to respect others; very humanistic. To be correct, to do your schoolwork correctly. (...) It is our cultural heritage, because we belong to the German cultural realm. (...) This was the mentality.”⁵⁹

Many Estonian historians of this generation emphatically referred to themselves as “peasant sons” or “peasant boys”. Kalev, born 1930, commenced the interview by telling me that Estonians had been peasants and slaves for 700 years,⁶⁰ which demonstrates how, for the self-definition of the generation born in the 1920s, connection to the countryside or the farmstead is still very significant.⁶¹ Vilhelm uses the analogy of native Indians to describe the Estonians’ battle against the Soviet military occupation: “the red activists were entrenched in various buildings. They acted just like white squatters on Indian land. They came out to do some raids and killings. Hard to believe, you can read this in Karl May or [James Fennimore] Cooper.”⁶²

Although born a generation later, Nelli refers to herself as an “aboriginal; I like this word, however in the true sense of the word Estonians are not aboriginal people, because of

the Swedish, Russian, and German influence, but I like to call myself an aboriginal, and so I am an aboriginal.” She opposes this image of a people culturally rooted in the country to the idea of the *homo sovieticus* (and of the European Union).⁶³

Estonian exiles (Est., väliseestlased)

The initial hypothesis about Estonian exiles of this generation was that they had preserved an often-idealised memory of inter-war Estonia. One respondent, born in 1960 to Estonian parents in the USA, said that exiled Estonian intellectuals of his parent’s generation needed to legitimise *why* they had had to leave and live abroad in a ‘daily plebiscite’ (i.e. the illegal Soviet annexation of Estonia).⁶⁴ They had the identity of political refugees, a status they finally lost in 1991 when they could (in theory) return to free Estonia.

However, the two respondents in Sweden belonging to G 1 were rather critical of the political developments in inter-war Estonia and in post-Soviet Estonia. Iivo remarked that the social security for the elderly had been better in the 1980s than it is nowadays;⁶⁵ also in the interview he openly referred to himself as a Marxist.⁶⁶ Although not overtly stated in the interviews, issues of envy and mutual accusations between those Estonians that had fled and those who remained in the ESSR existed. After 1991 some Estonian exiles returned to Estonia and at times behaved as know-it-all *Wessis*. One Estonian Russian respondent criticised the obsolescent perception of Estonian exiles (from North America), who could not contribute positively to the political process, since they fail to face up to the fact that the Russian-speaking minority in Estonia amounts up to 40 % and are a part of today’s’ Estonia as well.⁶⁷ Questions about who suffered the most or who can claim to be the custodian of true Estonian-ness are at stake here. The Estonian exiles had to adjust to the conditions of their new countries of residence (Sweden, Germany, Canada, USA, or Australia). One noticeable feature among Estonians in Sweden was that, almost immediately, publishing houses and an educational infrastructure were set up. A lack of State subsidies for establishing Estonian schools during the first 12 years drew the exile community in Sweden closer together. However, this seemingly tight-knit community was nevertheless far from being a homogeneous group, as the political divisions (into supporters of Päts and of his rival Jaan Tönnison) persisted.⁶⁸ In the late 1940s, the Estonian exile community in Sweden was faced with some naivety by the Swedes, who in their majority expressed the viewpoint that Estonia had been ‘liberated’ by the Soviet Union, or outright hostility, branding Estonians as ‘Nazi collaborators’. Siim, who grew up in Sweden, recalls:

“From Sweden in the 1950s many young people left for Canada and the US, because of the Cold War and the internal political situation. (...) I believe that some Estonians hoped to get as far away from the Soviet Union as possible, they did not trust the Swedish Government with Bo Östen Undén, the foreign minister, who stood with his name for the “*Balt Utlämningen*” and who called the Soviet government democratic.”⁶⁹

Suum explains the difference between Estonians who had fled to Sweden and those who had been evacuated to Germany: “it’s no coincidence that most of the Estonian intellectuals came to Sweden, as they felt Nordic, and Germany was Hitler - Germany, whereas Sweden had a fully functioning democracy. And via the [historical] Estonian Swedes, Estonia had natural contacts with Sweden. This bridge had always existed.”⁷⁰ He explained that the Estonians that came to Nazi Germany were more or less connected to the Nazi German occupying power, as members of the military, as civilians, or as people who felt connected because they spoke the language well or had relatives in Germany; the majority of them emigrated further to the USA or Canada. Moreover, it was related to me that the Estonian exile community in the USA (i.e. New York) was most conservative; proof of this is that they organised an annual march for the *Vaps* leader Sirk.⁷¹

With regard to the development of the Estonian language, it can be noted that the Estonian exiles took on Swedish idioms (or included English words in the US, Canadian, or Australian exiles respectively) in their language use. Possibly only the older generation (G 1) preserved an old-fashioned way of Estonian.⁷² Likewise, the so-called ‘homeland Estonians’ in Soviet Estonia included new words and concepts in their language and in this way developed it further. In that sense neither Estonian exiles nor homeland Estonians can claim to have preserved the Estonian language; much like identity, language is continuously evolving.⁷³

The following quote by the Estonian writer Jaan Kross illustrates the psychological and moral dilemma that those Estonians who left their home country share with all refugees, leaving behind their home country, their reading audience, and their mother tongue - which was their primary working tool:

“ ‘This is my battle—with the Tsar and the Tsarist empire, with what we got. (...) I thank God that he gave me the strength for this decision. That he made me realise: What could I possibly do abroad?! I have no money to publish. And if I were to get some, my message would not reach the people here. And if it did, it would be the message of a traitor! No, no, if one leaves, then not to Switzerland, but there.’ [Points to the darkness behind the windows] ‘To Irkutsk and further on, where the others are. But for me the only right thing to do is to be where I am forced to be. (...) Like an iron nail in the flesh of the Tsarist empire’ ” (transl. from Germ; Kross 1994: 315 f).⁷⁴

Russian historians of that age group were the most difficult to get ahold of for an interview. One reason for this may be that they are concerned about making too critical a statement about the policies of the Estonian government.⁷⁵ One respondent, a philologist born in 1933, belongs to Estonia's historic Russian community, and refers to himself as 'Estonian Russian'. In the interview as well as in his writing after 1991, he argues for the historical place of Russians in Estonia. Members of the historic Russian community share the experience of being faced with an overall atmosphere of prejudice and open discrimination, (mostly) by the Estonians.⁷⁶ In the interviews with other Russians of the second generational context whose families had lived in Estonia for many generations, I was told that their grandparents were discriminated against in inter-war Estonia: due to their lack of Estonian language skills they could not get into certain professions.⁷⁷ After the first Soviet year, Estonians began to perceive the local Russians as representatives of Soviet power. Whereas in 1941/44 the Germans persecuted mostly Jews, Gypsies, and alleged communists, the local Estonian OK of the Tartu Province also began to deport Russians from villages along the Lake Peipus (but were stopped by the Germans).⁷⁸ Similarly, after 1944, the new Russian immigrants had a bias against the local Russian community, as 'Whites'.⁷⁹ Nonetheless, the 'local Russians' (as they are also called) shared the experience of loss of Estonia's independence in 1940 (and 1944) with ethnic Estonians, while this was not a formative event for the new Russian immigrant settling in Estonia after 1944. Still, as Hariton remarks, there are certain interpretations of historical reality where local and new Russians concur:

"For the majority of Estonians it's still a very clear-cut picture that those Estonians who fought on the German side are true patriots and those who fought on the Russian side weren't. From the Russian point of view the opposite is true (...) [they] consider those Estonians who fought on the Soviet side [to be] true patriots and the SS [Legions] of course have a very negative image. (...) This is one of the issues where the local Russians, those Russians who lived here from the inter-war period onwards, agree with those Russians who came to Estonia after 1945."⁸⁰

Furthermore, Hariton added that there is a third category of Russian living in Estonia, i.e. Russian intellectuals, who have already gained a deeper understanding of Estonian history and identity.⁸¹ He voiced criticism with regard to the treatment of the Russian-speaking minority in post-Soviet Estonia; and he says that it is mostly Russians of his generation and those who are middle-aged, who consider the protection of Russian culture, language and education to be important (as an MP he worked in a cultural commission for these ends). He admits that Russians in Estonia generally are less interested in their identity, because they had adopted a

Soviet identity; also, they are aware that it is not advantageous to be Russian in Estonia.⁸² He elaborates:

“They [Estonians] just want the Russians to learn the Estonian language and to internalise the Estonian culture and [they believe] this would resolve all problems. In my opinion - and I am certain that (...) most Russians in Estonia would support this - integration is a two-way street and that a one-sided process cannot really bear any fruits. Since this makes Russians think that integration is just a hollow concept and they perceive integration as ‘Estonisation’.”⁸³

Hariton, like other Estonian respondents of that generational context, deplores the more pragmatic stance of the younger generation in Estonia, which in his opinion takes no interest in its own identity.⁸⁴

*Estonian Russians*⁸⁵

Paula, a respondent of mixed ethnic background, was born in an Estonian settlement in the St. Petersburg *oblast* in 1933. The Germans resettled her family (she describes it as being “deported back”) to Estonia when she was ten years old.⁸⁶ In her early years, the experience of the loss of her family’s farm, through collectivisation and near starvation as well as social inequality, had been decisive. Unlike the idealised picture of inter-war Estonia held by many Estonians of that generation, she recalls how in 1943 her family initially stayed with a wealthy Estonian farmer (a veteran of the War of Independence, who had been rewarded with a piece of land), who made them stay in the cellar where the foodstuff for the animals was kept. They then went on to stay with a very poor traditional Estonian peasant family instead, who were willing to share what little they had. Thus for her the Soviet period meant a gain in social standing, as compared to her previous life in Russia and the War years.

Her other formative experience was that of social exclusion: although she spoke Estonian, due to her mixed background she felt she was excluded through the years in Estonia. Arguably it was not only due to her Russian name (as she herself explains it), but also because she did not share the common experience of inter-war Estonia and the first Soviet year with the majority of Estonians (she had, however, witnessed the bombing of Tartu in 1944). This feeling of exclusion reached its climax in 1991, when Paula was asked to apply for Estonian citizenship, despite the fact that she had lived and worked in Estonia all her adult life; this generated a sense of indignation. In the end, she told me, she only received Estonian citizenship because her husband had been born and raised in Estonia. Paula uses the collective “we” twice in the interview. Firstly when explaining that

“40,000 ethnic Estonians [that] have been born in Russia, i.e. the second generation or our children, a lot of them had to be naturalised [as they had become stateless after 1991]. (...) I am sure that these people (...) feel that they have been humiliated, that they have to pass an examination to become citizens, let alone the Russians.”⁸⁷

She was also critical of the treatment of the Russian-speaking minority in post-Soviet Estonia, stating that the citizenship legislation really is about power interests: “our politicians are not thinking about democracy in terms of participation of all people, perhaps [the citizenship legislation] is an easy way to hide egoistic interest in the name of the nation, our culture, our language.”⁸⁸ The second “we” refers to the group of intellectuals who joined the CP because they believed in communism or in socialist ideals. She felt betrayed after she found out about Soviet policies in the Russia of the 1920s and ‘30s, about the events of 1956 and 1968. Perhaps one can speak of a ‘betrayed generation’, i.e. betrayed by the Party and misunderstood by the younger generation of her students. She describes how from the ‘70s onwards “they” tried to conduct semi-dissident work *within* the limits of the system. With the Afghanistan War “they” knew that the problems were systemic and “they” attempted to gather information on ideas of de-militarisation, peace and justice. In the same vein, she explained her involvement as a Baltic deputy as an enthusiastic attempt to reform democratically the Soviet Union Treaty.⁸⁹ Thus unlike many Estonian members of G 1, she draws a more nuanced picture of the Soviet period.

Like other members of G 1, Paula associates education with moral integrity and holds it in very high esteem. She recalls that, back in the Estonian settlement, “the teachers in the village were the only educated and very respected people; and my own teachers, I admired them, they were *real* teachers”.⁹⁰ Later in the interview she remembers “I came to Tartu after the War. It was all in ruins, but our school was without any damage, a white building, just standing on the top of the hill.” Education contained a notion of invincible integrity. I use the term ‘integrity’, for Paula says: “I have been involved in politics for a long time and I have been teaching these ‘red subjects’, so, it’s impossible to go back to [the study of] history, it’s too late.”⁹¹

Although the ‘thaw’ (i.e. political and cultural liberalisation under Khrushchev) and Soviet consumerism constitute the formative experiences more for the post-war generation (as G 2 was then in their formative most impressionable years), it was the *Zeitgeist* that greatly shaped Paula’s life as well.⁹² It can thus be argued that, due to her path in life, she is in fact located between the two generational contexts. Paula characterises the next generational context: “it is very common for the generation a bit younger than I am (...) that the families

and relatives tried to create a safe environment for their children, [and] not to push them into the past.”⁹³ At times they may even have encouraged their children to adapt to the system; in any case, due to this, we can suspect a degree of alienation between parents and their children.

4.2. *Khrushchev generation: ‘post-war children’, ‘Stagnas’ (G 2)*

“Ye who read are still among the living; but I who write shall have long since gone my way into the region of shadows. For indeed strange things shall happen, and secret things be known, and many centuries shall pass away, ere these memorials be seen of men. And, when seen, there will be some to disbelieve and some to doubt, and yet a few who will find much to ponder upon in the characters here graven with a stylus of iron. The year had been a year of terror, and of feelings more intense than terror for which there is no name upon the earth.”

- E. A. Poe (Shadows – A Parable)

*“And when finally the bottom fell out,
I became withdrawn,
The only thing I know how to do,
Was to keep on keepin’ on,
Like a bird that flew,
Tangled up in blue.”*

- B. Dylan

Estonians

Members of this generational context were born from the 1940s up to the mid-1950s. They experienced the War or Stalinist terror as children, and were young adults under Khrushchev. A ‘fatherless generation’, most of the respondents were raised without fathers (as they had died in the War, were imprisoned, had fled abroad, or were sick and therefore unapproachable). As mentioned earlier, their parents had often transmitted scant information on what had happened during the War and post-war years, but it was “in the air.”⁹⁴ Most Estonian families had relatives returning from Siberia in the mid-1950s, which constituted another source of information (as a ‘subversive potential’) on the recent past. Ülle-Mai recalls all the family photographs and suitcases of the deported relatives still in their house; and Nelli remembers how she “knew” that her aunt (and other relatives) were in Siberia (and had died there).⁹⁵ Ülle-Mai recalls:

“Aha, I [was] born in Tallinn during the after-war period and it is quite meaningful. It is the generation of after-war children. (...) It is a special childhood. The first part of this was the Stalin period with those deportations (...). The other part is when I was in my teenage years, the Khrushchev thaw. Everything was a bit easier and a bit better; all the society came out from the war mentality. (...) When I came to university it was like a conclusion to these two earlier periods, because then we first understood that we live[d

under some kind of extraordinary condition; that something had happened before us and we must now understand what really happened; because at home what really had happened wasn't told to us.”⁹⁶

The play “Black on White”, directed by Heiner Goebbel, evoked a similarly ominous atmosphere that something extraordinary, an unpronounceable catastrophe, had taken place. In the play Goebbel uses Poe’s deadly vision unfolded in “Shadows – a Parable”, which is partially quoted above.

The majority of this generation went through the Soviet system. To my cautious question about her membership in the communist youth organisation Ülle-Mai replies:

“I was a pioneer, a young communist and later a party member. I have done it all [*she laughs*]. But it was not about ideology, each and every step of it. It was not about the great Lenin being our idol. No, it was all very practical. It was interesting to do something together with other children. (...) [T]hose who were not members of the pioneer organisation - there were two in my class - they were not in our group, they were a little strange. (...) But our *Komsomol* life at school was very active, all these summer camps and every kind of competition and (...) discussions on youth problems, on love problems.”⁹⁷

With Khrushchev’s ‘Soviet consumerism’ came rising living standards; this generation was probably particularly susceptible to forms of acquiescence with the system (i.e. career advancement through party membership). On the other hand, what united many members of this generational context was the shared belief in the grand narrative of building a communist society. Ülle-Mai relates with some enthusiasm how they translated Western, slightly leftist works of literature, studied at Jüri Lotman’s school of Semiotics, and discussed Neo Marxist ideas.⁹⁸

It was this generation that mastered ‘double mental standards’ in their daily lives.⁹⁹ Many respondents of this generation used expressions such as: “I did not actualise or realise it, but I knew it all the time”; as though they did not dare to draw the conclusions at the time.¹⁰⁰ Subsequently, it is also with this generation that strategies of self-justification, so-called “white lies”, are prevalent.

It can be said that whereas issues of collaboration with the occupying powers are most pertinent within the first generational context, and they may be inclined towards forgetfulness (also in the interview situation), this second generational context was more affected by issues of accommodation to and complicity with the Soviet regime.

The ‘hippie time’, another current of the late ‘60s, influenced some members of this generational context.¹⁰¹ The crushing of the Prague Spring (as part of the ‘Brezhnev doctrine’)

led some members of this generational context to reassess their moral standards and belief systems. Other intellectuals of this generational context went through a painful process of disillusionment with the system in the late '70s or late '80s (and the process of regaining meaning and altering one's world view may still be ongoing).¹⁰²

Nora told me, with a slightly ironic undertone, that she belonged to the "Stagna-generation", or more precisely that the wider Estonian society labelled her that. The term holds a slightly derogatory meaning, implying that these people are not to be trusted.¹⁰³ Nora drew on the atrabilious image of a bird, which, though it appears to be flying, is in fact standing still for her generation (hence the short quote of Dylan's "*Tangled up in Blue*"). A similar joke was made about Brezhnev himself, i.e. he was referred to as a mock-up on wheels.¹⁰⁴ Nora remarked further:

"What makes things difficult is that we [*pause*], that when somebody of our generation, makes a statement which elicits controversy, people can just say: 'you are a *Stagna*. This is why you think this way.' And this is why many *Stagnas*, or older people, simply restrain themselves [from participating in the public debate]: to avoid being stigmatised *Stagna*, even when they are right."¹⁰⁵

It is this generation that forms a large part of the political elite in Estonia today. Nelli makes an impassioned statement on the current political elite in Estonia and the Soviet legacy:

"I was born in '44. (...) This already tells you the story about who I am, because in 1944 in Estonia you could not be on the 'right side', if you call the 'right side' the Russian side. My mother and father met in 1943. So, my father was foolish or not at his best and (...) in the German army. But he [the current Prime Minister] was born (...) in 1945 or 1946. (...) His father was foolish or whatever, but in the end he was on the Russian side. This is the difference, because all members of the existing parliament (...) are born (...) on this so-called 'right side'. (...) [For] half a century the 'right side' was the Russian side, the Soviet Union side. (...) Mentally, they [the MPs] are all on the 'right side'. (...) They are trained to live this way."¹⁰⁶

Correspondingly, Pille, herself from a later generational context, held that many of those born in the 1940s had been effectively brainwashed in the 1950s, as they continued to believe that they had lived in the "happiest country in the world". She added that she does not like to see those people in high government positions.¹⁰⁷

Local Russians

Zbigniew, part of the local Russian community in Estonia, has a negative view of the "stagnation period", a time that Heiner Müller, a well-known German writer, referred to as

“the throes of late socialism” in the play “Leaden Time” (Germ., *Bleierne Zeit*, 1978). I asked him whether he saw the time up to 1991 as being a ‘Soviet occupation’, and he answered that:

“It was ‘*Stagna* period’, stagnation period, and no longer the time of [Soviet] occupation. (...) At that time there were no opportunities available. (...) One just had to waste time. (...) Of course, some studied; they seized what the time had on offer. (...) If (...) it had been ‘Estonian time’ all the time, then of course I would have done something else.”¹⁰⁸

Zbigniew chose not to engage the system and became a tailor instead, leading a ‘Huckleberry Finn’ kind of life-style (as somebody who goes his own way and lives by his own standards) at his grandmother’s summerhouse in the 1960s. Even today, Zbigniew lives in a cabin outside Tallinn rather than a house.

(Soviet) Russians

Zbigniew dissociates himself (and his community) from the new immigrants, ascertaining that they view Estonian history through ‘Soviet eyes’, or more precisely, with a ‘laughing eye’, deeming the restitution of inter-war Estonia or the revised history of the War of Independence as nothing but a ‘fairy tale’. And while the ‘historical thoughts’ of the ‘newcomer Russians’ go to far-off places, his ‘historical thoughts’ remain in Estonia.¹⁰⁹ The Russians of this generation, whose parents came to Soviet Estonia as immigrant workers after 1944, are shaped by different collective memories (and internalised the Soviet way of life). To them the War of Independence, the inter-war Republic of Estonia, and the loss of Estonia’s independence are only ‘hollow’ historical facts. Hence, for this group the year 1991 was constitutive, since this was when they lost their Soviet identity and became a minority (of stateless foreigners). Many of them share the sense of roots; Elena (vice mayor of the city of Narva council for cultural affairs and sports) told me she is a child of Narva; but some minutes into the interview she described features of a *diaspora* identity: “I am a stranger among my own people [Russians in Russia], and I am on my own among strangers [Estonians in Estonia].”¹¹⁰

One respondent brought to my attention the existence of a small group of Russians in Estonia “which tries to merge with Estonians, attempting to be even more Estonian than Estonians themselves, who feel uncomfortable with their Russian names and even change them.”¹¹¹ Earlier in that interview we had spoken about the historical parallel to those Estonians, the so-called juniper Germans or wannabe Germans (Est., *kadakasakslased*), who endeavoured to blend into the German cultural sphere; Hariton concluded that this phenomenon nowadays is just as unfortunate.¹¹² I met one respondent of Russian-Armenian

background (of the second generational context, G 2) who aptly fits this characterisation. He demonstrated a highly critical attitude toward Russia, proclaiming that it is Russia's tradition to destroy other cultures and to create chaos, violence, and suffering. He labelled this the principle of the 'continuous return of Ivan the Terrible' (or the 'Genghis Kahn tradition'). He basically described the Russian society as non-functional and Russians as having an authoritarian type of personality (something he finds proof of in the fact that they never publicly protested against the colonisation of Estonia). He portrayed his group of friends growing up in the 1960s as:

"Really democratically-minded Russian people [who] disliked the stamp 'Russian'. (...) During all these years Estonians were hoping that something good would emerge from the presence of the Russian speaking community. Nothing however did, because freely thinking Russians (...) tend to mix with the locals. They tend to seek for their roots. (...) When I was younger I had a period when I said: 'no, I am not Russian.' Now, I am a little older (...) and I accept my identity as Estonian, Armenian, and Russian."¹¹³

Towards the end of the interview Eduard argued that:

"Estonians have been efficiently assimilating oppressors without applying violence. Perhaps this experience of living under Danish, Swedish, Russian, and German rule (...) produced some (...) defense mechanism among the Estonians that is effective in (...) situations of subjugation."¹¹⁴

*Second generation Estonians in exiles*¹¹⁵

The children of émigré Estonians learned about inter-war Estonia only through their parents' stories (also through relatives and friends) and had to re-assess this second-hand knowledge on their first visits to the Estonian SSR in the 1970s.

Siim was born in Estonia in 1943. His mother managed to flee to Finland with him in 1944, where the family reunited and saw its way to Sweden. He describes his visit to Estonia in 1979:

"I remember my brother's birthday on July 17. We were in Tallinn then. He plays the piano and is an old singer. I sing sometimes too. Our cousin Tõnu, the son of my mother's older brother Kalju, is also a singer. A musically gifted family, we decided to celebrate his birthday in style and invited Tõnu and his wife to the Hotel Viru. (...) It was a wonderful warm evening, and since I still had a bottle of whisky in my room, we all decided to go upstairs. But a uniformed 'gorilla' wanted to prevent our guests [*Tõnu and his wife - the author*] from joining us. (...) I persisted and asked him in Estonian what he wanted (...) but he kept saying: *h-u-a-h-u-a*. (...) The Tallinn Estonians stood shyly by my side. Then I tried it in English (...), then in German (...), and finally in French (...). My relatives on the other side [of the glass door] got worried and told me to stop it and come with them. The Estonians got anxious too. (...) Later when we all sat outside again, the gorilla cruised

around us breathing heavily [*imitates his breathing – the author*]. At that point Tõnu and my relatives turned to me: ‘now you see how it really is in this country!’ I replied: ‘now tell me where they got you?’ (...) Still followed by the ‘gorilla’, whispering, or rather bleating behind my back, I asked the receptionist in Estonian to tell me exactly what the man wanted. She replied that she couldn’t tell me. (...) This incident was typical for the time and it stands for the dilemma of whether to give in when you travelled back to Soviet Estonia, the old home, and behave like Soviets or the way the native people had to behave; that is to give in to those ‘gorillas’. (...) [Or] continue to behave like you were in (...) the West.”¹¹⁶

Siim continues:

“The older brother of my mother in particular, [was] a civilized man, a right Estonian (...), but his vocabulary was already twisted (...), for instance, when he said that he and the Red Army “liberated” Valga in 1944. His entire world view was up side down and against what I felt, I had to react as coming from the West, as representative of the ‘white men’.”¹¹⁷

As he had been active in Estonian politics in the ‘90s, he acquired some insight into the traces of the Soviet mindset:

“I was a minister in the first coalition headed by Mart Laar, together with people that I would have called ‘white people’, sharing the same ideals. I expected that they would have a decent [code of] conduct among each other, but I was personally disappointed. People behaved in a typically Soviet manner, although they carried the blue, white and black flag. (...) I was the so-called ‘scandal minister’ in Estonia. Never in my life was I involved in scandals, but in Estonia I was the ‘scandal minister’. (...) In Sweden and in the rest of the West, and here [in Germany], you are seen as a respectable and normal person, unless you do something wrong. In Estonia this was not so. As a minister you are by definition a fraud, a villain, a scandal type, who steals (...). This distrustful attitude, (...) this is how it was.”¹¹⁸

In a similar vein, he explained that the historian’s word is worth nothing in Estonia, as they are known from the Soviet period to just spread lies. Whereas the experience he recalls depicts his encounter with ‘alienated’ Estonians, he reminisces about the old days when Estonians trusted each other:

“It goes without saying that if you hear the Estonian language somewhere you approach your compatriot and ask where he is from. This is what I learned from my father. He called it the ‘duty of a compatriot’: You meet another Estonian and you help him; that is only natural. But then about fifteen years ago I met Estonians from Estonia, ‘homeland Estonians’, in Sweden. (...) And when I approached them, they were irritated, asking me what I wanted.”¹¹⁹

Pauls, born 1948 in a Displaced Persons Camp in Germany, tells me about his first one-day visit to Riga in 1975:

“My first experience in Riga that I still remember (...) we arrived and they [the tour guides] let us out at the monument of freedom [*the so-called “Milda” – the author*]. I went to the kiosk close by to get the local paper. (...) I observed that the man before me bought *Zīņā*, the party paper. I needed to go to the public toilets [they are located downstairs in this public place]. The man had also gone down and I saw him tearing up his paper, in very long, single strips of paper, all evenly measured of exactly the same length. I have never seen something like that before. He used the paper, sheet by sheet, as toilet paper [*he laughs*]. That I never forgot: my first experience in Riga. Really, his skill, *snap, snap, snap*, perfectly even strips of paper [*he laughs*]. (...) An expert in his field! They had a shortage of paper at the time. There was no toilet paper, not until the 1990s. (...) I thought: life teaches you, life shapes you, life makes experts. That he tore the paper in pieces, so fast, so perfectly, I truly admired the man!”¹²⁰

This little anecdote is multileveled. The kiosk was located near the famous and highly symbolic freedom monument. Pauls’ first impression of the stranger buying the Party paper probably was of a typical ‘Soviet man’. But once he went downstairs to the public toilet, he came to witness a different reality. To buy this paper (and not just any one) and use it as toilet paper may well have been a conscious act of defiance (a daily or weekly ritual). This initiation to his parents’ home country made him realise the double standards in Soviet Latvia, i.e. that Latvians who seem to conform in public life (i.e. above ground, in the open) may not do so in the private sphere (underground, semi-private).

4.3. *Brezhnev generation: the ‘transitional generation’ (G 3)*

Estonians

Members of this generational context were born between the late 1950s and mid-‘60s. Those born in the mid-‘50s went to university in the ‘70s and worked for 10 years before *perestroika*. Others born in the ‘60s were very influenced by the events of the Afghanistan War and the Polish *Solidarnosc* movement.¹²¹ Oskar, born in 1960, was among a group of students that founded a small movement, the ‘Young Tartu’ (Est., *Noor Tartu*), which was directed against Brezhnev’s Russification policies of the late 1970s. Among members of G 3 an overall disgust or revulsion for the corrupt client-patron system is voiced, i.e., against compromising careerist and impractical idealists (Johnston 1997). Oskar shares his thoughts on the Soviet legacy:

“The Estonian Socialist Republic is everywhere and it is a part of me as well. The worst thing is that it’s still capable of recreating itself. The children that grow up today are not totally of the cultural plane of the Estonian Republic. Part of them grew up as Soviets.”¹²²

He continues to characterise this ‘Soviet mentality of slaves’:

“[A] man [who] treats someone’s luck and success as a loss for himself. If someone got lucky it must inevitably have harmed someone else. This is why they hate anyone who is rich. (...) A free person is happy if somebody else is successful. A (...) mental slave is envying those who are successful. That is perhaps the fundamental difference. (...) A free person understands that things have to be done in a team and the profit is for all. The social, no socialist-minded person, what a paradox, is actually very asocial. He is called collective-minded, but it is not a collective of free people working in a team. It’s collective more like a herd put into the same cell. These people form a collective, but they are ready to cut each other’s throat at any time. [Ready] to escape or to gain a better position within the cell.”¹²³

Evidence suggests that members of the earlier generational context (G 1) ‘taught’ participants of this generational context (G 3) about the Estonian past. At the time of *perestroika*, members of both generational contexts were among the founders of the ‘Estonian Heritage Society’, taking an increasingly active political stance.¹²⁴ Similarly, Johnston (Johnston 1997) and Aarelaid-Tart (Aarelaid-Tart 1999; Aarelaid-Tart 2003) suggest that it was the first and third generation who pressed for Estonian independence, whereas the second generation aimed to achieve reforms *within* the Soviet system; a rift that would also indicate a generational conflict (they employ the term ‘generation’ in their works).¹²⁵

Estonian Russians

Like many intellectuals of mixed ethnic background, Zahkar had long grappled with his identity: Until he was ten he tried to be a good Estonian, an “orthodox nationalist”, but the neighbourhood boys of his age picked on him, because of his Russian name. In puberty he reacted to this by embracing being Russian and hating all that is Estonian. It took him until his mid-30s to reach a middle ground. Today he has to define his position carefully when it comes to commenting on current socio-political affairs as a journalist, because he is easily called a traitor, “a strange creature that does not belong to us, but still it dares to criticise us”.¹²⁶ Afterwards he drew up a list of dualisms between Russians and Estonians, and concluded:

“See how many dichotomies I have in me. I am in constant agony as to where I belong. I find certain Russian traits disgusting, but the same goes for some Estonian traits. I see that communism holds a healthy core, something I do like about the doctrine; but Estonians act as if they are standing above all of it, [as if] pure.”¹²⁷

Zahkar delayed his university studies: “I enrolled at 25. I waited until the Gorbachev time, until *perestroika*. (...) It was clear then that *perestroika* had gone too far for things to turn back. It was no longer risky to study a subject such as history.”¹²⁸ In the meanwhile he had become an “advanced alcoholic”, something that at the time was considered anti-social behaviour and in that way an act of disobedience.¹²⁹

Evidence suggests that no generational context among Estonian exiles or Russians in Estonia exists that would parallel the third generational context among Estonians (and Estonian Russians), which was activated by the specific social dynamic in the Soviet Estonia of the 1980s.¹³⁰

4.4. ‘Gorbachev generation’: the ‘freedom children’ (G 4)

Estonians

The participants of this generational context were born between the late 1960s and mid-‘70s. Consequently, for some the political liberalisation of *perestroika* was already noticeable during their last high school years.¹³¹ Most of them commenced their university studies and entered their working lives in a free Estonia. Still, they share an understanding of both worlds.¹³² Pille, a psychologist, born in 1971, recalls:

“I never questioned the official history of the time, although my parents and grandparents had told me about the Republic of Estonia, the time prior to the occupation; and my family always celebrated Christmas. I had no moral conflict. (...) I knew (...) about the occupation, although it took me some years before I realised that [during] my happy childhood - and I can say I had a very happy childhood - that we were actually living under occupation. Personally I felt I was in a cage all these years; not able to travel, something I had wanted to do from very early on.”¹³³

How could this generation distinguish what is ‘true’ from what is false? An Estonian sociologist of the previous generation says of her son’s generation that they quote cultural symbols of the Estonian Republic and of Soviet Estonia in an ironic and almost playful mix-and-match sort of manner, as all of these representations have lost their original meaning for them; in that sense she speaks of a post-modern generation, lacking a belief in any ‘version’ of the past.¹³⁴ She also describes them as overall consumerist and careerist in their orientation. Aarelaid holds that, for this generational context, the co-existence of two controversial worldviews was perceived as normal. She employs Lévi-Strauss’ ‘bricolage’ to describe the

process of re-signifying cultural objects, such as “the Fatherland”, “the Soviet Union”; “the Civil War”, “War of Independence”, etc. (Aarelaid-Tart 1999; Aarelaid-Tart 2003).¹³⁵

This has, however, not been my predominant experience with members of this generation: Niils, an Estonian historian born 1969, who at the time headed an independent think-tank on Russian Studies (monitoring political, economic, and military developments in Russia), resolutely expressed anti-Russian sentiments; warning me that, although Russians look like Europeans (i.e. Caucasian), they will always remain Russians.¹³⁶ Similar statements were voiced in interviews with the older generation of Estonian historians.¹³⁷

If the majority of this generation held an utterly post-modern view on current Estonian affairs (used in the sense of an unheeding “anything goes” (Paul Feyerabend)), how then did they become involved in the Singing Revolution? Tulviste & Wertsch come to the conclusion that this generation was in fact less deeply affected by official accounts of the past than the older interviewees. One respondent of this generation stated that she could clearly and easily detect that the Soviet history textbooks were untrue, since the slogans used were so funny (Tulviste & Wertsch 1994: 317, 320).

The Singing Revolution was probably *the* formative (and transformative) event for members of this generation. Pille remembered flags, songs, ethnic upsurge and nationalism all around them, and that it felt natural to go along with it.¹³⁸ Niils recalled how the wave of the independence movement meant a big change for his personal life, as it transformed him from someone who “grew up blind” to a young man who read out the historic Estonian declaration of independence of 1919 under a waving Estonian flag in 1988 at his hometown in Valga; that year he had also joined the local Heritage Society. Similar to Pille, he said it felt “natural” to them when freedom was finally achieved in 1991, something that had been unthinkable to them just a few years earlier.¹³⁹ Tiina, born in 1970, provides some insight into the *Zeitgeist*:

“I told you about this emotional time of learning about history at the end of the 1980s (...) at 16 (...) I was participating in what we call the ‘Singing Revolution’ (...) afterwards (...) I could really see what a sensitive time it was for many people, especially for (...) young people. (...) You were given a very special pride (...) [pause] I was proud, and I think that most of the people were very proud of being Estonian in the Soviet Union. Because it was [pause], I mean everybody knew that it was better to be Estonian than to be Russian. At the time we didn’t compare ourselves with the rest of the World, but we just had a comparison within the Soviet Union. (...) We were very proud of who we were. (...) I think you could feel this special pride of being Estonian at the end of the 1980s. I think the people were endowed [with it] [pause]. You were still the same person, but you were given an additional value.”¹⁴⁰

There were only a small number of inter-ethnic marriages in Estonia as compared to Latvia. Inter-ethnic marriages were considered a progressive development by the Soviet regime, leading to the merging of nationalities (in Estonia in 1979 the figures of inter-marriage show 18.6 % of the urban population and only 9.0 % of the rural). Members of the older generation viewed inter-marriage as 'collaboration' or 'treason' (Ryan 1990; Kallas 2002: 62).

The fragility of Zhakar's identity can also be found among younger intellectuals of mixed ethnic background; clearly, the 'identity question' unites the respondents of the G 3 and G 4 context. The strong nationalist current of the early 1990s more-or-less demanded that intellectuals of mixed ethnic background make a choice: whether they are Russian or Estonian. Zinovij was brought up in Russia and moved to Narva with his parents in 1988. It was only then that he began to study the Estonian language. Looking back, he understood the late 1980s and '90s to be a personal identity crisis. At the time he rejected his own Russian side. He recalled: "particularly in Narva, [as] it is a 'pro-Soviet town', you felt very bitter. Old Narva had been destroyed (...) I felt really bad in the early '90s, and this was my attempt to join the other side."¹⁴¹ When he came to study in Tartu in the mid-'90s, he was confronted with a feeling of inferiority once more: "I was the only one there who was not a purely bred Estonian."¹⁴² Finally, he overcame this state of abeyance: "my first language is Russian. If I had to choose, it would be Russian. Once I realised that for myself, things got so much easier".¹⁴³ Like Zahkar in his journalistic work, Zinovij encountered emotionally charged reactions from the audience when he delivered a conference paper on the indigenous collaboration with the German occupying power: he was vituperated against as a 'Russian spy' and a 'genocide denier'.¹⁴⁴

Polina was born in 1976 to an Estonian father and a Russian mother. She grew up in a bilingual environment in the North East of Estonia. She recalled:

"I remember how in 1993, when the 'Aliens Law' [*colloquial term for the Citizenship Law – the author*] was adopted and there was a crisis in society because of it - Russians really took it very badly - I was clearly on the Estonian side, feeling that we had a right to do it to them for what they did to us. (...) But now (...) I am thinking it has been 10 years, and it's time for a revision. (...) We need to have a new law that reflects the new situation. Now, I acknowledge that what we did in 1993 was not fair [*she laughs*]. Most of the Estonians I talk to about this don't like to hear about it, and they start the old argument that we were the victims. And they ask me why I call the Russians a victim of our policy. It takes a long time for them to realise that the positions have in fact changed, that they are now in a position of power. And then they begin to understand and that things need to change, but it's still hard for them to admit that what we did in 1993 was wrong."¹⁴⁵

Polina displays a great sensitivity towards the challenge posed by the Russian-speaking minority in Estonia; in fact, she picks up the same issue raised in interviews by Russians or Estonian Russian intellectuals from the first generational context:¹⁴⁶

“If you talk to Russians here [in Estonia], they tell you why they are different from Russians in Russia. They say, it’s the tidiness, the correctness, the punctuality of Estonians, and they already consider themselves as Estonian, because they want to be tidy, correct and punctual, and that this is not a part of the Russian identity at all. (...) They have taken on a lot of the Estonian [ways of] social conduct without speaking Estonian or having Estonian friends. The society around them has been teaching them how to behave in this context. (...) How then can you tell them that ‘you are not Estonian’? That would mean they are lost, because this is the only place in the world where they feel at home. This is the only place where they know what they are required to do, how to behave, perceptions, expectations. When you go somewhere else, you don’t feel at home, (...) you are neither at home here nor there. Is this a question of language?”¹⁴⁷

Based on the above, one may argue that the Estonian Russian intellectuals of this generation embody a great potential as ‘newly emerging identities’ in post-Soviet Estonia.¹⁴⁸ This hypothesis is based on the notion that these individuals, who were forced to reflect on and define their identity more carefully because of their mixed background, constitute an innovative and critical contribution to the Estonian society as a whole.

Zinovij dislikes the term ‘Gorbachev generation’ as “it is one of these over-simplistic academic concepts imposed in retrospect, for at the time they did not think of themselves in this way.”¹⁴⁹ As has been discussed in the introductory comments, these ascriptions are often made with hindsight (as has been illustrated by the example of the West German ’68 generation). At the time, members of the respective movement or generation may not have even been consciously aware of belonging to or constituting a generation; they assumed this ascription *ex post facto*.

G 5: moving forward

Lastly, there are those born in the 1980s, too young to remember the Soviet time, so that they no longer share an idea of both worlds. They finished high school in the late 1990s and are currently students or recent university graduates. Their referential point is the West (USA, European Union).¹⁵⁰ Hence, it can be argued that, due to the cataclysmic transition, a fifth generational context has already emerged in post-Soviet Estonia.

With regard to the youngest Russian-speaking generation in Estonia, I am left with a rather pessimistic assessment: Ülle-Mai explains that even though Russian parents, born in the

1960s, are more tolerant towards Estonians, their children are greatly influenced by their grandparents' generation:

"These elderly people in their sixties and seventies, they are 'sovietised', [they are] absolutely against this Republic. Of course the grandmother is cooking the soup at home, telling of the good old Soviet times. And now the youngest generation of 16 or 17 year-olds are chauvinists."¹⁵¹

5. Chapter summary & outlook

In this Chapter the methodological basis of my research was laid out (i.e. oral history, in-depth life story interviews). It further discussed the specifics of turning (professional) historians into objects of research. Some thoughts were stated on using interviews as a primary source of research. I have also shown how identity is re-constructed in the process of the interview, both by the interviewer and the interviewee. The overall interview setting and questionnaire design were described as well; all of which falls under the heading of self-reflexivity. Mannheim's thoughts on the generational factor were presented and applied to the case study of the four generational contexts (G 1 – G 4) co-existing among historians in post-Soviet Estonia.

It can be concluded that the four different generational contexts are most fitting for ethnic Estonian historians and for historians of Estonian Russian background. Contrastingly, there is no third generation (G 3) among Estonian exiles, the historic Russians or Russian immigrants; at least, it is not possible to find an obvious case for it in the interview data. Here, an attempt was made to provide a broader framework for the following Chapters, which are largely based on the life story interview material.

Endnotes of Chapter V:

¹ All this is further substantiated in Chapter Six.

² Here '*grande histoire*' signifies 'world history'.

³ Cf. Jensen 2000; Lucius-Hoene & Deppermann 2002.

⁴ How counter-memories (both cultural and communicative) were essentially closed off, 'frozen in time', and often unquestionably trusted, will be discussed in Chapter Six.

⁵ On the standardisation of the Estonian language and literacy, see Chapters Three and Four.

⁶ Anecdotes are well tested, standardised key narratives that point beyond the actual event they are about (Lucius-Hoene & Deppermann 2002: 152 f; Greenblatt & Gallagher 2000: 49 – 74). The dichotomy between the public and the private spheres (and the respective discourses) encapsulates the opposition between a totalitarian state and the family (home, farmstead, apartment, the 'kitchen') as a place of refuge and resistance (Sharp 2000: 100 – 109). However, it will become apparent in the ensuing Chapters how also the private sphere was compromised and highly curbed by the official sphere.

⁷ The origin of oral history as a discipline stems precisely from the attempt to write the history of (oppressed) minorities parallel to the history from above (be it the Church, a dictatorship or a government not recognising the social or ethnic minorities in the respective country). Cf. Barrera (2001) who while recognising the peculiar textual character of the historiographical work, tackles the topic of making history vs. talking about history.

⁸ I use the terms 'life story interview' and 'biographical method / interview' interchangeably. Cf. Niethammer 1980; Schütze 1983; v. Plato & Niethammer 1985; Denzin 1989; Wengraf 2001; v. Plato 1991; Dunaway & Baum 1996; Michel 1985;

Alheit 1996; Alheit & Hoerning 1989; Schütze 1983. The purists would argue that the researcher should not use quotes from life story interviews under 15-20 minutes of successive spoken text, because otherwise meaning could be easily misinterpreted. For time constraints I could not follow this orthodox *exegesis* of the life story method (in fact I have already 'broken' the rules by using a set of questions for my interviews); however when choosing the quotations, I have read the transcript pages prior to and following the actual quote, to understand and account for the argumentation of the respondent.

⁹ For works on oral history in the former Soviet Union, Estonia and Latvia, see v. Plato 1990; Humphrey & Miller & Zdravomyslova 2003; Anepao & Kõresaar 2001; Jaago 2002 (I – III); Kõresaar 2003; Kirss & Kõresaar & Lauristin 2004; Skultans 1998; and cf. Chapter Six on the Estonian life history project.

¹⁰ Cf. McCracken 1988; Denzin & Lincoln's, *Handbook of Qualitative Research* is an excellent source for a whole range of questions (Denzin & Lincoln 2000).

¹¹ In the Epilogue I single out five 'modes of talking' about the past in a typology of transmission, such as apologetics, distancing, idealisation, resignation, and denial (cf. Welzer et al. 2002).

¹² Oral history is not a method of 'reconstructing' the past, how it actually happened, in the Rankian sense (Germ. original "wie es eigentlich gewesen").

¹³ A typology of transmission of the past is presented in the Epilogue. Another way to interpret the interviews would have been to contrast the oral accounts of the interviews with the respective informant's diaries, letters and academic writings of the time, in order to extract changes in interpretation, biographical crossroads, conversions and new orientations.

¹⁴ This goes back to E. Tonkin's quote, "memory makes us and we make memory", as discussed in Chapter One; see also Rosenthal 1995; cf. Chapter Seven, the example of interpreting the Soviet period as 'Soviet occupation'.

¹⁵ Cf. Chapter One; cf. Schacter 1999.

¹⁶ The case can be used in all tenses: e.g. "past tense with a *mis*" (Turk., *Mışlı geçmiş zaman*) or "assumption of the present tense" (Turk., *Şimdilik zananın rivayeti*). See www.verba.org.

¹⁷ Cf. Breuer & Mruck & Roth *FQS* 2002; Ratner *FQS* 2002.

¹⁸ Cf. Eco 1992, 2000.

¹⁹ Pille, interview, Tallinn, 06.10.03.

²⁰ Arguably more drastic and intense in Estonia (and in the other Baltic States, in Poland, Belarus, Ukraine, and Russia) than in other parts of Europe, since almost every Estonian family experienced arrests, deportation and emigration, loss of property, and brothers or uncles fighting in opposing armies during the 20th c.

²¹ A further influential factor on the individual's construction of his or her narrative identity (apart from the impact of the *grande histoire*) are the 'master narratives' of his or her respective social group or generational context.

²² Cf. v. Plato 2000; Leh 2000; Kiesow, & Simon 2000; Jarausch 2002; Welzer 2000.

²³ Cf. Pierre Bourdieu's notion of cultural reproduction (Bourdieu 1993).

²⁴ The arguments for the choice of historians as my respondents are further unfolded in Chapter Six.

²⁵ Cf. Chapter One.

²⁶ Cf. Lucius-Hoene & Deppermann 2002; Jensen 2000; Welzer 2001; Ricoeur 1999.

²⁷ Cf. Chapter Two; cf. Brockmeier (2002) on autobiographical remembering and the dynamics between memory, self, and culture.

²⁸ In the sense of 'memory work' (in the Freudian sense of German *Durcharbeiten* or *Erinnerungsarbeit*), as explicated in Chapter One.

²⁹ Uppsala, phone conversation June 2002.

³⁰ I did not disclose how long I had studied Estonian history, since I aimed to avoid expert discussions; clearly, demonstrating too much knowledge of the topic on my part could be an obstacle to a good life story interview (cf. Rosenthal 1995: 188).

³¹ Lustration denotes the legal procedure by which former collaborators with the Soviet institutions of repression (i.e. KGB) are made accountable for their past deeds; cf. Chapter Six.

³² Lucius-Hoene & Deppermann provide useful guidance on how to analyse interview texts (Lucius-Hoene & Deppermann 2002: 178 – 330); see also: Rosenthal 1995: 216 – 226; as well as Rüsen & Borries 1994: 139 – 149; and Silverman 2001.

³³ Questionnaire in Appendix.

³⁴ I.e. these respective categories need to be reassessed and redefined even before employing them for research.

³⁵ Cf. Chapter Four.

³⁶ On the intelligibility of these sorts of experiences see Chapter Six. On 'fieldwork dilemmas' in post-socialist States, see De Soto & Dudwick, 2000; also Ager's informal introduction to ethnography (Ager 1996).

³⁷ I was acutely aware that I represented Germany (as a dominant nation), who had a long-standing history in Estonia and who played a significant role in the formation of the modern Estonian identity during the 19th and 20th cs. Clearly, a Japanese would have conducted the interviews differently (both with respect to how it was narrated and what was narrated), because there would have been less commonality, making it harder to find a common referential system and create mutual understanding. It would be interesting to explore further what exactly constituted this common ground between myself and the older ethnic Estonians, or the Russians. Clearly, an interviewer of Russian nationality would have come to a different interview, particularly with regard to the older generation of Estonians. In researching and writing Chapter Seven, my own perspective on the events of the War was challenged by the "Estonian viewpoint" on Germany as 'liberator' from the Soviet takeover.

³⁸ Cf. Chapter One.

³⁹ The theme of generation has been broached in Chapter One with regard to 'communicative memory', which, according to Halbwachs, commonly fades away after three generations.

⁴⁰ Ülle-Mai, interview, Tallinn, 08.06.02. Gurvitch developed a typology of 'social time' (Gurvitch 1964).

⁴¹ Cf. Platt & Dabag 1995. This is not to question whether biology is the basic requirement for generations.

⁴² Mannheim alludes to free-floating intellectuals (Germ. original "freischwebende Literatenschicht or Intelligenz") as being a segment of society that is commonly more concerned with the *Zeitgeist*, and more affected by it (Mannheim 1928: 326 f.).

Mannheim was a member of a salon in Budapest, the 'Sunday circle' (Hung., "Vasárnapi Körhöz"), also attended by György Lukács and Béla Balázs. The historians and intellectuals I interviewed fall into this category.

⁴³ Mannheim compares peasant sons of remote villages in the South of Germany with the youth in the towns and concludes that, although they are of the same generational location, they have little else in common (Mannheim 1928: 310).

⁴⁴ The concept of *entelechy* had been launched by the art historian Wilhelm Pinder.

⁴⁵ The so-called '68 generation' would make a poignant case of generational style, illustrating that clearly not all individuals who were students in the 1960s were members of the 'student revolution'; there were apolitical students as well, or those belonging to the 'reaction', such as members of Christian or other conservative student associations (cf. Bude 1995, 2000). It appears that Mannheim's thinking was influenced by Marxist ideas, since what differentiates a generational context from a generational unit is the degree of consciousness (Germ., *Bewußtsein*). He points out that some generational units are at the time fully conscious of the fact that they created a new *entelechy*, while others act more intuitively, not yet aware that they constitute a generational unit (Mannheim 1928: 317). In Estonia the loss of independence in 1940 (and the experience of the Second World War) produced different generational styles. Striving for Estonia's renewed independence was a task that faced three generations in Estonia. What differed were the attempts made to achieve this end and the definitions of 'freedom'. With the older generation it was armed resistance for Estonia's liberation (be it in the German army, as partisans, or in the Red Army); later, some saw the liberation of Estonia in the project of creating a new communist society; while still others saw it in forms of dissent against the Soviet system.

⁴⁶ At any time various *entelechies* exist in a society, such as the liberal, conservative, or socialist current; they attract individuals who bring in their own *entelechy*, and further the main *entelechy* of the time (Germ., "Strömungsentelechie") (Mannheim 1928: 323 f.).

⁴⁷ Aarelaid-Tart has written on this subject, but came up with a different periodisation. She defines generational cohorts by birth years: G1: 1914 – 30, G 2: 1946 – 56, and G 3: 1960s. In her study she only conducted in-depth interviews with 80 ethnic Estonian intellectuals between 1996 – 98 (Aarelaid-Tart 1999; Aarelaid-Tart 2003). Her collaborator, Johnston, comes up with yet another way to characterise the generations: to him it is by formative years, i.e. G 1: 1940-55, G 2: 1956-69 and G 3: 1970-85 (Johnston 1997).

⁴⁸ In only one case did I interview father and son, as they are both historians. This allowed for some insight into the tradition of memories *within* a family unit (Urmas, interview, Tartu, 06.10.03 and Oskar, interview, Tallinn 01.10.03). Welzer heads an ongoing research project on "tradition of historical consciousness" within German families (cf. Welzer & Montau & Plaß 1997; Welzer & Moller & Tschuggnall 2002). This project has been extended to a comparative study including several other European countries.

⁴⁹ Of course some may consider academia a family as well.

⁵⁰ Aarelaid-Tart names them the 'Republican Generation' (Aarelaid-Tart 1999; Aarelaid-Tart 2003).

⁵¹ By consequential I mean that these decisions had an impact on the rest of their lives (and that of their families). In the ensuing Chapters Six and Sevensome of these questions of collaboration or resistance will be delineated.

⁵² I thank Dr. Kai Junge for this comment. Clearly memory can play tricks and can be false, but these war scars are unambiguous; cf. Mosse 1990; Connerton 1989.

⁵³ Attributes of the inter-war period, such as sweet, nice, clean, and prosperous, also came up in interviews with historians belonging to G 4; cf. Pille, interview, Tartu, 06.10.03; Zinovij, interview, Tallinn, 18.09.03.

⁵⁴ This division into a public and a private memory will be discussed further in the subsequent Chapters.

⁵⁵ Quotes about this are provided in Chapter Six.

⁵⁶ Pille, interview, Tartu, 06.10.03.

⁵⁷ Vilhelm, interview, Tallinn, 12.06.02.

⁵⁸ Ülle-Mai, interview, Tallinn, 08.06.02.

⁵⁹ Ibid; she mentions the generation born in the late 1930s as the most innovative in amalgamating these values from the Estonian Republic with the new (socialist) ideas, such as providing good schooling for children of Estonian workers of poor background.

⁶⁰ Kalev, interview, Tartu, 03.06.02; cf. Urmas, interview, Tartu, 07.10.03.

⁶¹ On prevailing memories of the idyllic farmstead as a symbol of the state in the childhood memories of older Estonians, see Kõresaar 2002. There is a socio-economic dimension to this as well: It can be ascertained that ownership of land was an important factor in determining the political outlook of Estonians, i.e. that they interpret the past different largely depending on the fact whether they owned a farmstead during the inter-war period. Ülle-Mai's father was a self-made man from poor background and therefore a bit "left", her mother on the other hand was from a rich background, so they viewed the first Republic differently (Ülle-Mai, interview, Tallinn, 08.06.02). Those who were poor in inter-war Estonia tended to gain from the political changes, while landowners were likely to be expropriated (collectivisation) or even deported (as *kulaks*). Those who were the 'gainers' of the collectivisation (e.g. the new settlers) were fiercely battled against by the Forest Brethren in the 1940s. See Chapters Three and Six.

⁶² Vilhelm, interview, Tallinn, 12.06.02.

⁶³ Nelli, interview, Tallinn, 05.10.03; on the fear of (cultural) extinction, see Chapter Six.

⁶⁴ Henrik, interview, London, 20.04.03.

⁶⁵ Some interviewees directed my attention to the fact that the privatisation of collective farms turned out to be devastating shock for many rural residents, the influence of which can be witnessed even a decade later in long-term unemployment, dramatic decline in the birth-rate, village alcoholism (Realo 2003: 657). Iivo remarked that the social structure on the countryside was far better during the Soviet period and Zahkar interprets the election of Arnold Rüütel (a politician during Soviet Estonia) as president as the 'revenge' of the countryside (Zahkar, interview, Tallinn, 12.06.02; Iivo, interview Uppsala 17.07.02).

⁶⁶ Iivo, interview, Uppsala, 17.07.02.

⁶⁷ Zahkar, interview, Tallinn, 12.06.02.

⁶⁸ All mentioned in the interviews with the Estonian exiles in Sweden: cf. Illar, interview, Uppsala 09.07.02; Iivo, interview Uppsala 17.07.02; Siim, interview, Berlin, 17.04.04.

⁶⁹ Siim, interview, Berlin, 17.04.04. The extradition of German, Latvian, Estonian, and Austrian soldiers, who had fought in the German army to the Soviet Union by the Swedish government in 1945/46 has been mentioned in Chapter Three.

⁷⁰ Siim, interview, Berlin, 17.04.04; also Pauls, interview, Stockholm, 19.07.02.

⁷¹ Siim, interview, Berlin, 17.04.04; cf. Chapter Three.

⁷² I studied the Estonian language according to a textbook authored by the Estonian exile Felix Oinas and my young Estonian teacher told us again and again that these locutions are outdated.

⁷³ Juhan, interview, Tallinn, 26.09.03; also Pauls, interview, Stockholm, 19.07.02. Cf. Bennich-Björkman, 2001. This presentation was part of a much larger book project.

⁷⁴ I came across a similar line of reasoning in the interview with Ülle-Mai, Tallinn, 08.06.02; who said: "I am very happy in Estonia, without this mental splitting as the exiles have. Maybe I am even happy (...) that I lived with my nation through the period of occupation; that I had the chance to do something against it. [Maybe] not against it, but to discuss and think during the Soviet period what it is and what is good for my nation. [pause] I have always adopted a critical view on what it is to be an Estonian, but this question endless. I constantly address it to myself. And first of all it is fate to live here. And I don't like to change this fate" (Ülle-Mai, interview, Tallinn, 08.06.02).

⁷⁵ I believe that I was only able to interview Hariton because my language-interpreter was a relative of his.

⁷⁶ The historic Russian community amounted up to 10 % of the total population before WW II, mainly consisting of Russian peasants living in the Transnarva and Pechory regions, which Estonia acquired in the Tartu Peace Treaty (1920); also among them were the so-called 'old believers' and 'Whites.'

⁷⁷ Cf. Zbigniew, interview, Tallinn, 03.10.03; Nicolaij, interview, Tallinn, 8.10.03.

⁷⁸ Cf. Chapter Three.

⁷⁹ Cf. Zbigniew, interview, Tallinn, 03.10.03.

⁸⁰ Hariton, interview, Tartu, 02.06.02.

⁸¹ Ibid; cf. Manheim's concept of "free-floating intellectuals", mentioned earlier.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid; more on this in Chapter Six, in the section on transcending national history.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ For simplicity's sake, I use the term 'Estonian Russian' coherently in the thesis. At times individual respondents referred to themselves as 'Russian' or 'Estonian' in the interviews, although of mixed background. Or Russians would call themselves Russian Estonians. Also both the terms Estonian Russian and Russian Estonian came up in the self-descriptions.

⁸⁶ Since the early 18th c. Estonians came to live in Siberia. The oldest reported settlement was established in 1802. Deportation and expatriation was regulated by tsarist laws, which encouraged people from European Russia to colonise Siberia. Socio-economic motives were behind the agrarian settlement movement of the early 20th c., in which economic privileges were granted to the new settlers. By the 1920s around 40,000 Estonians lived in settlements in Siberia (Estonian settlements were characterised by a Lutheran community; Estonian schooling, societies, village councils etc.). The New Economic Policy (abbr. NEP) of the '20s brought prosperity to the Estonian villages. The watershed event in the life of the Estonian settlements was their destruction by forcible collectivisation from 1928 onwards. In 1937 all education had to be in Russian, at a point when 30,000 Estonians still lived in Siberia. Between 1940 – 49 about 25,000 Estonians were repatriated to Estonia from all across Soviet Russia. In 2002, 40 (mainly) Estonian villages still existed, with up to 11,400 Estonians living in Siberia. See Chapter Three and <http://www.folklore.ee/estonka/files/index.php?id=37&keel=eng>

⁸⁷ Paula, interview, Tallinn, 09.10.03.

⁸⁸ Ibid; Paula spoke out very blatantly that what we have in Estonia today is the legitimisation of the distribution of resources by ethnicity.

⁸⁹ The Congress of People's Deputies of the USSR was re-created as part of Gorbachev's reforms via a 1988 amendment to the 1977 Soviet Constitution, and first convened in May 1989. Its purpose was to elect the Supreme Soviet, and together they were to decide about amendments to the Soviet constitution (hereby the Congress of People's Deputies could no more than approve and ratify). The Congress existed until the end of Soviet Union; see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collapse_of_the_Soviet_Union; and <http://www.ai-press.com/CongressDocs.html>

⁹⁰ Paula, interview, Tallinn, 09.10.03.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² For the direct quote on the *Zeitgeist* of the '60s see section on complicity vs. normality in Chapter Seven.

⁹³ Paula, interview, Tallinn, 09.10.03. On teaching history in the ESSR, see section 1.5. in Chapter Six.

⁹⁴ Simon, interview, Tallinn, 07.06.02; also Ervin, interview, Tallinn, 02.10.03.

⁹⁵ Cf. Chapter Six on sites of counter-memory; cf. Nelli, interview, Tallinn, 05.10.03; and Ülle-Mai, interview, Tallinn, 08.06.02.

⁹⁶ Ülle-Mai, interview, Tallinn, 08.06.02.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid; also in other Central and Eastern European countries at the time, translations of Western literature were regarded as "windows to the world."

⁹⁹ A skill connected to these double mental standards was the "writing and reading between the lines".

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Nelli, interview, Tallinn, 05.10.03; Ülle-Mai, interview, Tallinn, 08.06.02; Paula, interview, Tallinn, 09.10.03. Aarelaid-Tart (1999, 2003) writes on these 'double mental standards'.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Nora, interview, Tallinn, 08.10.03, as quoted in Chapter Six.

¹⁰² Cf. Ülle-Mai, interview, Tallinn, 08.06.02; Paula, interview, Tallinn, 09.10.03. Regarding personal coping mechanisms with the encountered loss of meaning and personal strategies of self - justification for accommodation to the Soviet system, see Epilogue.

¹⁰³ Ülle-Mai, also of that generational context, told me that her son “labelled” her in such a fashion when he said: “Oh you have been a pioneer” (Ülle-Mai, interview, Tallinn, 08.06.02).

¹⁰⁴ From Russ. *Stagnatsia*, in colloquial Est. *Stagna*; it denotes the period of Brezhnevite stagnation.

¹⁰⁵ Nora, interview, Tallinn, 08.10.03.

¹⁰⁶ Nelli, interview, Tallinn, 05.10.03.

¹⁰⁷ Pille, interview, Tartu, 06.10.03.

¹⁰⁸ Zbigniew, interview, Tallinn, 03.10.03.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid; with ‘historical thought’ he designates the specific memories he shares with his community.

¹¹⁰ Elena, interview, Narva, 06.06.02.

¹¹¹ Hariton, interview, Tartu, 02.06.02.

¹¹² Ibid. The so-called ‘juniper Germans’ are discussed in Chapter Three. They serve as an excellent example of ‘ethnical mimicry’ (Bhabha 1994: 85 ff) and ‘broken language’ (Labov 1980); cf. Duijzings 1992, who discusses this phenomenon for the case of the Gypsies in Kosovo and Macedonia.

¹¹³ Eduard, interview, Tallinn, 11.10.96.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ The third generation of Estonian exiles no longer refers to themselves as ‘Estonian exiles’; for instance, a Swede born 1973 in Uppsala of Estonian parents knows the language, travels to Estonia, and calls himself a Swedish Estonian; cf. Kalle, interview Uppsala, 11.07.02.

¹¹⁶ Siim, interview, Berlin, 17.04.04.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid. Siim goes on to say that crime rates in Stockholm had gone up due to Estonians trafficking in drugs and prostitutes.

¹²⁰ Pauls, interview, Stockholm, 19.07.02.

¹²¹ In a recent interview on BBC World Service (28.08.05), Janusz Lewandowski, political activist in the *Solidarnosc* movement, referred to his generation as the ‘generation of solidarity’, setting it apart from the earlier alienated and fearful generations. This would suggest that what became G 3, the Brezhnev generation, in Soviet Estonia turned out to be the generation of solidarity in Poland.

¹²² Oskar, interview, Tallinn 01.10.03.

¹²³ Ibid; when Oskar described this Soviet slave mentality, it reminded me of Darwinist thinking in the early days of Capitalism.

¹²⁴ Evidence for this from the interviews would be that both Oskar (G 3) and Kalev (G 1) use the politically loaded term ‘civil occupation’ to describe the presence of the Russian-speaking community in Estonia today (Oskar, interview, Tallinn 01.10.03; Kalev, interview, Tartu, 03.06.02).

¹²⁵ Cf. Chapter Six. Semjonov distinguishes strategies *within* the Estonian national liberation movement (1988 - 91), i.e. different representations of the nation in political organisations. He identifies those more radical nationalists, aiming to cut all ties with the Soviet legacy and demanding the restoration of an independent Estonian Republic in its demographic composition, and with its legal institutions as represented in the ‘Congress of Estonia’, founded 1989 (the ‘Estonian Citizens Committee’, Est. *Eesti Kodanike Komiteed*, and the Estonian National Independence Party). A competing force to this approach was the Peoples’ Front (Est. abbr. RR, founded 1988 through the People’s congress of the ECP), which opted for gradually extending Estonia’s sovereignty based on the democratic resources generated by *perestroika*. Whereas the PF’s ultimate aim was an independent state, the third competing force, the ECP, wanted to achieve this end *within* the Soviet system (it is noteworthy that initially there were many Russian intellectuals among the supporters of the RR) (Semjonov 1999).

¹²⁶ Zahkar, interview, Tallinn, 12.06.02.

¹²⁷ Ibid; see section 4 in Chapter Six for further quote.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ This deduction needs to be further substantiated; also, it would need a comparison with any existing generational context in Russia at the time.

¹³¹ Ibid; with regard to the noticeable liberalisation in the classroom, see quote in Chapter Six.

¹³² We may even speak of knowledge of three worlds, i.e. that transmitted by the grandparents, the Soviet experience, and their experience of the Independence movement and regained freedom.

¹³³ Pille, interview, Tartu, 06.10.03.

¹³⁴ Ülle-Mai, interview, Tallinn, 08.06.02. A mindset she extends to her own generational context (G 2) as well. Ülle-Mai described the phenomenon of double reality and of ‘anything goes’ mentality almost jokingly: “The first Republic was reality, the shoe size of the first prime minister was reality, 1945/46 was reality, the deportations were reality, as were Stalin’s statues and their demolition. All of this was reality.”

¹³⁵ Lévi-Strauss saw ‘mythical thought’ or ‘authorship’ as examples of bricolage. The notion of *bricolage* (or *bricoleur*) signifies improvised structures that come about by appropriating pre-existing materials that are ready-to-hand (Lévi-Strauss 1974). In semiotics the practice of *bricolage* is seen as operating through several key transformations, such as addition, deletion, substitution, and transposition (see <http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/S4B/sem09.html>).

¹³⁶ Niils, interview, Tallinn, 11.06.02. I needed to revise my pre-conception that the think tank could serve as a bridge between the countries.

¹³⁷ Cf. Kalev, interview, Tartu, 03.06.02; Eduard, interview, Tallinn, 11.10.96.

¹³⁸ Pille, interview, Tartu, 06.10.03.

¹³⁹ Niils, interview, Tallinn, 11.06.02.

¹⁴⁰ Tiina, interview, Tartu, 06.10.03.

¹⁴¹ Zinovij, interview, Tallinn, 18.09.03.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Polina, interview, Tallinn, 05.10.03; possibly she already falls into G 5.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. Elena, interview, Narva, 06.06.02; Hariton, interview, Tartu, 02.06.02; Paula, interview, Tallinn, 09.10.03.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. Mannheim's concept of the "*aufgelockerten, werdenden Neuen*" mentioned earlier; cf. also "cultural hybridity" expounded in the epilogue.

¹⁴⁹ Zinovij, interview, Tallinn, 18.09.03.

¹⁵⁰ I conducted one group discussion with participants of this generational context (G 5) at the Pedagogical University, Tallinn, 07.10.03.

¹⁵¹ Ülle-Mai, interview, Tallinn, 08.06.02.

Chapter Six:

History teaching, writing and telling in Estonia

0. Introduction

In the preceding Chapter on methodology, I argued in favour of the life story method and oral history as instructive means for exploration of national identity and collective memories in Estonia. As explicated earlier post-Soviet Estonia is a ‘nationalising state’ that can only build on a short experience of independent democratic statehood. As national history is always a ‘winner’s tale’ (Benjamin 1977: 260), Estonian national history writing after 1991 aimed at setting right historical wrongs in a negative response to the previously dominant Soviet historiography. It was in 1991 that the tables were turned and the formerly prevailing Soviet interpretation of Estonia’s past was omitted from the newly constructed national narrative. As has been mentioned earlier, modern Estonian identity was strongly influenced by the Russian ‘other’ (as representatives of the Soviet system), particularly so after 1940/41.¹

Historians discuss, write and disseminate history, while forging images of the national past. I demonstrate that history was of great importance to many Estonians under foreign rule, for to know and remember one’s history was an ‘existential’ matter of cultural survival. Moreover, historians were influential in the late 1980s and early ‘90s, as several members of the ‘guild of historians’ went into politics. Were historians ‘bearers of a counter-memory’ by transmitting and preserving alternative accounts of Estonian history in times of occupation and during the Estonian SSR? This question of the historian’s moral responsibility forms the heart of the first part of this Chapter, in which the overall conditions of history writing and teaching under an oppressive regime, in times of socio-political transition and in a ‘nationalising state’ are highlighted. Finally, I consider future prospects for a multi-dimensional historical narrative in Estonia.

With all this I aim to shed light on Estonia’s ‘historical culture’, a term that has been explicated in Chapter One; I will only briefly recapitulate here: “Historical culture includes every articulation and contestation of historical consciousness and all the ways in which historical memory is processed in the daily life of a society” (Rüsen & Jäger 2001: 399).²

Following from my argument that memories of ‘formative historical events’ constitute the building blocks of any collective cultural identity, I single out events of ‘collective suffering’ and of ‘collective resistance’ that appeared consistently in the interviews with

Estonian historians (as well as in Estonian history writing), and can thus be regarded as constitutive of the Estonian identity. Since national history writing (just like collective memory) is based on mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion, I also point to several events that elicit controversy in post-Soviet Estonia, i.e. certain taboo topics that may be causes of collective shame.

PART I

*“When my father died. They put him in the ground.
When my father died. It was like a whole library burnt down
World without end. Remember me.”*

- Laurie Anderson (Old African song)

1. On the changing role of historians

According to Halbwachs and Nora, history begins when group memories fade and the past is no longer of immediate relevance to the respective community's life. At that point the past is no longer 'inhabited' but 'dead' (Nora 1990, 1996);³ it is here where the historian's work begins (Assmann 1997: 47 f). F. R. Ankersmit states, "scientific history is the kind of discourse in which historians 'destroy' historical reality in their effort to domesticate it" (Ankersmit 1998: 190). This 'domesticated' account is a variant of the past, from which all that fits badly within the categories of a 'scientifically canonised' past is eliminated (Ibid.:189).

Anthony D. Smith describes nationalism as a historical or historicist movement *par excellence* (A. D. Smith 1999: 29). In this he attributes to the historian's work a greater bearing on contemporary affairs, at least to those historians engaged in writing so-called ethno-history, which Smith considers a vital pillar of any modern nationalist movement (A. D. Smith 1999: 16 f).⁴ Historians writing this kind of history are engaged and passionate about their subject matter (i.e. the regeneration and restoration of shared myths and memories), in contrast to those professional historians who claim to be objective and impartial. One of the things that sets professional history writing and ethno-history apart is that the former is clothed in a more 'scientific language', but ultimately every historian is influenced by his respective cultural background, political affiliation, and personal life experience, which inform his motivation, choice of research topic, and his interpretation of the historical facts. Much like Alexander von Humboldt's thoughts on the historian's task from 1821, Bédarida asserts that the historian is to describe or explain the facts, but also to understand and interpret, which inevitably introduces an element of subjectivity - or "guesswork", as Humboldt termed it - and which makes hermeneutics all the more important (Bédarida 2000: 73 f). Or as Gallerano puts it, historiography is "a scientific activity *sui genris*, whose cognitive dimension touches and mingles with the affective dimension, which is steeped in values, predilections, and non-scientific or pre-scientific choices" (Gallerano 1994: 91).

Estonian historians can place themselves in the tradition of the 16th c. chronicler Balthasar Rüssow, a Protestant minister of Tallinn's Church of the Holy Spirit whose Chronicles of the Livonian Province included a criticism of the nobility and the Catholic Church and were thus disapproved of by the authorities.⁵

Can historians in Estonia after the Second World War be described as bearers of a 'counter-memory' in opposition to the Soviet system? Such a question flows from the overall understanding that the historian has indeed an intellectual, social and moral responsibility (Bédarida 2000: 69); that "it is the historian's foremost task to act as a bearer of the group's memory, to preserve the traditions and collective memories of the former, but simultaneously to critically analyse them and assess their pertinence and accuracy in the light of empirical facts" (Mommsen 1995: 131).⁶ Mommsen writes within the enlightenment tradition when he stresses that the historian should point to the moral dimension implied in history, or as Bédarida states, he should become a "spokesman for justice", but not pass judgements (Bédarida 2000: 76). It is however his social and moral responsibility to provide members of a community with sufficient information for their orientation in life; and he must be aware of the consequences that his interpretation of the past may entail, i.e. his indirect influence on people's action (Mommsen 1995: 137 - 143). These complex issues of responsibility are heightened in periods of military occupation, under totalitarian regime and socio-political rupture.

At all times, historians have been restricted in their work by subjective internal as well as external political factors. In the case of the Estonian SSR historical research, access to archives (i.e. 'secret archival repositories' or 'closed collections') and teaching were hugely restricted by censorship.⁷ Likewise Estonian émigré historians in the West had only very limited access to archival sources before 1991.⁸ However, after independence was regained Estonian and Russian historians faced new constraints, as they had to abide by the principle of national restoration and consolidation. Moreover, investigations into the immediate past were hampered by the fact that many KGB files had been (temporarily) evacuated to Russia in the winter of 1989 (Jürjo 23.10.98).⁹

As has been discussed, intellectuals played a pivotal role in the national movements in the late 19th c. in Central and Eastern Europe. However, rather than historians it was Estonian village school teachers, parish priests and philologists, who were influential in Estonia's national awakening during the 1860s. In the late 20th c. we are presented with a complex

picture of intellectuals who helped to legitimise the communist system and others who (later) de-legitimised the ideological superstructure.¹⁰

Oskar, an Estonian historian born in 1960 with a patriotic-minded family background, disapproves of those “many intellectuals, who liked to play games with ideas of equality and freedom not understanding that equality and freedom do not match, because if you are free you are not equal, [and] if you are equal you are not free. It is a simple truth [that] those leftist intellectuals always forget, I think deliberately.”¹¹

Under communism history was highly politicised and promoted as the ‘Truth’, of which historians were the ‘official bearers’. Thus intellectuals may have felt empowered and flattered by the system. The composer Hanns Eisler, who chose to live in the GDR after his return from exile, remarked to a friend that he was proud to live in a country where books were taken seriously to the extent that they are feared and at times banned. In 1991 the (former) Hungarian dissident György Konrád stated: “Today (...) only the dissidents conserve the sentiment of continuity. The others must eliminate remembrances; they cannot permit themselves to keep the memory” (Konrád 1991: 84). Konrád’s provocative statement alludes once more to the important question of custodianship of memory, which is connected to the successful claim of moral integrity, truth and authenticity.¹² Who can claim to be the ‘rightful’ bearer of a community’s memory and its cultural continuity, especially during periods of long-term occupation? Clearly, it would be absurd to grant only the dissidents a *nimbus* of integrity as rightful bearers of the society’s collective memory.

Oskar, who commenced his history studies at Tartu University in 1978 and was expelled shortly before completion in the early ‘80s, explained, “I became famous. I happened to be a martyr. (...) People repressed by the KGB got a sort of quality certificate, ‘these are honest and fair people [who have] been accused by KGB’.”¹³

1.1. *Dissidents*

“It was just a historical hole, nothing left!”

- Paula

Estonia had a relatively small number of outspoken dissidents (ca. 20 - 30 individuals). However with the ‘Forest Brethren’ Estonia saw an armed resistance until the mid - 1950s.¹⁴

Estonian intellectuals were acutely aware of the activities of the more numerous dissident groups in the ČSSR and Hungary. Especially for the older generation, the ending of the Hungarian uprising meant the shattering of their last hopes,¹⁵ whereas the crushing of the Prague Spring had a strong impact also on those born in the '40s and after.¹⁶ Vilma, an Estonian history professor born 1921, says about the post-war years: "It seemed that we had to help also to make the liberalisation [of the Soviet system] possible. But we lost this hope, or I personally lost it, in the year 1968 after the (...) Prague events."¹⁷ Paula, an Estonian professor born 1933, did her doctorate in the mid-'60s in Moscow. I asked her to give me a few examples of previously unknown facts she learned about during that time. She replied that she learned

"(...) about the logic or absence of logic of repression, specifically I remember the so-called Agrarian Policy, the collectivisation and what happened to the society then. We had excellent lectures on the history of the Soviet military and afterwards I felt that this was just a historical hole, nothing left. (...) Therefore knowing about the events in Budapest and unfortunately later in Czechoslovakia it was awful, it was a real trauma. I remember that I always wanted to visit Czechoslovakia, but after that (...) I haven't been to Czechoslovakia. I am afraid to go there, because I am from that place [pause, *she is sobbing*] or at least in Soviet times [pause, *she is sobbing*] it was personally impossible to go there."¹⁸

On the other hand, Nora, an Estonian writer and literature critic born 1945, relates her subjective experience:

"This was 1968, spring was at its peak and in the autumn of the same year it was all over. I was studying at the time and all came together: something happened in my life. I fell in love. I studied. I married. I believed that quite naturally, I am the centre of the world. I was 22. And the world around me does what I do, it's opening. [That was] 'Socialism with a human face'. Naturally this is so. We [*her generational context – the author*] enter the world and so it is quite normal that somewhere in the Czech lands, in Slovakia, more of the kind takes place and of course it will come to us too. We were very optimistic. (...) The world opened up and we ourselves were young and all came together. The shock and depression when all was shattered were immense. However, the wave [of freedom] came to us more gradually (...) and receded in that same fashion. One day we realised that things got much tougher."¹⁹

Asked about stories of resistance transmitted in his family, Oskar replies:

"I knew there were (...) people, who had fought against the Soviets with arms in their hands. (...) I was 8 years old when the Prague Spring was

'killed'. I remember (...) people were quite open, especially when compared to the later period. (...) [It] was a very memorable lesson for me that there are people who want to change things. That there is even an entire nation which tried to do something and there was no question anymore, to whose side I belonged, at least mentally."²⁰

On Estonian dissidents

Simon, a former Estonian dissident born in 1956, had spent 5 years in a labour camp in Perm for 'anti-Soviet propaganda'. Before his arrest in 1983, he had been a chimneysweeper.²¹ Simon was a member of the MRP-AEG, which organised the first political demonstration in Hirvepark to mark the 48th anniversary of the MRP in August 23, 1987.²² In 1988 he was asked to emigrate, which he did, first to Sweden and later to Germany. He explained to me that because the Soviet system had no need for intellectuals from the humanities, intellectuals from these soft sciences were far more vulnerable and thus more prone to cooperate with the Soviet regime. He described the group of Estonian dissidents as mostly consisting

"(...) of engineers, technical (...) intellectuals, but on a sort of lower level (...) and there were various generations. There were people who were already in prison during the Stalin and Khrushchev era, but got away relatively easy. They did not spend 25 years [in camps], but usually 5 years or something, and then there were younger people like me (...) or Ervin who were disgusted by the Soviets. (...) This dissent in its known form, [such as] writing letters (...) came from Russia. It was not invented anywhere else but in Russia (...). Of course our dissidents have their national aspects but generally it was the same (...). There were guys that were ideological leaders, but this ideology was not refined enough that you could write it down and make it in a party programme and this was mainly because it would make us very vulnerable. (...) Before us there were groups which were very secret, very conspiratorial and they mainly worked on various programmes; and after they finished these programmes they got arrested, and basically they didn't do more than spending all their time on [writing] papers that had no meaning anyway. If you (...) want to reform a society then (...) you have to work out how to achieve it, but that was absolutely impossible. From my point of view the main idea of dissent was simply to demonstrate that somebody is outspokenly in opposition. This gives others the possibility to be not quite as openly opposing, but (...) to do something in [the field] literature or art and so on. We stepped into the line of fire, although it was not a war situation."²³

About one's duty to voice dissent he holds:

"Some people simply have more courage, more curiosity to touch the borders of what is allowed and what not, because in fact in the '70s and the '80s

nobody was killed anymore. I mean there were accidents and people died, but no mass-repression. So, actually it was a duty from my point of view that the teacher or educator tried to widen these limits, but most people are cowards. Most people only think about themselves. So, you cannot demand courage from everybody. It's a virtue that most people don't have.”²⁴

An equally prudent view was expressed by another former dissident, Ervin born 1952, who had spent 6 months in the *Tatari* prison (Tallinn), 2 years in a prison camp in the Urals, another 2 years in so-called external exile in Siberia, and 4 years under strict surveillance back in Estonia. When questioned whether he is resentful, he responded:

“No, absolutely not! It was my free choice and I know what I did and I know I had to pay for it. (...) I don't think people should all think like me. (...) How can I decide what other people really want? (...) I wanted my freedom. What other people want (...) is not of my business. I'm not the Messiah. I was writing for myself.”²⁵

Even though I consistently employ the term ‘dissident’, the reality of dissident activity in Soviet Estonia may have been more complex.²⁶ The Russian professor emeritus, Hariton, said in this regard “initially Russian and Estonian intellectuals were united in the desire to become a democratic society and to overcome the Bolshevik system.” What divided them right from the start was that the Estonians wanted “the establishment of Estonian independence and considered this to be even more important than to achieve general democratisation.” He recalls:

“They said ‘let us first regain our independence and then democracy will follow naturally.’ While for the Russian dissidents the issue of Estonian independence was secondary. (...) [To them] the achievement of a general democratisation in the Soviet Union was of primary importance. They held the belief that if you stressed the claim for independence in any particular Soviet Republic, then you may set different ethnic groups against each other which may lead to the opposite of the intended effect.”²⁷

Ervin makes a number of additional distinctions:

“We were mainly ‘Freedom Fighters’ not dissidents, because dissidents were those, who didn't want to change the basis of the state, especially human rights fighters in Moscow and Leningrad. They didn't want de-colonise [Estonia], (...) they didn't even want to introduce a multi-party system.”²⁸

So the first line is drawn between his group of “Freedom Fighters”, or as he later corrects himself, of “Resistance Fighters”, and the Russian dissidents. The latter did not aim at the de-Sovietisation of society, but focussed on economic and human right issues instead, what Ervin limns as “only cosmetic repair works.”²⁹ Contrary to that his group envisioned “an ending of the occupation, the withdrawal of Soviet troops, the restoration of independent Estonia on the grounds, the [borders] of the pre-war Estonian Republic; of course of the democratic Estonian Republic!” Ervin stresses that they decided not to revert to the Basic Law in place during Estonia’s authoritarian rule, but to define new democratic laws instead.³⁰ He then points to a further dissimilarity between the two: “They [*the Russian dissidents – the author*] were of course academics, doctors. And the Moscow authorities didn’t tolerate them. (...) the final aim of the Soviet [Russian] dissidents was to leave the country. We did not want that.” Lastly, he distinguishes his group from the publicly known, official writers in Estonia, who took what he calls “mild public action”, such as the ‘Letter of the Forty’, whereas his group did not consist of intellectuals, but of unknown, ordinary people, such as heaters, chimneysweepers, and students etc.³¹

1.2. *Émigré historians*

Estonian historians in exile, such as Evald Uustalu, Rein Taagepera, and Toivo Raun among others endeavoured through their work to inform the West of the fate of the Baltic States, and many campaigned openly against the illegal annexation in 1940.³² For instance, Simon looked up to them as they were “surviving without collaborating”:³³

“For me they were alternative Estonia, I truly believed that when we are all finished they are still there and one day they will come back. (...) this is ridiculous, but then again, we didn’t have much information. (...) we knew that they existed (...) it was really some kind of moral support, but we treated them really seriously. We thought, ‘this is the real Estonia’.”³⁴

Simon conceded that their publications were one-sided, since they were written in clear opposition to the Soviet regime that had forced them to leave their homeland.³⁵ Their books were smuggled into Estonia and distributed hand to hand or duplicated by primitive methods. After the 1950s a more effective means of exerting influence was through foreign radio channels, such as ‘Voice of America’ (from 1951), the Baltic section at ‘Radio Liberty’ (from 1970) and ‘Radio Free Europe’ (from 1983).³⁶

1.3. Other sites of counter-memories in Soviet Estonia

From the evidence gathered, the answer to whether historians in the 20th c. articulated dissent against the Soviet occupation of Estonia must be negative. During the time of the Estonian SSR history teachers had a very limited scope for teaching a more critical history, and it was mostly through the families (i.e. the private sphere), through works of literature and artefacts from the inter-war period, *samizdat* publications (in addition to the books smuggled in from abroad) that a counter-memory was sustained. The former dissident Ervin understands the preservation of these sites of counter-memory as an “act of passive resistance”.³⁷ In Tallinn’s old town the foundations of houses destroyed in the bomb raids of March 1944 had been left as a site of memory. It was not until the 1980s that signposts were put up at the site, reading “Tallinn was bombed by the Soviet Air Force during the evening and midnight of March 9, 1944. 53 % of the living space was destroyed, ca. 20,000 people lost their homes, 463 people were killed and 659 were wounded.” Until then the bombing was attributed to the Nazis (similar to the bombing of the town of Narva) (Gunter 20.06.02). Another living ‘site of counter-memory’ were the thousands of returnees from the Siberian labour and prison camps in the course of Khrushchev’s amnesty in the mid-1950s.³⁸

Some respondents hold that the countryside on a whole was a bearer of (uncorrupted) Estonian values, because apart from forced collectivisation the countryside remained unaffected by the influx of Russian immigrant workers, who settled in the main cities or in the north-east of Estonia.³⁹ A Russian respondent, Nicolaij born 1961, compares the damages that collectivisation had done in Russia with the effects it had on life in the Estonian countryside:

“This part of the village, where for the Estonian case [Anton Hansen] Tamsaare and all those famous people stem from, had been destroyed in [the case of] Russia. The best part of the village has been destroyed! (...) Actually in Estonia the repressions of 1949 touched most of the intelligentsia but the ‘stem’, the ‘source’, [that is] the village, was left untouched, but in Russia the source was destroyed as well.”⁴⁰

He continues, “Estonians treat Russians like gypsies, because they are not connected to the [Estonian] land.”⁴¹ This is most interesting, since Nelli, an Estonian theatre director born in 1944, explained how Russians, or the Soviet man, lack a word for ‘home’ (Est., *kodu*) and that this is where all troubles originate.⁴²

Oskar, whose mother worked in a publishing house and whose father is a history professor (emeritus), learned about the destruction of books by the Soviets when he was a schoolboy. He recalled:

“There was a room full of books, encyclopaedias for example, that were hacked with an axe and (...) they were collected and locked into a room. (...) My mother simply stole as many as she could and brought them home. (...) They had been brought there from the libraries. They were on the list and they were taken and sentenced to burning.”⁴³

The way Oskar described it, the books acquire almost a human quality. They needed to be saved. It is evident that these were not just books, but that they had an enormous cultural and existential value particularly after the War.⁴⁴ Similarly, Vilma remembers:

“The cellar of a house that held the books of the private collections of teachers and professors (...), who had emigrated, and all these books were assembled in the cellar and then one worker of our university library informed us that they are there. (...) It was in high Stalin time, forty something. (...) [We] could go there to take some books on the sly (...) and we all [went], because they would destroy these books. Soviet authorities will destroy these books. And then we went there several times, (...) she opened the door for us and then we took these books. Many books (...).”⁴⁵

The Soviet regime was well aware of the potential danger that a strong cultural memory constituted for the system. For that reason access to the Kreutzwald Library in Tallinn was strictly restricted up until 1986.⁴⁶

The mass-deportations in 1941 and 1949 were meant to break the backbone of the Estonian intelligentsia and particularly in the early '50s schools and institutions of higher education were purged and “Estonian-minded” teachers replaced by Estonian-speaking teachers who were mainly from Russia (Kivimäe 1999: 209).⁴⁷ Ea Jansen writes that the quality of education at the University of Tartu was low, as the staff had been replaced by schoolteachers, whom she characterises as “uneducated, ludicrous men” (Jansen 2000b).⁴⁸ Hanneleen, a

lecturer at the Pedagogical University (Tallinn) born 1936, points out: “the Minister of Education was Ferdinand Eisen. He was a communist, already an old man. He received his education before the [Second World] War. During these 20 years he tirelessly aimed at upholding the Estonian language and Estonian textbooks.”⁴⁹ She continues to explain: “very many teachers were sent to Siberia (...) or they lost their work. And the communists (...) especially from Russia, Russian Estonians, who had lived in Russia. Estonians, [except that] their Estonian language was already bad, but the Russian occupier’s policy brought them here.”⁵⁰ The quote illustrates how she struggles to define those Estonians who returned from Russia. In this, several Estonian historians brought up the term *’jestlased’*, often while laughing quietly. Perhaps they were embarrassed due to the derogative connotation that the term *’jestlased’* carries? The wrong spelling of *’jestlased’* (Est., *eestlased* would be the correct way) denotes the Russian accent with which the newcomers, or ‘Russified’ Estonians, spoke after having spent decades in Russia.⁵¹ When asked about ‘these’ Estonians from Russia, Ervin explains:

“At the end of 1944 they [*the Estonians from Russia – the author*] invaded Estonia and stayed here. And many of them (...) were recruited as Soviet party officials. There were two kinds of officials: Native Estonian communist who had fled from the Germans, and the Russian Estonians. And they didn’t like each other. But the party leaders were Russian Estonians. And there was a power struggle between them. The main struggle was in 1950 at the plenum of the CP when native Estonian communists were blamed as ‘nationalists’ and expelled from their places. (...) Since then the *jestlased*, the Russian Estonians, (...) took over and filled all the leading posts in CP, in the government, in the Soviets and so on. Estonian national communists were rehabilitated after Stalin’s death, but they never reached the top level. They were rehabilitated on the medium level of office, approached this, but never in high level [of the nomenclature]. These positions remained in the hands of the *jestlased* (...) until 1988 when the last leader of CP, K. Väino, was sacked and replaced by the native Estonian K. Väljas.”⁵²

The majority of Estonian respondents are of the opinion that it is because Estonian remained the language of instruction in schools and institutions of higher education that their cultural identity could be preserved. Vilma expounds:

“We had Estonian schools and whatever the ideological direction of the subjects taught [were] (...), it was done in Estonian nonetheless, and it was the main thing that this medium survived. And the interest for the Estonian language was most vivid. *Emakeele Selts* [*the Mother Tongue Society – the author*] (...) was an organisation that worked very intensively.”⁵³

In fact all Estonian historians, when asked about the constitutive building blocks of a modern Estonian identity, referred to the language as fundamental. Thus, Ervin comments “we are not like the Irish, who lost their language (...), the Irish, the Scottish, or the Welsh (...); if one took our language, we are no longer.”⁵⁴ Based on the interviews with older Estonian historians particularly, I understood how the Estonian language itself was a form of (cultural) resistance, i.e. speaking Estonian was a statement in itself. The Estonian language served as a kind of ‘protective shell’ in which criticism could be voiced. It functioned almost like a code that signalled people’s like-mindedness and even trustworthiness; in contrast, those who spoke ‘broken’ Estonian could not be trusted.⁵⁵

On Russification

It was only from the late 1970s and early ‘80s onwards that Brezhnev’s Russification policy pushed to intensify the use of Russian in all institutions of education; this was experienced by many Estonian intellectuals as a threat to their identity. In response students protested on a large scale, and were then classified as ‘rioters’ and ‘hooligans’ by the Soviet authorities. Siim, an Estonian exile born 1943, remarked about these student street demonstrations that the youth shouted ‘*Heil Hitler*.’⁵⁶ Notably, Estonian dissidents and human rights activists (even the Green movement in Estonia) had ethnocentric and nationalistic overtones, as their disapproval was directed against the influx of large numbers of Russian settlers, branding them “an ominous tumour in the body of the Estonian nation” (in D. Smith 2001: 42); which makes for a peculiar mixture. To explain that the student protests were opposing the Soviet nationalities policy and its attendant social problems, the ‘Letter of the Forty’ was published shortly after by forty of Estonia’s official writers (Remeikis 1983 1984: 7).

It can thus be concluded that open protest against the repression emanated from pupils and students rather than from the teaching body;⁵⁷ one reason for that may have been that the Estonian youth had less to lose, as they did not have a career or their own families yet.⁵⁸

The Estonian Encyclopaedia

The Estonian Encyclopaedia is another noteworthy ‘site of memory’. In brief, eight volumes of the EE (as it is widely known) were published in inter-war Estonia and fell under the

category of censored books in Soviet Estonia. One interviewee showed me a volume of the EE (now part of the permanent exhibit at the Estonian Occupation Museum) in which many pages had been blackened or removed due to censorship.⁵⁹ From 1985 onwards the Soviet Estonian Encyclopaedia (Est., *Eesti nõukogude entsüklopeedia*, abbr. ENE) was published. Vilma deems it an “act of national will” that the ENE was written in Estonian and not in Russian. She recalled that it “became a national initiative. People subscribed in masses. (...) It turned into a manifestation of national ability (...) although of course the historical articles were quite often written according to Soviet standards, but the enterprise as a whole gained national meaning.”⁶⁰ This concerted effort is reminiscent of the fundraising for the first Estonian gymnasium, the Alexander School, a hundred years earlier (mentioned in Chapter Three). In 1990, in the midst of political change, the fifth volume of the ENE was once again published under its former name, i.e. as EE. The first four volumes of the ENE are still in use today, i.e. they have not yet been re-written⁶¹

The Estonian Open Air Museum

It may seem paradoxical that Estonian remained the official language of the Estonian SSR, that song festivals were permitted, and that an ‘Estonian Open Air Museum’ (Est., *Eesti Vabaõhtumuuseum*) was established in 1957.⁶² The well-known answer to this riddle is provided by the slogan: ‘national in form and socialist in content’.⁶³ The Soviet policy towards titular nationalities was not consistent, since some policies encouraged the ‘flourishing’ of the nations, whereas others aimed at their ‘merging’.⁶⁴ Consequently, Soviet authorities provided official vehicles that helped (titular) national groups to maintain their national distinctiveness.⁶⁵ Another manifestation of this apparent paradox was researchers studying the Estonian national awakening. Vilma, one of them, clarified:

“It was permitted to study the national movement, but not too much of course (...) and therefore we had to do it silently, under the pretext that we studied the class basis of the national movement. (...) and we made it sound very Marxist, even Soviet-Marxist. (...) It was quite something to study this period, it sounded innocent, but actually it wasn’t.”⁶⁶

She added self-critically:

“The old romantic concept of the national emergence of Estonia (...) continued in the memory of the people, but it was of course not our [*the historians – the author*] merit, far from it. It was (...) mostly an oral tradition in the families (...), but what did contribute to the study and maintenance of the period of

awakening was (...) that the Soviet authorities allowed the song festivals and other national traditions, as a (...) national *façade* for the Soviet Republic. The Song Festivals were actually always such national demonstrations, (...) the authorities, they shut their eyes.”⁶⁷

Furthermore, many historians in Estonia remarked that the repressive Soviet policies and the threat posed to Estonia’s culture in fact ‘helped’ to preserve Estonian national identity; and that the Estonian culture is under greater threat now, since it is faced with the global pop culture etc.⁶⁸

1.4. Soviet historiography: censorship and fabrication

It is well known that in the Estonian SSR (as elsewhere in the Soviet Union) history was treated in a highly ideological fashion, and was the most politicised subject of all; the reason being that it served as a powerful device for legitimising Soviet institutions.⁶⁹ To enhance their position rulers form alliances both with memory and with forgetting: they do so through genealogies, commemorations and memorials, which work both retrospectively and prospectively.⁷⁰ Hence, the installation of Soviet power involved an overall process of institutionalised or forced *amnesia* of which population transfers were probably the most drastic example.⁷¹ Apart from the rewriting of textbooks, censorship and destruction of books (all mentioned earlier), other means of systematically depriving the Estonians of their historical memory included the replacement of national symbols and monuments and the changing of place and street names. For instance, the Soviets destroyed most monuments for the War of Independence in 1940/41, while Estonian villagers frequently put aside bits of rubble and kept them in cellars and gardens.⁷² At the same time monuments for the ‘Great Patriotic War’ were erected until the very last years of the Estonian SSR. The deterministic science of historical materialism combined the refusal of history and the beginning of a new history (Gallerano 1994: 94); it dissolved the distinction between history as a discipline and history as sheer propaganda while holding a dogmatic sway on the notion of ‘Truth’.⁷³ Estonian history was now taught as a part of the history of the Soviet Union and certain motifs were elevated to key positions in the new Soviet historiography, among them: 1) the ‘liberation’ of Estonia by the Red Army;⁷⁴ 2) the ‘historical friendship’ between the ‘great Russian nation’ and the Estonian people since the Middle Ages (Shtepa 1962: 276);⁷⁵ 3) the revolution in Estonia in 1940 against the ‘reactionary bourgeois government’ (indicating the existence of home-grown Estonian leftist organisations who sympathised with the Soviet

ideology); 4) the alleged pro-German orientation (collaboration of ‘German Fascists’) of all three Baltic peoples;⁷⁶ and 5) the anti-Soviet Baltic émigré activity after 1941.

Misiunas notes for the case of the Lithuanian SSR that during the first post-war decade the history of World War II was scarcely covered, and that this only changed with the ‘thaw’ (Misiunas & Vardys 1978: 174). Clearly, the ‘greatest taboos’ throughout the time of the Soviet Union were the MRP (and its secret clauses) and the ‘Great Terror’ of the 1930s in Russia,⁷⁷ whereas the Nazi atrocities committed in the Baltic region constituted “the easiest and safest topic” of Soviet historiography (Misiunas & Vardys 1978: 181, 189).

On historical research

There were several institutions for the study of history in Soviet Estonia: On the one hand the department of history at the University of Tartu responsible for teaching history, and on the other hand the Institute of History and that of the History of the CP, both part of the Academy of Science in Tallinn and designated for research only. Vilma, who had worked at the Institute of History all her life, described the process of writing the History of the ESSR as:

“(...) the main work that the Institute of History was engaged in. (...) it took a lot of trouble. I was a young historian and I was made to write it. It was so difficult. It was edited and changed several times and criticised from ideological positions. It was a terrible work. (...) The Institute of History wasted its time with the compilation of this generalising work based on the Soviet model. [pause] It was most difficult and nobody read it. Of course the students had to read it, but (...) I think, the common people, never read these books.”⁷⁸

She described the difficulties imposed by censorship, particularly with regard to the publication of the third volume, which dealt with the inter-war period or so-called ‘bourgeois Estonia’. Due to its never-ending revision process, Vilma and her colleagues simply named it an “egg”.⁷⁹ She concluded that “the rigid principles of class and absolute class struggle (...) weren’t the worst. The absolutely worst about Soviet manipulation was that the whole history was looked upon as a prologue to [the creation of] the Soviet State.”⁸⁰

Vilhelm, an Estonian history professor born 1932, admonishes:

“These half-truths were far more detrimental than downright lies. (...) total falsifications of textbooks are completely innocent, they have a different impact, but to write a text where some long-established facts are inserted into an overall fabric of lies is very bad. (...) It is the liability and duty of every honest human being and historian to stay away from these things.”⁸¹

With any academic publication, historians in the Estonian SSR had to compromise in that they had to insert the obligatory quote from Lenin, Engels or the like in the preface, adhere to a Marxist-Leninist rhetoric, and apply the overall concept of class struggle; the alternative would have been to write for the drawer only.⁸² Nevertheless, they had a choice of joining the Communist Party or not. Evidence suggests that even without party membership one could become a lecturer and even a professor. Several history professors I interviewed had never been in the party, which (at the time) served as a symbol of resistance for the students.⁸³ Vilhelm, one of those ‘figureheads for resistance’, remarked that one had to pay a price, in that one’s future career advancement was at risk and one could not travel abroad.⁸⁴

Historians had the option to revert to ‘apolitical’ research topics, such as Ancient or Medieval History. Vilhelm stated: “It was impossible to write Modern History. All those [historians] who can be taken seriously (...) researched older periods. My own research in agrarian history was absolutely innocent. It could have been carried out in any country at any time.” Moreover, one did not have to teach the so-called ‘red subjects’ (Est., *punane aine*) such as party history or historical materialism. Again, I am told by Estonian respondents that generally Estonians from Russia or Russians taught these ‘red subjects’.⁸⁵ Similarly Urmas, a history professor at the University of Tartu born 1926, said: “(...) dangerous were all topics of Modern History. Already at university I researched the older times. Also later when I was teaching, [I taught] the older history of Estonia up until the middle of the 19th c.”⁸⁶ For many of the older Estonian historians I spoke to, the end of the First World War constituted the benchmark after which they avoided teaching any topics.⁸⁷ Consistent with this, Pauls, a historian born 1948 in Germany to a Latvian exile family, recalled: “Historians themselves say, when you are researching the Medieval Ages you could write 90 % truth, but the closer one got to the modern times, this was decreasingly so. It was hardly possible to research the history after 1918.”⁸⁸

On the analogy of the ‘piano player’

In many interviews I asked why one would choose to be trained as a professional historian knowing full well that one’s research would be restricted and one could only teach the Soviet interpretation of history. I compared it to a piano player, who knows that he will only be able to play a hymn to Stalin but still decides to become a pianist. Oskar replies: “If you learn to

play the piano in a society in which only certain tunes are allowed to be performed, you still learn to play the piano. And you may play on your own [and] secretly to your friends and wait for the time when you can do so publicly.”⁸⁹ Like many of his colleagues, his motivation to study history, despite all the difficulties, was to comprehend the history of his country. More specifically, he states:

“History isn’t just a big bag of facts and numbers, it is a system to know that there was the Thirty Years War and the Northern War. (...) The whole civilisation has some structure and some logical build-up and that was the thing I went to university for and this is what I got. Because there are large areas in history, which you can’t deny, which even Soviet communist rule did allow to be taught and studied.”⁹⁰

Also, optimists among the older generation of Estonian historians had hoped for the Soviet system to vanish before they completed their university studies.⁹¹ Ervin, the former Estonian dissident, says:

“We did not have four years of occupation like the French, Danish or Dutch, but we had 50 years of occupation. And to survive [this] in order not to be destroyed [or] expunged, somebody had to collaborate. (...) This is understandable, because if all the people would have refused to teach at the universities, what would have happened to us?”⁹²

This comes close to the argument ‘if we didn’t teach history ourselves, Russians might have taught our children instead’. Clearly, historians were all faced with the ethically precarious choice between political pragmatism and ‘historical truth’. Although their lives were no longer under immediate threat after the early ‘50s, voicing dissent still endangered their position and impeded their career or the possibility of publishing their work.

1.5. *Teaching history in Soviet Estonia*

Asked whether history teachers were able to voice dissent, Hanneleen, who belongs to the generational context that experienced Stalinist terror, states that “most of the people decided that they didn’t want to be in prison.”⁹³ During the Soviet period school teachers had to use available textbooks and teach the prescribed *curriculum*. Some teachers ‘kept the books closed’ and conveyed more critical tones verbally. Here, jokes, historical comparisons, exaggerations, and the well-known method of ‘talking between the lines’ were the most common expressions of dissent.⁹⁴ Teachers may have feared awkward questions from pupils

who had heard different accounts of Estonian history at home.⁹⁵ On the other side, many parents did not relate stories of inter-war Estonia or the war-time to protect their children from possible difficulties with teachers and co-students.

The following interview illustrates how it was essentially ‘down to’ the courage and initiative of individual teachers to keep the scholarly tradition and heritage of inter-war Estonia alive. Nora, whose father worked in a publishing house, recalled a private conversation with her Estonian language teacher when she was about 11 or 12 years old: “I said what a great catastrophe it has been for the Estonians when the Germans came to us in the 13th c. And (...) she [*the teacher – the author*] replied, ‘well, but much worse occupying powers followed’.”⁹⁶ Following this, the teacher, who had been educated during the ‘Estonian time’, invited her favourite pupil to her home. Nora continued:

“She openly spoke to me about the past, also about 1939 and 1940. She was puzzled and asked me ‘if my parents didn’t put things straight to me’? And I said no. (...) It was a talk in confidence, times weren’t as tough anymore. Stalin had died. [It was] 1956 or 1957, already after ‘Hungary’. We spoke about history and literature (...) what it means to be a state without an occupying power, independent (...), so that I would understand what independence really means. (...) Perhaps she simply wanted to explain to me what it takes to have a state, (...) self-confidence and all that.”⁹⁷

Subsequently, Nora’s parents brought her to their summerhouse in the countryside where their private library had been relocated. Nora described: “(...) this is where I spend almost my entire holiday. (...) I have discovered all that [*the forbidden books and journals - the author*] in one summer and afterwards a whole different life for me began.”⁹⁸ After her discovery Nora returned to the childhood she knew, however, since that summer she attended Church on Sundays, which may have functioned as a counter-world for her. Oskar describes how he learned more from other children than through explicit stories from his parents: “At the age of 3 or 5 I first heard the expression in the street among boys ‘will you give me a word of honour?’ ‘Yes’. ‘Will you give me an Estonian word of honour?’ ‘Yes.’ ‘Then it is okay, now I believe you’. Maybe that was the when I began to learn about national pride?” He gave me another example from the time when he was a little boy:

“I was very young, maybe 4 or 5 [years of age] when (...) I was beginning to be programmed like a Soviet kid. Perhaps I had watched some movie about the Second World War on good Russians and bad Germans and then I said to a neighbour boy who was 4 years older than me, ‘how lucky we are that the Russians won this war’ and he looked at me and said ‘why (...) lucky it was a very great misfortune’. I clearly remember this moment. I thought, well maybe things are totally different, maybe reality is different from what we are

told. This goes back on how kids influence kids. How the slightly older once influence the younger.”⁹⁹

Zahkar, an Estonian Russian born 1963 recalls his high school days in the 1970s:

“I belong to this generation that was raised with Soviet War movies. I was socialised through these War movies. (...) The German occupation was depicted as the worst thing imaginable. (...) When I was 6 or 8 years old I realised that my mother may hold some wartime memories, so I asked her: ‘Mother have you seen a real German soldier? Were there Germans in your village?’ ‘Yes!’ ‘And what happened?’ ‘Nothing’, mother said, ‘nothing happened’. No pillage, no executions, nothing. This was a shock for me. Thereafter I asked other family members (...), but they implied that the Soviet occupation was different from the German one. It was cruel, because of the deportations and the expropriations. (...) In the history class at school, I was taught that during the German occupation in Estonia (...) 100,000 people were killed and as a little boy I said, but my mother and my grandmother told me something else. (...) My parents were asked to come to school and they [*the KGB – the author*] had a serious talk (...) about their ideological stance. (...) In my elementary school years I could sense this fear with my older teachers. A fear that we could ask inappropriate questions.”¹⁰⁰

2. History in times of transition

2.1. *History comes alive: Estonia’s ‘ethno-historians’ and the Estonian Heritage Society*

After the late 1980s historians played a pivotal role in the restoration of national statehood and in the reshaping of Estonian national identity through history writing. Many historians became active in politics in the early ‘90s. In 1987, the founding members of the aforementioned “Estonian Heritage Society” (Est., *Eesti Muinsuskaitse Selts*, abbr. EMS) set as their goal “to become masters of their own past”, among them the historian and later President Lennart Meri and the historian and later Prime Minister Mart Laar, setting the agenda for a new national history writing.¹⁰¹

When I asked Vilma about the function of the EMS she pointed out that prior to its establishment, a semi-voluntary organisation for ‘home study’ [Est. *kodu ruulemine*] had already existed:

“(...) it was a committee of the Academy of Science and it was official, but everywhere in the country were small committees. They were very eager to

promote these home studies, also [studies of] nature and history (...) and this was very important for the Estonian identity. (...) I remember (...) how I cried on a meeting in the countryside. (...) The local choir came and sang patriotic songs, Estonian patriotic songs, and I began to cry. (...) There were some semi-voluntary organisations, because all of Estonia was a country of voluntary organisations, widespread voluntary associations modelled upon the German example, inspired by Baltic Germans.”¹⁰²

Although private student organisations were forbidden in Soviet Estonia, small groups of students and teachers met throughout in clandestine circles (e.g. exchanging and reading forbidden literature together), often in protest against political opportunism and acquiescence to the Soviet system; at times dissidents attended these meetings as well.¹⁰³ From the perspective of former Estonian dissidents the time is recalled in this way:

“As I understand it they [*the university teachers – the author*] had knowledge about everything, but they (...) only began to make use of it when the occupation ended. The historians, true historians, were very good and they were informed, because we ‘resistance fighters’ were not isolated from [the rest of] society. We knew the intellectuals, we passed our information, our material on to them and they gave us their books and material. It was an exchange of information.”¹⁰⁴

With regard to the socio-political ‘transition’, Ervin opines “we knew it, in our inner mind. Maybe it was suppressed (...), but we were not (...) a totally level-minded society such as depicted in Orwell’s 1984. We had our history, our culture. We had and have [*he laughs*], which made it easy for us to survive these changes.”¹⁰⁵

During the second half of the 1980s members of these private circles joined the local Heritage Societies, which organised excursions to the countryside to restore graveyards and work on historic ruins. Oskar explained to me that in this way the past was palpable; people came together and became more active.¹⁰⁶ History came alive as a direct experience for the participants of these workshops. I understand that the setting allowed for free and informal communication between Estonians of different generational contexts about the recent past.¹⁰⁷ The historians involved in these activities belong to the passionate, engaged type referred to earlier.

Rein, an Estonian *amateur* historian born 1929 described the EMS as the “first legal opposition in Estonia”.¹⁰⁸ He was the founder and most active member of the local EMS in Narva, where he compiled an exhibition on ‘old Narva’ that was opened to the public in 1989.¹⁰⁹ He stated that the objective of the exhibition

“is to educate the local people, Estonians and people from abroad, about the modern history of Narva, which they had no clue about; for instance the story of the destruction of Narva during the March 1944 bombardment which was basically a secret. Until the very end of Soviet rule (...) people were still taught that it was the Germans who blew up the city.”¹¹⁰

The exhibition includes a documentation of graveyards and POW labour camp sites, subjects that, as Rein made clear, are still taboo in Narva today. He described the ignorant attitude of the local authorities towards his exhibition:

“A person in the local government is a Ukrainian. (...) I asked him if he knows anything about the [POW] camp. He didn’t. I told him thousands of Ukrainians were brought to the camp. He said ‘for sure they took SS people there, they are bandits!’ Next time I came to see him, I took the list of inmates with me, and I added that most of the Ukrainians were from West Ukraine. He replied: ‘all this West Ukrainians are stiff. They don’t want to learn Russian’.”
¹¹¹

Slightly bewildered, Rein added that this person “considered himself a Ukrainian.”¹¹² Notably, the situation in Narva (and in north-east Estonia) is particular in that ethnic Estonians constitute a minority of 3.89 % there. Consequently, an exhibition revealing Soviet War crimes is less welcome than it would be in Pärnu or Tallinn.

Zinovij, an Estonian Russian born 1973, spent his childhood in Russia but returned to Narva with his parents in 1988, where he felt alien although it was supposed to be his homeland. He recalls his motive for joining the local EMS in 1991:

“First of all my interest in local history, [it was] more like nostalgia, (...) ‘you try to find refuge in this old golden age’. (...) It was a beautiful town and of course the grandparents, mostly grandmothers, told all these romantic stories. (...) Very sweet stories about Narva, (...) for me all of Estonian history was encapsulated in Narva.”¹¹³

After graduating from school, he worked at the Narva Museum, but soon his hopes were shattered “that the Narva Museum (...) would be a cradle, [i.e.] that all the dedicated people working on the history of Narva would be there.”¹¹⁴ Later he added:

“I realised that these people [at the Narva Museum] were simple bureaucrats (...) afraid to loose their jobs (...) [they were] Russians without Estonian citizenship. Their vision of history was very different from mine or from that of the people of the EMS. (...) These people were for real. [Though] not professionally trained historians, (...) they were very dedicated and that made it attractive.”¹¹⁵

Earlier he explained: “I only began to take a political interest in history after I joined the EMS. Even though they (...) dealt with the history of Narva, they looked at the post-War occupation and that was already political. From that you could figure out what the general history of Estonia used to be.”¹¹⁶

The ‘Russian Spirit’

Zbigniev, a Russian *amateur* historian born in 1950 (and not a member of the EMS) has compiled an exhibition on the so-called ‘historic Russian community’ that lived in Estonia before 1940, naming it ‘Russian Spirit’ (Est., *vene vaim*). His objective was to provide evidence for the ancestral roots of the ‘ancient Russian community’ in Estonia to reinforce their position today. He described himself as Estonian Russian (Est., *Eesti venelane*; also using the Est. term ‘*põlis*’ meaning ‘ancient’ or ‘primordial’). To buttress his identity-claim he referred to his forefathers who belonged to the so-called ‘White Russian intelligentsia’.¹¹⁷ Adding that his family has lived in Estonia for 9 generations, and that although no Estonian blood runs through his veins and some family members don’t even speak Estonian, he considers Estonia his homeland.

In the case of the young Estonian Russian, Zinovij, and of the older Russian, Zbigniev, turning to local history is closely linked to the endeavour of finding and claiming one’s own roots.

In the late 1980s the demonstrations demanding the publication of the MRP secret protocols and the activities of the EMS all fed into the independence movement (e.g. RR, ENIP). As one interviewee recalled, it was then that all the fragmented or atomised groups of society met.¹¹⁸ It was particularly the younger members of the EMS that gave *ad hoc* teachings in classrooms between 1987 and 1991 and produced the first editions of new history textbooks.¹¹⁹ The liberalisation was noticeable in the classroom. Zinovij, who was a pupil at the time, stated: “At the age of 14 it was no longer a ‘sin’ to listen to Western radio stations. I would not be arrested for it. I could do it freely. I could even speak about it at school. The teacher said ‘Anton is spreading anti-Soviet propaganda’, but nothing happened, nobody expelled me from school. It was all allowed.”¹²⁰ He remembers:

“On this day we had the Pioneers’ Parade at all schools and we had a marching competition. It was cheerful, we liked it. Of course we did not realise the ideology behind it, but it was nice, trumpets drums, recitals. (...) We were rehearsing and the teacher [who] was not in a very good mood (...) said ‘well, if I had to give everybody a nickname, (...) Zinovij would have to be called ‘anti-Soviet’.”¹²¹

In sum, the fact that many of the political leaders of the Estonian independence movement had a professional background as historians sustains the argument that the battle over what is the historical ‘Truth’ played a key role in Estonia’s re-emergence as independent State. History came alive in the late ‘80s, when people’s interest in ‘their’ history was rekindled and revelations about the past mobilised them. Both history and memories served as ‘weapons’ in the struggle for independence. The RR was able to gain wide support and integrate the Estonians, because it tapped into these counter-accounts.¹²² History was not ‘dead’, it was not the ‘end of history’, but rather it’s ‘rebirth’.¹²³ However, this process of restoration and rehabilitation of historical knowledge and the “hypertrophy of historical reference in the public speech” were always guided by a future orientation, i.e. it was a turn to the past to obtain guidance for the present and the future (Gallerano 1994: 93).¹²⁴

2.2. National history writing in Estonia since the 1980s

Times of socio-political upheaval, such as the end of an undemocratic regime and the subsequent transitional phase, during which independent statehood is restored, are highly instructive for the study of collective memory and identity; this is the time when competing interpretations of the nation surface in the society's debate and are 'up for grabs'. During this time, national identity becomes a highly politicised category, as different groups 'battle' for the privilege to write national history and thereby formulate national identity. Examining this period gives insight into the 'building blocks' constitutive of collective identities in Estonia, which are otherwise hidden under layers of *longue duree* processes of cultural memory.

It is fair to say that in 1991 Estonia did not have a long-standing tradition of independent historical research to act as a counter-weight to the long shadow cast by Baltic German scholars and to 50 years of Soviet historiography.¹²⁵ Helme notes that a first generation of reputable Estonian historians had emerged in the inter-war period, but that the Second World War had a devastating effect on academic research (Helme 1995).¹²⁶ In retrospect, Vilma valued history teaching in the 1940s as 'trustworthy', stating that "then our teachers taught us about Estonian history and historiography without any ideological restrictions."¹²⁷

"Estonia goes back"

From the late 1980s onwards history was re-written in Estonia; in the process, old interpretations were rejected, taboo topics lifted, and historical figures rehabilitated, while a new national narrative was re-constructed.¹²⁸

Whereas the official Soviet historiography treated the period of Estonian independence (1920 – 40) as an aberrant interlude and insisted on the continuity from the 'Baltic Soviet regimes' (1918 – 19) to the communist governments re-established in 1940 and on to the Estonian SSR, the re-interpretation of history in Estonia from the late 1980s onwards saw Soviet rule as a rupture (characterised by general misfortunes, unhappiness, party autocracy, and terror), that had to be overcome to make way for the cultural regeneration of an independent Estonia. "Estonia goes back" (Est., *Eesti tule tagasi*) was the slogan indicating that the Estonian Republic was built on the notion of continuity.¹²⁹ Herein, the events of the War of Independence and the annexation in 1940 were the foremost topics that needed to be re-interpreted.¹³⁰ Previously unmentionable events of the period from 1918 – 50, such as the

Forest Brethren's armed resistance and the deportations, were among the first facts to be divulged. The newly constructed narrative set an Estonian non-Soviet and non-Russian normality (in the shape of an idealised inter-war period) against the Soviet period while claiming that the Soviet era did not impact on the Estonian *longue durée* in any substantial manner.¹³¹

Any periodisation of historical events *already* conveys meaning, since it provides a cognitive frame through which past events are viewed or re-covered. The periodisation of modern Estonian history is thus a highly political matter: the more moderate Estonian historians argue that the Soviet occupation and the totalitarian nature of the regime ended with Khrushchev's 'thaw', whereas others claim that the Soviet occupation did not end before 1991; and still others contend that its final conclusion was only marked when the last Russian troops pulled out of the country in 1994. More radical voices hold that the Russian speaking-community in Estonia still represents a "civil occupation".¹³²

It can be argued that the Soviet interpretation lives on, inasmuch as the newly constructed national narrative, in an effort to rectify historical injustices, is a direct response to earlier Soviet interpretations of Estonian history (cf. Tulviste & Wertsch 1994).¹³³ Lagerspetz notes that the new interpretation of history shares a common basic structure with Messianism: there was a 'golden age' of the independence period, then the collective road of suffering (exile, humiliations, mass-arrests and deportations) and finally the perspective of a return to the 'Promised Land', i.e. to an independent Estonian State (Lagerspetz 1996: 74 ff.).¹³⁴

In sum, a return to national history writing and a populist historical journalism is discernible in Estonia since the late 1980s (Kivimäe & Kivimäe 2002).

On symbolic acts of rehabilitation

The political figures of former President Päts and Gen. Juhan Laidoner, who fought in the War of Independence, became symbols of independent Estonia during foreign rule,¹³⁵ thus their rehabilitation was crucial in the attempt to restore Estonian statehood in the early 1990s. In the course of this President Päts' mortal remains were removed from the Russian Kalinin *oblast* (where he had died in exile in 1956) in order to rebury him as a statesman and martyr for his nation in Tallinn (Lagerspetz 1996: 75, 79).¹³⁶ Also, in recent years General Laidoner, who perished in a Russian prison in 1953, was honoured with an equestrian statue in his

hometown of Viljandi (also, his military decorations were recently returned to the Estonian government).¹³⁷ In her book on the Political lives of dead bodies, reburial and post-socialist change Verdery argues that dead bodies have a symbolic role to play in people's struggle to come to terms with profound socio-political change, as well as in legitimising post-Soviet or post-socialist realities. To her, dead bodies are "vehicle[s] through which people in post-socialist societies reconfigure their worlds of meaning", as they hold ideas about the ancestors, burial, morality, blame, time and space. Moreover, she relates that "corpses and bones (...) were (...) central to dramatising the end of Communist Party rule" (Verdery 1999: 50 ff).

On 'frozen memories'

Was the previously dominant Soviet interpretation of history simply replaced by the fragmented counter-accounts of the formerly repressed? These private memories had been preserved in family units and disconnected small groups as if 'frozen' in time until the late 1980s. This metaphor accentuates how these counter-accounts did not undergo a critical reflection in a wider public, but were merely reproduced over time. Hence, some facets of the Estonian national identity appeared almost anachronistic and bygone on their 'defrost' (e.g. overemphasis on folklore and songs, the farmstead and countryside, and a prominent ethnic conception of the nation).

The case of Veera's family illustrates the point that private memories were 'frozen' in time, for until 1991 her parents did not entrust to her that they had been deported to Siberia.¹³⁸ However, that the memories of terror were transmitted non-verbally becomes evident from Pille's account:

"What comes to my mind is my grand mum. (...) My grandparents' house was just by the road (...) what I remember from my childhood is that my grandmother always had to close all curtains as tightly as possible once darkness set in and this really annoyed me as a child. I mean it was so nice to look out of the window and watch the twilight. (...) But of course the idea was that no one from the outside could peek in (...) and this had something to do with the 1950s and '40s. (...) I mean you could get shot. She [the grandmother] did not feel safe in the '70s and she kept this tradition (...) even in the early '80s."¹³⁹

The last part illustrated how Pille, born 1971, comes to understand that her grandmother's behaviour was a result of her experience of the War years in the countryside. Hence, an overall atmosphere of fear was nevertheless conveyed to the next generations.

On official and unofficial histories

My introductory question may appear somewhat flawed, since the Soviet interpretation of history was not merely replaced by the various counter-accounts; instead only *some* unofficial accounts entered the domain of official history writing and formed the newly constructed national narrative after 1991. Tulviste & Wertsch point out that official and unofficial historical accounts differ in content, sources, in the ways of transmission, and in their narrative structure. Whereas the official or dominant history of the nation is presented as a coherently structured narrative, unofficial accounts are characterised by fragmentation as they lack an overarching narrative; instead they consist of strings of anecdotes and observations, a number of statements, comments and attitudes based on personal experience. However, the authors contend that due to a 'hidden dialogicality' (M. Bakhtin) the fragmented unofficial histories are in fact structured by the official discourse (Tulviste & Wertsch 1994: 325 – 29, 253).

Whose history is it?

Estonians felt a clear need for societal cohesion in the early 1990s, mainly due to the perceived threat of the Russian-speaking community living in Estonia and of the close proximity to Russia.¹⁴⁰ The withdrawal of the last Russian troops from Estonia on August 31, 1994 signifies the beginning of societal consolidation.¹⁴¹ However, did the diminished external threat allow for a more inclusive national narrative and an increasingly pluralistic discourse on the past to emerge? Or did the writing of the nation remain 'hegemonised' by the Estonian core nation, resulting in 'new historical orthodoxies'?¹⁴² This challenges the question whether a *caesura* had taken place at all in Estonian history writing. According to Brüggemann's assessment the debate of the '90s on the question of whether the new Estonian history is that of ethnic Estonians or a history of the state and territory (i.e. the historical concept of *Estländer* encompassing all people living on Estonian territory), he mostly emphasised the former.¹⁴³ He goes on to ask whether the re-nationalisation of Estonian

historiography in the early '90s simply replaced the guiding principle of 'class' with that of the 'nation' (Brüggemann 2001).

At the time of my fieldwork (2002-03) an extensive history of Estonia, such as the History of the ESSR (Est., *Eesti NSV ajalugu*), had not been re-written, which is partly based on a lack of resources, and due to the undecided question of *how* to write Estonian history after 1991.¹⁴⁴ Kivimäe & Kivimäe remark that in the new millennium the rift between more traditional historians who hold fast to national stereotypes and the younger generation that is critical of national mythologies and stereotypes still exists. A proponent of this younger generation is the journalist and writer Andrus Kivirähk whose book The Memoirs of Ivan Orav is a parody of the re-writing of Estonian history in which the author assumes a Russian identity (Kivirähk 1995; Kivimäe & Kivimäe 2002: 169). His writings were treated like the 'Bible' by young history students in Tartu in the mid '90s. Zahkar, historian born 1963 of mixed Estonian Russian background, enthusiastically remarks:

"This is not humour, it's satire, sarcasm against Estonian sacrileges. This writer [Andrus Kivirähk] did 10 times more to break through taboo issues than did all of Estonia's historians together. For him sacrileges don't exist, he knows no fear of taboo issues, he is just laughing at all that is sacred to Estonians."¹⁴⁵

*On history textbooks*¹⁴⁶

Estonian history textbooks are probably the most prominent means through which national identity is constructed. Ümarik analysed whether textbooks published between 1991 and 1999 portray an exclusive ethnocentric identity or whether Estonia is represented as a multi-ethnic society allowing for a territorial, state-bound notion of identity to take root (Ümarik 2001a, Ümarik 2001b). Her conclusion is that 3 out of the 5 textbooks promoted an ethnic concept of identity, the other 2 allow for the co-existence of different nationalities in Estonia. Ümarik points out that in the late '90s a turn to a more pragmatic view on the past is discernible and that textbooks increasingly favour a territorial concept of national identity (i.e. turning historical territory into the core element of national identity). However, a hostile attitude towards Estonia Russians can be found in all the textbooks and the age-old 'Baltic German enemy' has been replaced by all that is associated with the Soviet period.¹⁴⁷

One of the facts that struck me about post-Soviet Estonia's historical culture is that Mart Laar while being an active politician wrote standard Estonian history textbooks.¹⁴⁸

Evgenij, a Russian historian born 1957, states of one of the textbooks co-authored by Laar that “(...) it is a book about destruction (...) of creativity. The destruction of history as such.” On my question whether he is referring to the destruction of the ways people used to live together in Estonia up until 1991 he replies:

“It’s in the nature of people who come to power; they create their own history and destroy the history that had been previously created. They just tear off 50 years (...) and of course 300 years of existence of the Russian Empire as well, eliminating the facts. Some Estonians say ‘it is not our history’. They have their history starting from 1918 to 1940. You know, the other history is not their history.”¹⁴⁹

Zahkar notes on this process of construction and destruction:

“This is another taboo! They speak about integration, but they think really of assimilation. This means that the Russian identity must be deconstructed and this deconstruction can only be successful when on the Estonian side no construction is taking pace.”¹⁵⁰

In sum, the reconstruction of identity almost inevitably involves destruction: the Soviet account on Estonian history has been de-constructed and with it much of the history of the Russian-speaking community in Estonia; fully including the ‘Russian past’ into the newly constructed national narrative after 1991 may have meant undermining the Estonian sense of self, eroding the Estonians’ self-confidence.

The Soviet legacy: a theoretical vacuum

Soviet historiography lacked a methodological and theoretical stronghold, as the methodological frame had been fixed by Historical Materialism, allowing for little further reflection. This legacy lives on in that today the majority of Estonian historians dismiss all (officially prescribed) theoretical frameworks.¹⁵¹

Kivimäe states “it is not surprising that after the collapse of Soviet power public opinion in Estonia accused historians of supporting or even collaborating with the communist government” (Kivimäe 1999: 206). For all of the former Soviet Union, Karlsson remarks that in the late 1980s the great majority of historians did not contribute to a critical analysis of the Soviet regime, and that this was due to their long-term binding relations with communist power (i.e. patron-client relationship) and a lack of professional training. Moreover, in the late

1980s it had become more expedient for them to advance non-Soviet, pre-communist history rather than to set off a critical debate about the Soviet legacy which may have involved controversial questions of their own compromise (Karlsson 1998: 16 f).¹⁵²

After 1991 all institutions of party history were disbanded and several research institutions reorganised.¹⁵³ When compared to post-Soviet Latvia, Estonia saw no screenings of historians or re-evaluations of their (Soviet) degrees and competences in the early '90s.¹⁵⁴ Several respondents told me that many former Communist Party historians became political scientists, and teachers of Historical Materialism and Scientific Communism became sociologists after 1991.¹⁵⁵ Some recalled unexpectedly running into former colleagues. For instance, Hanneelen relates that "the most important scientist, a doctor of history, who compiled books about the so-called revolutions of 1940; (...) he now works as a cloakroom attendant."¹⁵⁶

The Estonian life history project

However, neighbouring disciplines such as cultural anthropology slowly begin to impregnate the disparaging attitude towards all theory still prevailing in the historical discipline. An example of this is the Estonian life history project, which promoted biographical sources as highly constructive for the study of the recent history of repression and Sovietisation in Estonia. One attempt to "rehabilitate memory" was undertaken by the Estonian Literary Museum, which in 1989 (in the first of a series of nation-wide life story competitions) called upon those Estonians ready to bear witness to what had long been hidden; the first of these life stories were published in newspapers straight away. Mart Laar, then chairman of the History Task Force of the EMS, encouraged Estonians "that in writing down one's own memories or those of one's parents and grandparents, everyone would have the opportunity to help give back our history to the people" (in Hinrikus & Kõresaar 2004: 21). To this point 6,000 – 10,000 (auto-) biographical texts (e.g. memoirs, letters, diaries etc.) have been collected through the different institutions in Estonia.¹⁵⁷ Initially only ethnic Estonians (or Estonian citizens) were encouraged to participate in these life story competitions. Eventually, in 2003 a life history collection was launched for the Russophone community of Estonia, aiming to preserve "the historical experience of the Russian-speaking minority in Estonia." A further competition on the memory of life under the German occupation was initiated in that same year (Hinrikus & Kõresaar 2004: 24).

PART II

3. Formative historical events constitutive of the Estonian identity: A typology

A distinctive feature of Estonian history is the ‘cyclic nature’ of historical events, such as circumstances surrounding the emergence of the Estonian Republic in 1918 and the (re-) establishment of independent statehood in 1991. In each case Estonians had to rid themselves of a foreign ruler, and towards the end of the First and during the Second World War they were subjected to an alternation of German and Russian military occupations. On the level of practical life this ‘cyclic nature’ of historical circumstances often meant that Estonians lost their home or farmstead more than once within 50 years. Most Estonian families lost relatives during the War years, in combat, through deportation or flight abroad. Simon describes the fate of his own family as representative of most Estonian families:

“My father was in prison, my mother had been deported. (...) She was in the Novosibirsk *oblast*. My parents met [there], because my father was released in 1955 but he was unable to come to Estonia, because his parents were deported and therefore he travelled to his parents, who were also in Novosibirsk. (...) My grandmother was (...) in prison and deported. My grandfather was shot, well everybody [was effected by the terror]. It’s nothing unusual. It’s unusual that everybody in 3 generations was somehow repressed, but everybody had somebody in the family. So, the day-to-day talk about how it was in the places people got deported to and in the prisons (...) was nothing uncommon (...) you heard it here and there all along.”¹⁵⁸

On a *longue durée* scale of things, the experience of the occupations during the 20th c. resonates in the Estonian collective memory as far back as the experienced subjugation in the course of the German conquest of the 13th c. Similarly, Brezhnev’s Russification policy of the late 1970s tapped into the collective memory of the Russification during the late 1890s. Also, deportations to Siberia have a long tradition, for instance the great uprising of 1858 was ended with corporal punishment and sentences to Siberia (Raun 1987: 45).¹⁵⁹ In people’s minds the collective memory of these different formative events can blend into one ‘grand narrative’;¹⁶⁰ therefore Irwin-Zarecka described memory as “dormant traces of the past” and “only when the daily social practices draw from this resource does our sense of the past become activated and memory becomes remembrance” (Irwin-Zarecka 1994: 14).

Some of the constitutive elements of the Estonian national narrative have previously been tackled. In what follows an attempt is made to systematise them in a typology of ‘formative historical events’ which can figure both informative and restrictive on processes of national identification. To recap, formative or foundational histories hold a mythical quality or function as *mythomoteurs* encapsulating both the normative and formative knowledge of who the group is and what its purpose is in life; they can be identity reinforcing (e.g. the myth of chosenness) or function as a subversive counter-myth (e.g. the myth of regeneration or the myth of the ‘golden age’).¹⁶¹

At the core of the Estonian national narrative stands Carl Robert Jakobson’s line of “700 years of slavery and 700 years of survival.” Jakobson, one of the leading figures of the Estonian awakening, attacked the German conquerors for having imposed the yoke of the most severe slavery upon the Estonians for 700 years, bringing about the degeneration of their splendid old culture (in Jansen 2000a: 61). This narrative is simultaneously one of suffering and of resistance (or resilience), and still figures most prominently in the Estonian national identity.

Raun depicts Estonian history as that of serfdom and the Estonian identity as determined by a lord-peasant relationship (Raun 1987). It is noteworthy that the ‘German landlord’ in this narrative was replaced by the ‘Soviet Russian oppressor’ after the first Soviet year 1940/41.¹⁶² Hanneleen states that “the anti-Russian feelings in Estonia only rouse when Soviet rule set in, during one year, 1940. During all the previous centuries [Estonians were] anti-German.”¹⁶³ This re-evaluation allowed the Estonians to view the Germans “as the lesser of the two evils”, which had a particular pertinence with reference to Estonians legitimising their fighting alongside the Germans against the Red Army (following the logic, “my enemy’s enemy must be my friend”).¹⁶⁴

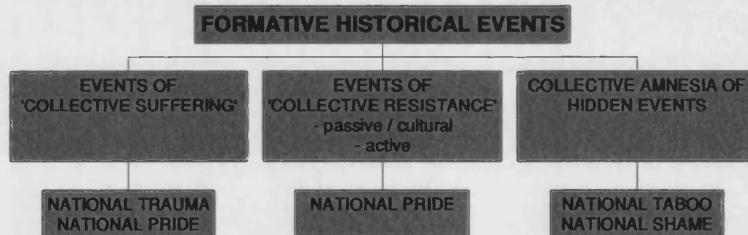
Based on Renan’s claim that suffering and sacrifice (particularly in connection to warfare) are powerful national unifiers, the formative building blocks of Estonian identity appear to be memories of events of collective suffering and resistance (Renan 1994: 17 f).¹⁶⁵ Vilheliim noted that it is not only language but also ‘common destiny’ that define Estonian identity. According to him, one ‘fault line’ within the Estonian society runs between those who experienced the inter-war Republic and fought for a free Estonia during the Second World War and those who either lack that experience or who were on the other side. He provides a very palpable example for this ‘fault line’: “Some were those who threw [people] in the back of the trucks, others were thrown onto the trucks.” Later on he remarked that he

would always choose to be on the side of the deported, i.e. those who were thrown onto the trucks. Interestingly, he employs the same term of ‘community of common destiny’ (Germ., *Schicksalsgemeinschaft*) in conjunction with the term ‘brotherhood in arms’ (Germ., *Waffengemeinschaft*) to describe Estonians who fought alongside the Germans against the mutual enemy.¹⁶⁶

As previously expounded, collective memories are based on the logic of remembering and forgetting, i.e. it is a selective mechanism of inclusion and exclusion. Therefore a third category of events needs to be introduced: That of collective *amnesia* of ‘hidden events’, or rather of taboo issues, including highly controversial stories which must be forgotten at a certain point in time by a certain group (or by the entire nation).

As a detailed historical overview has been provided in Chapter Three, I will no more than allude to those historical events significant for the Estonian identity.

Figure V: Formative historical events of the Estonian national identity



“There shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain.”

- Revelations 21:4

“We are what we lost.”

- F. R. Ankersmit

3.1. Events of collective suffering: humiliation, defeat, and loss

Events of collective suffering are closely linked to (national) trauma.¹⁶⁷ Grief, or its more active form, mourning, is caused by a ‘loss of meaning’ (Germ., *Sinnverslust*).¹⁶⁸ Thus, Rüsen defines mourning about a loss experienced in the past as the ‘work of suffering’ (Germ., *Trauerarbeit*) (Rüsen 2001c: 63-84).¹⁶⁹ The work of memory can thus be the work of mourning (Ricoeur 1999: 7). Through the process of mourning, the individual aims to

transform the loss and regain meaning (as a form of reconciliation). Some claim that it is only by way of public mourning that a trauma can be transformed (Todorov 1996: 14). Here, Agnes Heller writes “one can only authentically forget what is first authentically remembered” (in Gallerano 1994: 96). If I read her correctly, this kind of forgetting is connected to the notion of forgiving, while authentically remembering entails public recognition of what has been done, both by one’s community and by the perpetrators.¹⁷⁰

In the Estonian SSR the process of mourning had been suppressed and ‘public memory work’ involuntary delayed up until the late 1980s, at which time an official recognition of the suffering caused by the Stalinist regime was gradually permitted.

The mass-deportation of 1941 stands out as *the* quintessential event of collective suffering. The period of the second Soviet occupation up until Stalin’s death figures as a time of great fear. The flight of ten thousands of Estonians abroad (separating families); the actions of the shock battalions; the total destruction of the north eastern border town of Narva, the bombing of Tallinn and Tartu also in 1944;¹⁷¹ the second wave of deportations in 1949; and the forced collectivisation all belong in this category of events. The harassment of Estonians in the Soviet army in peacetime has been mentioned as another example of suffering.¹⁷² Hence, on a *longue durée* scale of things, the memory of events of collective suffering taps into the narrative of ‘700 years of slavery’ and the collective fear of (cultural) extinction.¹⁷³

Kalev relates an anecdote on the arbitrariness of Stalinist terror:

“There was a committee in 1949 that had to send a number of *kulaks* to Siberia. But how could one determine who is a *kulak* and who is not? (...) I have seen the members of the committee walking around our house. My father had begun to build a new house in 1938. (...) In 1939 the War had begun (...) and so it was not completed. The head of the committee noted: ‘great house, two *Morgen*, a *kulak*.’ But another member of the committee intervened, ‘don’t you see the house has no window grate.’ And now I wonder what if he had started to build the house just a year earlier and it would have been ready!”¹⁷⁴

Events of collective suffering affect feelings of group worth, since suffering can be interpreted as ‘national shame’ as its memory implies a negative identification with notions of defeat and humiliation.¹⁷⁵ Therefore deliberate attempts are undertaken to suppress and purge the historical memory of these events and to turn them into a collective taboo.¹⁷⁶ Pille said that Estonian children are often reminded that despite all the suffering Estonians managed to go ahead and do well; that they are survivors and can be proud of it. She recalled that

whenever she did not want to eat her breakfast, her mother told her stories about her great aunt who was a child in Siberia with nothing to eat.¹⁷⁷ Thus, memories of collective suffering can represent sources of collective pride as well.

3.2. *Events of collective resistance: sources of national pride*

Events of collective resistance, - be it active military resistance, passive (cultural) resistance or shades of political dissent - are all linked to an individual's moral integrity, a positive national self-image, and national pride.¹⁷⁸

The War of Independence figures as *the* key formative event for the first Estonian Republic, as it was a successful War for an independent Estonian State.¹⁷⁹ Here, the memory of the battle of *Cesis* in June 1919 is particularly significant. Similarly, during times of foreign rule, the inter-war Republic as a whole and the Tartu Peace Treaty in particular, in which Bolshevik Russia accepted the independent Estonian State in its territorial borders for all time, figured as potent symbols of national resistance and pride.¹⁸⁰ Hence, the founding date of the Estonian Republic and the day of the Tartu Peace Treaty were unofficially commemorated during the "years of dependence" (Misiunas & Tagepera 1993). The Estonian national committee (Est., *Eesti Vabariiklik Rahvuskomitee*), founded on March 23, 1944, stood for national continuity and the spirit of political resistance, as did the various exile organisations, such as the Estonian government in exile (in Sweden) that met until 1992, or the Free Estonia Committee in the USA.¹⁸¹ The free spirit of the university town of Tartu (Est., *Tartu vaim*) as opposed to the 'corrupted' town of Tallinn, the seat of the government, the ECP and KGB, constituted a further symbol of cultural and political resistance.¹⁸² One interviewee cited a well-known Estonian saying that Tallinn is the capital, but Tartu is the city with brains.¹⁸³ As mentioned earlier, dissident circles and some émigré Estonians stood for (outspoken) political resistance.¹⁸⁴

On armed resistance: the partisans

In the post-war years the 'Forest Brethren' became the stuff of legends for Estonians.¹⁸⁵ Iivo, an Estonian exile born 1925 who fled Estonia in 1944, remarks that the 'Forest Brethren' "fought the battle against the Soviets that we couldn't fight. Even if they killed people, mostly

it was those working for the Soviet authorities. Sometimes they pillaged villages, but they needed food to survive. (...) I believe that they are and will act as a positive symbol.”¹⁸⁶ Vilhelm has words of support for the actions of the ‘Forest Brethren’ as they had to “keep the surroundings clean” of vagabonding Red Army soldiers, dangerous gangs, partisans, and parachutes in self-protection and self-defense.¹⁸⁷

Illar, another Estonian exile born 1921, points to the fact that, compared to the Estonian partisans who picked up armed resistance in 1941, the ‘Continuation War’ of the ‘Forest Brethren’ was a “hopeless case.”¹⁸⁸ Ervin, a former dissident, conceded that “compared to us [*the dissidents, born in the 1940s and ‘50s - the author*] they had no choice, they fought in the German army and then had to hide [in the woods] to save their lives;”¹⁸⁹ so that the heroic resistance against the Soviets turned into a matter of sheer survival after 1944.

Whereas for Kalev the songs of the ‘Forest Brethren’ were “forbidden songs of resistance;”¹⁹⁰ already for Estonians born in the 1940s they lost their original meaning and were used as drinking songs. Ülle-Mai, born 1948, stated that “they [*the ‘Forest Brethren’ songs – the author*] were not holy for us. (...) for our parents they meant something positive, but for us it was something to take ironically.”¹⁹¹ When I asked Polina, an Estonian Russian born in 1976, about collective events of resistance, she remembered:

“When we were kids, I found my father’s journals from when he was young. They were kept in the second floor of our house. We would always like to look at them and there were many songs of the ‘Forest Brethren’ which I think my father and his schoolmates sang when they were gathering together drinking [and] playing guitar. ‘I went to fight for my freedom, for my ideals’. (...) So my father is from the ‘60s generation. He was a huge Beatles fan, so to some extent this put him against the State as the State was anti-Western, anti-American.”¹⁹²

Polina ended up laughing about the fact that her father would be a Beatle and sing ‘Forest Brethren’ songs at the same time.”¹⁹³

In sum, the usage of terms such as ‘partisans’ needs careful decoding and contextualisation: when ethnic Estonian respondents speak of ‘partisans’ they denote anti-Soviet resistance. Two of my interviewees, both of Russian background (one of them a Russian Jew), proudly recalled that their family members were partisans. Similar to some of the ethnic Estonian respondents, they only used the term ‘partisans’, presupposing that I understood that there is only *one* possible way of paramilitary resistance, i.e. against the Germans.¹⁹⁴

Events of resistance are related to the longer tradition of peasant revolts against foreign landowners, such as the St. George's Night uprising of the 14th c. Siim remembers how as a boy he was impressed by a novel on Estonia's struggle for freedom: “(...) there was the youth literature, such as the Avenger about the peasant uprising of 1343 [on St. George's Night] written by an 18-year-old in the 1880s, Eduard Bornhöhe. That was great, to fight against those German traitors” he adds.¹⁹⁵ As previously expounded, the first Estonian awakening was an act of cultural self-assertion and its memory was considered a form of resistance against Baltic German domination.¹⁹⁶

Under Soviet rule the Song Festivals represented a rare opportunity for larger numbers of people to show their national allegiances, and they increasingly did so from the late 1980s onwards.¹⁹⁷ Hence, the long tradition of folklore and the younger Song Festival tradition, together with the important role of a distinct language, can be considered as forms of cultural resistance under foreign rule. This is the reason why the independence movement was commonly referred to as the ‘Singing Revolution’.¹⁹⁸ The fact that the Estonian education system and general literacy levels were well advanced in the 1920s (when compared to Russia) constitutes another source of pride, since institutions of education had always been linked to the consolidation of Estonian national identity. At the beginning of the interview Urmas, born in 1926, takes particular pride in the “excellent Christian education” provided by his village school.¹⁹⁹

Kalev remembers:

“We were not allowed to go to Church (...) for the Christmas celebrations. I knew that there were special groups in Church to make sure that nobody from the students or professors is there. They were not in the Catholic Church. So me and my wife, [although] we are Lutheran, were allowed to go to the Catholic Church.”²⁰⁰

Vilhelm recalls:

“I know of people who after they had returned from Siberia never celebrated Christmas again. (...) Officially Christmas and fir trees were forbidden. When

I was a student in Tartu in 1950, I went to the market to buy a small sampling and I went home with this little tree, but I could not buy candles prior to Christmas. You could only buy them after December 26.”²⁰¹

Oskar expounds how during the Soviet period the Christmas celebration

“was more or less tolerated, but it was laughed at and mocked. Of course there were no holidays (...), but you could not deny people the right to visit the graves of their parents and to put candles there. All the graves were lit that evening [Christmas Eve]. A dark winter’s night and then the sea of flames and this (...) was silent resistance. People looked at each other’s faces and felt they belonged together (...), total strangers. The graveyard was full of people. (...) At the same graveyard there was a monument dedicated to the soldiers of the War of Independence. It was the same graveyard where my grandfather and grandmother (...) were buried. The monument itself had been taken away and there was no inscription, but there were big granite stones and there were always candles there as well. I was very young when on each visit we put candles there and my mother said it is for the men who fought for Estonia.”²⁰²

Among the younger generation, Pille told me that her family celebrated Christmas but did so at her grandparents’ village Church. At the time she was a young Pioneer and she did not understand the meaning of Christmas. As a child she was surprised that she got her presents when other kids got them a week later.²⁰³ The Estonian Russia Zinovij recalls:

“It was a taboo that our school was not far from the only functioning Russian Church [in Narva]. There was a cemetery too and every Easter they had a small procession around that Church. (...) The teacher always said that ‘I know that you are going, but be careful, you better not’. These religious things were taboo. (...) Many guys went just out of curiosity, not because they were very religious or wanted to express their dissent. It was fun, they were just curious. I am sure they were ridiculing these elderly people participating in the procession.”²⁰⁴

3.3. *Collective amnesia of hidden events: controversy, taboo and national shame*

*“Das Vergangene ist nicht tot; es ist nicht einmal vergangen
Wir trennen es von uns ab und stellen uns fremd”*

- C.Wolf²⁰⁵

“We shall not remember that what we label as occupation, and what is thus our life.”

- Merle Karusoo

Events that constitute sources of controversy, because they are connected to national shame, are (consciously or unconsciously) put aside or better forgotten. Hence, we can speak of so-called ‘hidden events’; i.e. hidden from the ‘public eye’. One can distinguish between deliberate *amnesia*, forced institutionalised *amnesia*, and mere forgetfulness (*effacement*). It goes without saying that each period has its own specific taboo topics and that what had to be forgotten in the Estonian SSR differs from the events that became screened out after 1991. As collective memory is based on mechanisms of exclusion and inclusion, it is by contrasting the different accounts held by Estonians, Russians, émigré Estonians, Estonian-Russians and Estonians born in Russia on these formative events that one can map out some of the controversial topics *within* the collective memory of intellectuals in post-Soviet Estonia.²⁰⁶

The Estonian flag

Oskar explains how in Soviet Estonia: “(...) our national colours (...) were strictly forbidden. If an artist designed a poster (...) he could not make the mistake and use these three colours even if that would be a natural depiction of reality.”²⁰⁷ He relates: “On a person still alive today who considers himself an intellectual, but who in those days (...) had been a voluntary spy for the organs of repression” and who said about a poster designed in the colours blue and white: “(...) you are clever, but I am cleverer, you are counting on the fact that (...) men wear black. (...) In case people come with black shoes then it becomes blue, black and white, this shall not be allowed.”²⁰⁸

In connection to this, Pille recalls an incident from the 1980s:

“I remember we were in our farmhouse when my grandmother was still alive. And in [the journal] *Looming* a poem was published in which the first letters of each row gave the words blue, black, white, which are the colours of the Estonian flag. And of course that was a major taboo. Not in my lifetime, but I remember how the old people told stories that one could not even put on a black suit and white shirt and blue tie, because of the combination. And I remember that (...) the old people, my parents, were whispering about it [the poem]: hush-hush-hush. This is something I really remember.”²⁰⁹

On taboos

The first complex of events that constitutes a taboo in today’s Estonia concerns questions of complicity and collaboration with the foreign regime.²¹⁰ Bearing in mind that all men fit for military service were conscripted into one of the two armies, their range of choices and possible alternatives was limited: to leave and fight in Finland was one option, to join the partisans another (since there was no Estonian army).²¹¹ The ‘indigenous collaboration’ with Nazi Germany in the killing of Jew, Gypsies and alleged communists, the great number of POWs who died in Estonia - all of this belongs to this complex of highly controversial events. That Estonians were killing other Estonians in a fratricidal war constitutes the second set of controversial events: Estonians fought in the Red Army or were members of the notorious ‘shock battalion’. On the other side the OK and the ‘Forest Brethren’ fought against (alleged) communists, partisans, the ‘shock battalions’ and committed atrocities directed against Estonian villagers who agreed to the collectivisation, the so-called new settlers.²¹²

Another taboo concerns the fact that Estonians assisted in the deportations of their fellow countrymen.²¹³ “Naturally they were Estonians”, Zahkar tells me, “because who else was able to denounce? Estonians denounced Estonians. You are talking in today’s Estonian about denunciators? This is a taboo!”²¹⁴

In the private memory of many Estonians, the fact that Estonians were mobilised into the Waffen SS has not been a cause of taboo or shame, far from it; instead, fighting in the Wehrmacht against the Red Army was largely seen as fighting for the cause of Estonia’s national independence. Fighting with the Germans was understood as a form of ‘national resistance’ or ‘national collaboration’.²¹⁵ In the Lithuanian national narrative, for example, collaboration has been romanticised to the extent that there are so-called ‘patriotic traitors’. The complexity of the issue becomes apparent when collaboration is interpreted simultaneously as ‘national treason’ and ‘national resistance’.²¹⁶

After his rehabilitation in post-Soviet Estonia, President Päts was only very selectively remembered, since the fact that he abstained from armed resistance on the eve of the Soviet invasion is one of the contentious issues of his legacy (a case of partial *amnesia*).²¹⁷

It can be concluded that the decisions made in the War years still have a profound impact upon social relations in present-day Estonia.

A protected discourse

At a more recent conference on the '*Reichskommissariat Ostland*', I observed the argument of an American historian of Lithuanian origin who acknowledged that Lithuanians needed to settle accounts with their past, but that this could only happen in their own time, in their own way; most of all he said that they needed to discuss it among themselves in their own language, as many Lithuanian words (and concepts) cannot be translated into English and are thus fundamentally unintelligible to outsiders. This is the argument for a 'closed discourse'; and possibly a consequence of long-term foreign rule.²¹⁸ Although I came across a range of defensive reactions from the respondents, their willingness to make their pasts comprehensible to me prevailed over such protective attempts. At times however respondents seemed to be at their own limits in making me grasp *how* people lived in the Soviet system. Estonians of different age groups told me that they themselves don't understand how they survived the terror and coped with the double standards of the split private and the public sphere during the Soviet period.²¹⁹

On 'good communists'

The fact that not only 'Russified' Estonians were members of the CPE, but that an 'indigenisation' of the CPE took place in the '70s constitutes another sensitive issue. Estonian respondents sometimes referred to Estonian communists as 'good communists', as 'our communists' or 'national communists'.²²⁰ Vilma explained that she joined that CPE in the 1950s, because she believed she could contribute to the liberalisation of the Soviet system.²²¹ Also, the memory of normal day-to-day life in the Soviet period remains a taboo topic. Hence, Merle Karusoo, an Estonian theatre director, describes how presently existing 'memory

blocks' don't allow her to even remember her own life lived in the Soviet period (Karusoo 2002).

3.4. *Constitutive elements of the newly constructed national narrative: a winner's tale*

In this section I elaborate on six main themes of the dominant Estonian interpretation of historical reality after 1991, which are connected to the three categories of event introduced before. In the figure, I also indicate how these formative historical events have been employed as social strategies of 'whitewashing', 'blaming the other', 'self-victimisation', 'distancing', and 'moralising' (in the public sphere and also in the personal life stories).²²²

- 1) An 'Estonian time' (as 'our time') is set against a 'Soviet time' in a clear attempt to distance 'us' (Estonians) from 'them' (Russians, all Soviet) in a dichotomy along solely ethnic lines.
- 2) "There were no ethnic Estonian communists", i.e. only a small number of native Estonians were in the party *nomenklature* and complicity with the Soviet regime was rarely the case. On my question whether there were Estonian communists, Simon replies: "No, don't be ridiculous. (...) A party with 130 members, most of them in prison, one could claim that this was a mass-movement, but it wasn't." Evidently he related my question to the time of the Estonian Republic (i.e. the time before the events of 1940).²²³ Similarly, Kalev stated: "A revolution [in 1941], it was a theatre! You know how many members were in the Communist Party? There were 119. Somebody wrote there were 133. (...) They could not have carried out a revolution!"²²⁴ In the same vein, David Smith writes that "Soviet-imposed communism never acquired any genuine legitimacy amongst an Estonian population" (D. Smith 2001: xi) and that Estonia must be considered a Central European country (and not a former Soviet Republic), because Estonia remained to be a *de jure* independent Republic under illegal occupation and because Soviet communist ideas never encountered fertile soil.²²⁵

A metaphor for this myth of innocence is the 'goose'. Vilma explains: "We have an Estonian saying (...) 'if you put water over a goose then the goose comes out untouched'. Likewise, the [Soviet] manipulation was poured all over the Estonians, (...) but they remained largely intact."²²⁶ According to it, Estonians have been overpowered and helpless in the face

of two great powers, but they kept their sense of inner integrity against all odds. At first, the image of the goose makes one think of a passive, sacrificial lamb devoid of any choice. When thinking of a white goose, it also holds the notion of innocence. But looking back to Roman history one can find that the goose was a symbol of watchfulness and vigilance. Geese were kept as holy animals in Rome and it is said that in 387 BC they saved Rome from an approaching horde of Gauls (Cooper 1986: 62 f).²²⁷ In this regard Zahkar polemically rants:

“I think it’s a question of mentality, the entire nation needs this lie. This is like the last line of defense. Estonians make it very easy for themselves. (...) of course it is not very comfortable to live between Russia and Germany, the two great powers. On the other hand it’s very easy to say in all bad that happened we were only victims. Russians and Germans did all that. We are a snow-white nation. We have always been abused, nobody ever asked us what we wanted. (...) please leave us alone and don’t ask about the Holocaust, fascism, or about collaboration.”²²⁸

To recap, in post-Soviet Estonia the memory of collective suffering has been employed as a social strategy of self-victimisation and of blaming the ‘other’ in order to strengthen one’s own group-esteem and solidarity.²²⁹ “We have suffered, we feel no shame or guilt, we have done nothing wrong”, says Pille, representing the viewpoint of many (ethnic) Estonian intellectuals.²³⁰ By maintaining the myth that the Estonians kept their moral integrity in their collective suffering, the ‘collective ego’ stays unscathed, which in turn aided in the process of restoring the national identity after independence.

This is linked to the belief that there is “no collaboration under occupation”, i.e. Estonians cannot be made accountable for any of the events that took place during the Soviet period (as also expressed in the previous quote by Zahkar).²³¹ Michnik notes that it is the predominant conviction among people in the post-Soviet countries that they have only been victims and that it would take time and painful unpleasant debates to debunk this ‘myth of innocence’ and to admit their share of blame (in Plüss & Strobel 2004).

3) The ‘return to Europe’ goes hand in hand with a (now official) re-evaluation of the centuries-long Baltic German control of Estonia. In the political debates of the ‘90s Estonian history was placed in the Protestant Scandinavian or German cultural sphere. An attempt at the re-interpretation of the Baltic-German ‘other’ was the invention of the Cross of the Virgin Mary’s land (Est., *maarjamaa rist*) as the highest national decoration of the State. The Cross harks back to the Catholic mission of the 12th c. and aims to elevate Estonia into the European

cultural domain.²³² However, as it is a reminder of Estonia's defeat by the Teutonic Knights that brought about the end of Estonia's 'golden age', protests were voiced against this decoration when President Meri introduced it in 1995 (Brüggemann 2001: 817; Lagerspetz 1999a).²³³ A narrative closely connected to this one is that of Estonia as a nation in need of catching up with the rest of Europe (and the developments Estonia missed out on).²³⁴

4) The image of the dandelion or juniper tree (Est., *kadakas*) growing on sparse limestone soil stands for the courage and resilience of Estonians in their struggle for survival while faced with the threat of (cultural) extinction (Hinrikus & Kõresaar 2004).²³⁵ "To be an Estonian almost automatically means to be a resistance fighter" (Jürjo 1998) and as Kalev believes "most Estonians resisted [the Soviet regime]".²³⁶ In this a younger Estonian Russian gave a polemical reply: "(...) if you speak with people in Estonia today, everybody was a dissident, already by definition an Estonian *is* a dissident."²³⁷ What is blanked out in the construction of this national myth is that the 'flip side' of survival was accommodation or collaboration with the former system. Nora tells me with a smile that Estonians always had to "wiggle their way through" and Niils says that "surviving means making compromises."²³⁸

5) David vs. Goliath: Zahkar remarks that the common belief exists among Estonians that Estonia triggered the break-up of the Soviet Union, since Estonia was the first Soviet Republic to declare independence, on August 20, 1991.²³⁹ There are critical voices among Estonians too. For instance, Vilhelm remarks:

"This is a little ridiculous. I like to compare it with the Dakota Indians. With the brother of Sitting Bull, the one who knew how to conduct spiritual dances. He could dance as much as he liked, he could not destroy the troops of the enemy. Likewise the Singing Revolution and the Baltic Chain did not draw out the Russians."²⁴⁰

6) The *topos* of the 'Long Second World War' is connected to the notion of victimhood and the moral argument of betrayal. It implies that the Second World War did not end for Estonia in 1944/45, but lasted until 1991 (D. Smith 2001: xii, 33 ff).²⁴¹ That this *topos* is not unique to Estonia, but quite widespread among the people of Central Eastern Europe becomes evident in Slavenka Drakulić's description of her mother: "she experienced World War II and ever since, like most of the people in Eastern Europe, she behaves as if it never ended" (Drakulić 1993: 15). The metaphor of the 'white ship' signifies the hope of Estonians for the Allies to

intervene and spare them their fate (i.e. the hope of liberation) and for the resignation about the fact that the Allies ‘sold’ Estonia to the Soviets (i.e. the notion of disillusionment) (S. Kivimäe 1995: 593 f). This metaphor has been employed in the EU and NATO accession process since the ‘90s as a highly moral argument of betrayal and retribution.²⁴² As is reflected in Sarv’s speech:

“The ‘culprits’ behind our war were Churchill and Roosevelt, who signed the Atlantic Charter in 1941. A charter which promised to restore the independence of all European States that had lost their freedom in the Second World War. The promise was given. Estonians believed in it, hoped for it, and waited and fought” (Sarv 2000: 36 f).

Vilma described how

“in Estonia after the (...) Second World War (...) nearly all Estonians hoped that the Americans would come and free us, or that the English would come. But they didn’t come. We had a neighbour at the countryside where my father lived who always listened to German radio (...) and then everyday his neighbour came by, ‘say, are the Americans coming?’ And he replied that he had no information, but that they would come very soon.”²⁴³

Nelli recalled questioning her aunt:

“It must have been the early ‘50s, because I came to school in 51. (...) I remember that I began to ask about life in Siberia, and I remember her answer that they were working in the forest; and every morning when they were going to work they took all their most important belongings with them because every morning they hoped that a helicopter would come and bring them back home. Somebody will come and rescue them, every morning the same [procedure].”²⁴⁴

From his childhood in Sweden Juhani, born in 1953, remembers that an Estonian boy told him “about his father coming home (...) after he had received his monthly wage. When he said that he had paid the landlord for three month in advance (...) the mother was giving him the hardest time: ‘What do you throw money away for, we go back to Estonia.’” Juhani appears amazed that this took place in the late ‘50s.²⁴⁵ A ‘white ship’ can be found in Greek mythology, the Bible and early Christian iconography where ships come to save and rescue; they promise salvation and are sacred, such as Noah’s Ark or the little bark of Moses floating on the river Nile. The Church itself has been depicted as a ship, as the second Ark from 300 AC onwards - with the mast as a cross or *tropaion* and the oarsmen being Jesus and the apostles - maintaining its course through all sorts of stormy weather on its passage to the safe

haven (RGG 2002; LCI 1994). During the Bronze and Iron Ages in northern Europe the ship was employed as the central symbol of burial cults. Although Estonians are not a seafaring nation *per se*, Estonia is a country with islands and a large coastal strip; thus nautical metaphors come naturally.

Figure VI: Constitutive elements of the new winner's tale

	Narrative	Strategy
1)	'Estonian Time' vs. 'Soviet time'	Distancing from the 'other' (i.e. the Russian, all Soviet)
2)	'Goose' 'No collaboration under Occupation'	Coping with taboo: denial, whitewashing, blaming the 'other' (i.e. the Russian, all Soviet)
3)	'Return to Europe'	Distancing from the 'other' (i.e. the Russian, all Soviet)
4)	Dandelion, juniper tree	Strengthening group-worth: whitewashing,
5)	David vs. Goliath	Strengthening group-worth
6)	'Long Second World War', 'White ship'	Dealing with defeat: moral argumentation, Self-victimisation, and blaming the 'other' (i.e. Russia and the Allies)

4. Transcending national history: Prospects for a multi-dimensional history

It is through national history writing that stereotypes are reproduced, which often preclude the *on par* existence of conflicting national or ethnic groups with the (dominant) national group. From the discussion so far, we can gauge that Estonian history writing holds a great potential with regard to the integration of the Russian-speaking community.²⁴⁶ Estonian history textbooks after 1991 tend to portray a negative stereotype of Russia and Russian-speakers by equating Russian with Soviet (i.e. using the two interchangeably), with the result that the youngest generation of Russian-speakers grows up with a negative self-image (Kivimäe: 1999: 207).²⁴⁷ Hanneleen states that the negative image of Russians in Estonia is an irrevocable consequence of their behaviour and that the truth needs to be documented in the history textbook. Only with time, she adds, can the negative image of the Russians be altered.²⁴⁸

Hariton, a Russian professor emeritus, remarks that the picture of Russians as ‘intruders’, ‘oppressors’ or ‘occupying power’ does not motivate them to learn about history. He then suggests having books written especially for Russian pupils, in which an attempt is made to explain all these nuances to them.²⁴⁹ Evgenij, a Narva Russian, talks about the corollaries that the negative image portrayed in the textbooks has:

“(...) it finds its expression in fights between Russian and Estonian youth in Tallinn and also (...) in Paldiski. These facts are known, but they [*the government officials – the author*] are trying to silence them. That is one of the extremes where it comes to show. Another is the destruction of monuments and cemeteries, Russian orthodox cemeteries.”²⁵⁰

Successful integration of the Russian-speaking community in Estonia may be possible by transcending this reductive ‘us’ (good Estonians, victims) and ‘them’ (‘bad’ Russians, perpetrators) distinction.²⁵¹ However, today the ‘category of victimhood’ is constitutive for the Estonian identity to an extent that it prevents them from changing this way of stereotyping. By admitting that not all Russians have been ‘villains’, Estonians have to adjust the picture of their own people in the textbooks and acknowledge the historical reality that there were ethnic Estonians who sympathised with and supported the Stalinist regime or Nazi Germany, and that Estonians killed (or deported) other Estonians for their political beliefs or out of self-interest.²⁵² Possibly, as Ignatieff argues, the pursuit of truth and justice among historians may be in conflict rather than in harmony with the purpose of inter-ethnic reconciliation, for often there is no chance that both warring sides recognise the same truth. Ignatieff continues that the healing properties of historical truth are thus limited, as it may scratch open old wounds rather than mend them (Ignatieff in Jedlicki 1999: 231). Moreover, as history (and national mythmaking) in Estonia has long been an ‘existential’ matter of national survival, certain *lieux de mémoire* have been sanctified, which precludes (or at least hampers) any mediation of differences in historical interpretation (Jedlicki 1999: 230).²⁵³

Here, Zahkar holds:

“When you take a small nation such as the Estonians of one million, then a national myth is a question of survival. Without it the Estonian nation would not exist and this makes the debate about the deconstruction of myth a somewhat delicate undertaking. (...) If you tell an Estonian that he is also a relic of the *homo sovieticus*, he takes it as a personal offence, since a *homo sovieticus* is *par excellence* only a Russian. And a Russian is automatically a communist. (...) To find your way [through this] as an individual [pause], I always place myself (...) in no-man’s-land.”²⁵⁴

This no-man’s land lies between the dichotomies and stereotypes. Likewise Paula talked about how on the political level since 1991 Russians have been treated “as representatives of

the Soviets. As if we [Estonians] were not Soviet. It is ridiculous; (...) we cannot say that everything that happened here during the Soviet time was the result of the Russians.”²⁵⁵

On mutual understanding

Rüsen pleads for a narrative that is multi-faceted, allowing for a variety of perspectives and voices; most importantly, he argues that one's own culture should not be portrayed as a 'single success story', but that its representation should include the story of one's own suffering *and* of that inflicted upon others (Rüsen in Schweiger 2002).²⁵⁶ It appears to be important to acknowledge the other group's suffering, i.e. not to view Russians solely as representatives of a repressive and alien system, but to recognise that they were victims of terror in just the same way (Hosking 2005).

Nikitor, an Estonian Russian intellectual born 1952, contends that you only understand another culture, or people, when you are able (and willing) to feel and relate to their (collective) shame. He continues: “I think in very many cultures and nations, national shame is more important than national pride. (...) It is very crucial for our understanding of identity that identity is not what we think or speak about, [but instead] it is to do with what we hide.”²⁵⁷

Zahkar recalls his father's life story:

“When I asked my father ‘what do you remember from the War’, he replied: ‘hunger’. Only 4 years ago I learned that he had also been deported by Soviet authorities. It is an Estonian saying that ‘from Siberia to Siberia you cannot be deported’. But it happened. He was deported from east Siberia to the west of Siberia, which was no improvement, and he was born to a, you could say, slave family. My grandfather worked in a copper mine in Krasnojarsk. (...) The deportations done with the Russian population were much harder than the deportations later on. You take an entire village and send them to a different region, with no infrastructure and the people dug holes in the ground in which they lived for years. My father was born into such a hole in 1936. He never told me about that during the ‘Soviet time’. (...) He was very loyal to the Soviet Union and Stalin. He was a Stalinist, personally he never blamed Stalin. This is another difference between Estonians and Russians. My father suffered much more by the Soviets than my mother, but my mother as an Estonian spoke about the crimes committed by the Soviets, whereas my father didn't. He simply accepted that as a Russian.”²⁵⁸

Most telling was also Nicolaij's biblical reference, in which he linked the Russian peasants, who were uprooted and 'enslaved' for 40 years, to Moses' endeavour to lead the Israelites out

of Egypt.²⁵⁹ Almost at the opposite end stands Oskar, who closes his eyes to the fact that Russians had been victims of Stalinist terror as well when he states:

“This is why I become very angry when someone tells this idiotic story that Russians too are victims of communism. I admit, if you talk about individuals it’s very true, but as a whole the [Russian] nation cannot be [called] a victim of its own deeds. No one brought communism to Russia except for the Russians.”²⁶⁰

With Rüsen I maintain that only through an ‘open treatment’ of the past, i.e. by including taboo topics, shame, defeat, loss etc. in the history textbooks, can these dichotomies gradually be transcended; but for this the catalyst is not *amnesia* but amnesty in the sense of true, public forgiving (Ricoeur 1999: 11).²⁶¹

5. Chapter summary

This Chapter discussed history teaching and writing under the conditions of an oppressive political system and again in the situation of a ‘nationalising state’. I examined the role played by historians in the Estonian SSR and during the political transition when several historians-turned-politicians. Based on the interviews with historians different ‘formative historical events’ constitutive of the newly constructed national narrative and of an Estonian identity were mapped out. At the same time an attempt was made to contrast this dominant (ethnic) Estonian view with some of the existing counter-accounts in post-Soviet Estonia. Furthermore, importance was attributed to transcending the one-dimensional national history by publicly recognising the multi-vocality of the different accounts of Estonia’s troubled past.

Endnotes for Chapter VI:

¹ See Chapters Three & Four.

² Cf. Rüsen, 1994: 213; cf. Rüsen & Gütter & Füßmann 1994: 3 – 26.

³ See Chapter One.

⁴ Cf. Pearson 1999; Fentress & Wickham (1992) equate oral history and ethno-history.

⁵ Jaan Kross’ Between the Three Plagues, written between 1970 and 1980, tells Rüssow’s life. The ‘plagues’ refer to Swedish, Polish and Russian rule of Livonia. Kross himself is often referred to as the ‘collective memory’ of Estonians, as he has been a chronicler of his times (Salumets 2000).

⁶ Mommsen refers to Ranke’s well known postulate that “*jede Epoche unmittelbar zu Gott*” [each historical period is immediate to God – the author’s transl. from German], i.e. every historical period needs to be seen in its own right and the historian should describe, understand and explain the past, but abstain from any moral judgement (Ranke in Mommsen 1995: 135). On the opposite side stands Le Goff, for whom history should be the truth, and historians only really fulfil their role when they become moralists (Le Goff in Bédarida 2000: 71 ff). As an example of politicians turning to historians for their validation (or judgement) of the past, the Estonian commission is discussed in Chapter Seven.

⁷ Access to archives was limited to those historians or journalists with party affiliation who were asked to write on a particular subject. The CC or its subordinate agencies (local censorship bureau) appointed historians and censored their works (Litvin 2001: 10 f, 17).

⁸ Pauls described the restriction and obstacles he experienced when using archives in the Latvian SSR (Pauls, interview, Stockholm, 19.07.02).

⁹ The archive of the ECP has been secured in post 1991-Estonia. The KGB archive has been transferred to the Estonian State Archive (Kivimäe 1999: 207).

¹⁰ Cf. Schöpflin 1993; Baumann 1987.

¹¹ Oskar, interview, Tallinn, 01.10.03.

¹² Arguably this quest for 'Truth' be seen as a remnant of 'real existing socialism'.

¹³ Oskar, interview, Tallinn, 01.10.03.

¹⁴ Up to 35,000 men joined the 'Forest Brethren' in total (S. Kivimäe 1995: 593).

¹⁵ Vilhelm, interview, Tallinn, 12.6.02.

¹⁶ In the early 1970s two underground organisations emerged (the Estonian National Front and the Estonian Democratic movement). At that time the *samizdat* publication 'Estonian Democrat' appeared. For the Conference on Security and Cooperation (CSCE) in Europe in Helsinki in 1976, Estonian dissidents issued a memorandum against the "immoral, inhuman and illegal colonial rule in Estonia" in response to the perceived threat to national identity posed by Russification (Remeikis 1984: 7).

¹⁷ Vilma, interview, Tallinn, 11.06.02.

¹⁸ Paula, interview, Tallinn, 09.10.03. Of course this bemoaned absence of any logic behind the repressions presupposes that the Soviet regime was essentially rational. The "historical hole", a hole of meaning in which all attempts at (historical) interpretation are inevitably dissolved.

¹⁹ Nora, interview, Tallinn, 08.10.03, transl. from German.

²⁰ Oskar, interview, Tallinn, 01.10.03.

²¹ Simon, interview, Tallinn, 07.06.02. Although not a trained historian, he curated the Estonian Occupation Museum, see Chapter Seven. Mart-Olav Niklus, a prominent human rights activists, who so-digned the Baltic Charter in 1979, was arrested in 1981 for signing a statement on the MRP; also in January 1981 Jüri Kukk was arrested, who had protested against the Soviet intervention of Afghanistan. In 1983 massive raids were carried out in Estonia against dissidents, among those arrested were Lagle Parek and Enn Tarto (Remeikis 1984: 8).

²² These revelations on the secret protocols were significant since they proved that the annexation in 1940 was illegal and that therefore *de jure* the Estonia state had never ceased to exist. See Chapter Three.

²³ Simon, interview, Tallinn, 07.06.02. At two places in the quote Simon sets his generational context against the older group of Estonian dissidents, emphasising that the latter group had practised different forms of resistance. According to this, Enn Tarto, Mart Niklus, Lagle Parek, and Jüri Kukk, all born between the late 1930s and 1941, belonged to this older generation of dissidents.

²⁴ Ibid. Ervin, born 1952, is another outspoken Estonian dissident whom I also interviewed. The usage of the word 'disgust' is worth mentioning, since another interviewee, Vilhelm (quote in Chapter Seven) also used this term in his description of the Soviet period. Disgust "is a dislike so strong as to cause stomach upset or queasiness" (Webster).

²⁵ Ervin, interview, Tallinn, 02.10.03.

²⁶ For further reading: Alexiev 1983; Horm 1973; Trapans 1991; Hosking et al. 1992; Johnston 1998; and Johnston 2001.

²⁷ Hariton, interview, Tartu, 02.06.02.

²⁸ Ervin, interview, Tallinn, 02.10.03.

²⁹ The fact that he referred to his group as 'Freedom Fighters', just as the veterans who had fought in the German army call themselves, illustrates how dissidents and veterans all claim to have fought for the liberation of Estonia; i.e. linking their claims to the narrative of the 'Freedom Fighters' of the War of independence, as it is in this context that the term originated. See section 1.4. in Chapter Seven.

³⁰ Unlike Hariton's generalising statement previously quoted.

³¹ Ervin, interview, Tallinn, 02.10.03. The 'Letter of the Forty' has been mentioned in Chapter Three, and is discussed in section 1.3. in this Chapter.

³² Through their 'policy of non-recognition'; cf. the works of the Estonian exile historians Meissner 1956, 1991; cf. Loeber 1972; cf. Horm 1973; cf. Küng 1980.

³³ Simon, interview, Tallinn, 07.06.02.

³⁴ Ibid. The Estonian exile community kept alive the idea of legal continuity, also through the exile government in Stockholm. Consequently they became very active in the Estonian Congress movement, promoting ideas of continuity and restoration. See Chapter Four.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Simon had worked at Radio Free Europe for 10 years. Many of the Estonian interviewees stressed the great importance of foreign radio channels as a source of 'free information' (cf. Vilma, interview, Tallinn, 11.06.02; Hanneleen, interview, Tallinn, 13.06.02; and Ervin, interview, Tallinn, 02.10.03).

³⁷ Ervin, interview, Tallinn, 02.10.03.

³⁸ Cf. Anepao 2002; Kross' *Ausgrabungen* (Excavations) (1995) tells the story of a returnee from Siberia.

³⁹ Pille, interview, Tartu, 06.10.03.

⁴⁰ Nicolaij, interview, Tallinn, 08.10.03. Tamsaare is the author of *Truth and Justice* (Est., *Tõde ja Õigus*, Vols. I-V, 1926 – 33).

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Nelli, interview, Tallinn, 05.10.03; Est. *kodu* for home, hearth, dwelling, and house. From this derives Est. *kodulik*, meaning private and Est. *kodumaa* meaning homeland.

⁴³ Oskar, interview, Tallinn 01.10.03.

⁴⁴ If only with regard to the importance attributed to these books, I am reminded of the miraculous rescue of the IVO Archive from the Wilna Ghetto. In Latvia approx. 26 – 30 million books were destroyed under Stalinism. Skultans remarks that by the

destruction of entire libraries, the Soviet occupying power managed to obliterate the common significance of Latvian literature, which was closely linked to national identity. Literary traditions can be seen as a way to remember the past, and a breakdown of these traditions for Latvians implied that they were then less able to recall their lives in a meaningful collective way, that is, drawing on the shared historical resources of that community. To Skultans the destruction of books equates to the destruction of the textual community (Skultans 1998: 23 - 29, cf. Anderson 1991).

⁴⁵ Vilma, interview, Tallinn, 11.06.02.

⁴⁶ Kreutzwald edited the national epic *Kalevipoeg*; cf. Chapter Three.

⁴⁷ With regard to the profession of historians, March 1950 constitutes a watershed; it was then that a great purge was carried out against all 'erstwhile' historians from the inter-war period (Helme 1995: 153; S. Kivimäe 1995: 597).

⁴⁸ Vilhelm, interview, Tallinn, 12.06.02. Litvin, a historian and contemporary witness, writes: "Party historians formed a special group whom one can scarcely place within the historical profession." He proposes a typology of four different kinds of Soviet Russian historians: dissidents, Bolshevik conservatives, regional or local historians, and genuine scholars. The Soviet state characterised them as socio-political categories, such as conservative or petty bourgeois. He mentions that there were 'true scholars' and 'dissidents' among Soviet Russians historians, such as A. M. Nekrich or M.N. Pokrovsky (Litvin 2001: 22, 26, 29).

⁴⁹ Hanneleen, interview, Tallinn, 13.06.02.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ The late head of the ECP, Käbin, was one such person; cf. Vilhelm, interview, Tallinn, 12.06.02.

⁵² Ervin, interview, Tallinn, 02.10.03.

⁵³ Vilma, interview Tallinn, 11.06.02.

⁵⁴ Ervin, interview, Tallinn, 02.10.03.

⁵⁵ The term 'broken language' was used by W. Labov. Vilhelm, interview, Tallinn, 12.06.02. On the other hand Pille, an Estonian psychologist born in 1971, says that the fact that Estonians did not like to speak Russian was not a conscious act of resistance; rather the cultures and languages are so dissimilar, that it was not easy for Estonians to speak Russian (Pille, interview, Tartu, 06.10.03).

⁵⁶ Siim, interview, Berlin, 17.04.04.

⁵⁷ Iivo, interview Uppsala 17.07.02. Paula recalls how in the late '50s she had to counter student body attempts to establish an Estonian student league alternative to the existing *Komsomol* (Paula, interview Tallinn, 09.10.03).

⁵⁸ Tiina, interview, Tartu, 06.10.03.

⁵⁹ Simon, interview, Tallinn, 07.06.02; see section 1.2. in Chatper Seven.

⁶⁰ Vilma, interview, Tallinn, 11.06.02.

⁶¹ It might be insightful to compare the encyclopaedias from the inter-bellum with the volumes written in the Estonian SSR and after independence; see <http://www.klinikum.ee/infokeskus/entsyclopediad.htm>.

⁶² The ethnographic museum just outside of Tallinn displays farm building from north, south and west Estonia and the islands covering a time from the mid- 18th to the 20th cs.

⁶³ Old form and new content, much like the concept of historicism of the late 19th c.

⁶⁴ This inconsistency was caused by the unbridgeable gap between Lenin's concept of the 'prison of the peoples' that was directed against the tsarist regime and Stalin's new party line with regard to the nationality question, in which the unification of all peoples under the leadership of the Russian nation and the creation of a *homo sovieticus* were propagated. It was the so-called theory of the 'lesser evil' that attempted to bridge that gap in the 1950s. Looking back on history this *formula* claims that a Russian annexation of non-Russian people was a lesser evil when compared with the consequences that may have resulted from an annexation by another state (i.e. the tsarist colonial policy), substituting a relative evil (i.e. loss of national independence) for an absolute evil (Shtepa 1962: 276 – 284). Cf. Tishkov 1979: 39; cf. Huttenbach 1990; cf. G. Smith 1994: 1 – 12; G. Smith 1996: 2 – 22. To recap, Stalin defined the nation not in racial or tribal terms, but as a historically constituted community defined by a common language, a common territory, a common economic life, and a common culture (Stalin 1994: 18 – 21).

⁶⁵ Cf. Chatper Four.

⁶⁶ Vilma, interview, Tallinn, 11.6.02.

⁶⁷ Ibid. This corresponds with Kivimäe, who contends that "the study of pre-revolutionary history of the Estonian peasantry was a 'veiled approach' to the study of the history of the Estonian people" (Kivimäe 1999: 209). Clearly, as one interviewee remarked, the anti-German notion prevalent in pre-Soviet Estonian historiography and the peasant history fit well into the Soviet historiography (Zahkar, interview, Tallinn, 12.06.02).

⁶⁸ Cf. Vilma, interview, Tallinn, 11.06.02; Kalev, interview, Tartu, 03.06.02; Simon, interview, Tallinn, 07.06.02; Nelli, interview, Tallinn, 05.10.03; Zahkar, interview, Tallinn, 12.06.02; and Evgenij, interview, Narva, 06.06.02; Paula also argues that "the Soviet occupation was the last drop in the formation of a modern Estonian national identity" (Paula, interview, Tallinn, 09.10.03). Cf. Chapter Four on the ex negative identity, and Chapter Seven on the 'existential' use of history.

⁶⁹ Cf. Piirimäe 1995; cf. Kerner & Stopinski 1991; cf. Connelly 2000; cf. Arens 1969: 51 f; cf. Lipinsky 2000.

⁷⁰ The conviction that the past makes us what we are in the present "is the root of the importance that political power has always given to the control of the past as a privileged instrument for the control of the present." Herein, "the political function of historiography is to regulate memory and oblivion (...)" (Gallerano 1994: 90); cf. Assmann 1997.

⁷¹ A classical example for institutionalised *amnesia* would be the French Republican Calendar (Zerubavel 1977). In Latvia, the concept of 'mankurtism' was used as a synonym for the way in which the Soviet people had been cut off from their historical memory. Dreifelds explains this concept: Mankurts were a mythical group of Kirghiz people who had been captured and turned into slaves and brainwashed (Dreifelds 1996: 21; cf. Milan Kundera 1994). The theatre director Nelli holds that the aim of Soviet integration was that people forget their roots, but that this lack of roots among the Soviet people poses a great danger to Estonian society, even today; cf. Nelli, interview, Tallinn, 05.10.03.

⁷² See section 1.4. in Chatper Seven. In post-Soviet Estonia the 'Monument of Freedom' on Tallinn's 'Freedom Square' (Est., *Vabaduse Plats*) had not been restored yet (i.e. in 2003) (Raud 1998).

⁷³ See section 2. in Chatper Seven.

⁷⁴ This goes back to the Russian assistance against the Germans by Alexander Nevskii in the battle on the Ice of Lake Peipus (1242), which has been repeatedly referred to in Soviet propaganda. Cf. Eisenstein's famous movie on this historical battle.

⁷⁵ Cf. Chapter Four.

⁷⁶ In fact everyone who did not die under the German occupation was suspect (Hosking 2005). The Baltic governments' alleged plans to turn the Baltic States into German colonies prior to the signing of the mutual assistance pacts with Soviet Russia formed the basis for this claim. After 1944 every expression of nationalism by Estonians was easily linked to their alleged Nazi leanings. Russians called Estonians "Nazi collaborators" in verbal conflicts (Kallas 2002: 56). In Soviet propaganda it was *kulakism*, which had not been wholly liquidated before the outbreak of the War, that provided a base for the fascist occupation regime (Misiunas & Vardys 1978: 179 f); hence the fierce policy of collectivisation of the Estonian countryside in the late 1940s.

⁷⁷ The fact that Khrushchev's 'secret speech' in 1956 was not made public prior to 1989, and that after the de-Stalinisation all critique of the former was subsumed under the euphemistic term 'cult', shows how blank spots in history continued to exist until 1989 (Litvin 2001: 22).

⁷⁸ Vilma, interview, Tallinn, 11.06.02.

⁷⁹ Ibid. *The History of the Estonian SSR* (*Eesti Nõukogude Sotsialistliku Vabariig Ajalugu*, abbr. *Eesti NSV ajalugu*) was published 1955 – 71 and replaced Hans Kruus' *Estonian History* (published 1936 – 40). The periodisation of the Eesti NSV is interesting as the first volume covers the ancient times to the 1850s, the second volume stretches from the 1850s to the Bolshevik revolution, and the third volume goes from 1917 to the '50s.

⁸⁰ Vilma, interview, Tallinn, 11.06.02.

⁸¹ Vilhelm, interview, Tallinn, 12.06.02.

⁸² Kivimäe refers to a survey conducted on the most important monographs published in the Estonian SSR during the '60s and '70s that suggests that, while the concept of class struggle had been accepted in principle, it was never implemented in historical research in any orthodox fashion; this would speak for a sham or pseudo Marxism of Estonian historians at the time (Kivimäe 1999: 211).

⁸³ Vilhelm, interview Tallinn 12.06.02; Urmas, interview Tartu, 07.10.03, and Kalev, interview, Tartu, 03.06.02; all three were forming those 'figureheads for resistance'.

⁸⁴ Vilhelm, interview, Tallinn, 12.06.02. Hence, the decision to acquiesce to the system depended on one's ambitions.

⁸⁵ Cf. Vilhelm, interview, Tallinn, 12.06.02; cf. Kalev, interview, Tartu, 03.06.02. Hariton explains that as these Estonians grew up in Russia, to them the party history came close to the true history (Hariton, interview, Tartu, , 02.06.02).

⁸⁶ Urmas, interview, Tartu, 07.10.03.

⁸⁷ Kalev, interview, Tartu, 03.06.02.

⁸⁸ Pauls, interview, Stockholm, 19.07.02.

⁸⁹ Oskar, interview, Tallinn, 01.10.03. Likewise Ervin, who commenced his studies in 1978, argues that he wanted to gain the skills and the official degree (Ervin, interview, Tallinn, 02.10.03).

⁹⁰ Oskar, interview, Tallinn, 01.10.03.

⁹¹ Urmas, interview, Tartu, 07.10.03.

⁹² Ervin, interview, Tallinn, 02.10.03. He later on qualifies that he only considers those university teachers who taught the so-called 'red subjects' collaborators.

⁹³ Hanneleen, interview, Tallinn, 13.06.02.

⁹⁴ On day-to-day resistance cf. Johnston 2001. With regard to comparison it became clear from the interviews that during the Soviet era some Estonian historians contrasted Russian imperial dominance with the so-called 'good old Swedish time' (1600-1710), or they made historical references to the French Revolution or the struggle of the Irish (Kalev, interview, Tartu, 03.06.02; Oskar, interview, 01.10.03). This is why in the context of counter-histories, anecdotal evidence becomes very important (Greenblatt & Gallagher, 2000: 49 – 74).

⁹⁵ Evidence for this could be found in interviews with the older generation or their children's generation.

⁹⁶ Nora, interview, Tallinn, 08.10.03.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Oskar, interview, Tallinn, 01.10.03.

¹⁰⁰ Zahkar, interview, Tallinn, 12.06.02, transl. from German.

¹⁰¹ Lagerspetz, 1996: 69; Meri 1999; Oplatka 1999. Estonian Heritage Society, or Est. *Eesti Muinsuskaitse Selts* means in direct translation 'society for the protection of antiquities, or of relics of old times'. Interestingly, it displays similarities to historical societies (Germ., *Geschichtsvereine*, *Heimatshutzvereine*, *Altermungesellschaften*) that existed as part of the civil society in 18th and 19th c Germany, obviously with a strong regional focus. These societies aimed at a revival of the past, the preservation and restoration of ecclesiastical buildings, and the creation of archives and museums. The historical societies were based on a "common civil duty of piety towards the past" (Giesen 1999: 212). These societies gained a wider influence in the 19th c among the *petty bourgeoisie* at a time when history was not yet treated as special expert knowledge but rather as part of a general education. Giesen notes the "dilettante relationship" to the past held by many of the members (Giesen 1999: 211). A differentiation into expert and lay knowledge only began to take form in the 2nd half of the 19th c. when experts gained a monopoly on the past. This trend came to full fruition after the unification of the German lands in 1871 (i.e. historicism) (Giesen 1999: 224, 238 f).

¹⁰² Vilma, interview, Tallinn, 11.6.02.

¹⁰³ Cf. Urmas, interview, Tartu, 07.10.03; cf. Pille, interview Tartu, 06.10.03; cf. Ervin, interview, Tallinn, 02.10.03; cf. section 1.3. in this Chapter.

¹⁰⁴ Ervin, interview, Tallinn, 02.10.03. He describes their network consisting of émigrés, foreign radio stations, Finnish tourists, foreign journalists stationed in Moscow and Leningrad, and contacts with Soviet dissidents made when serving in the (political) prison camps.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Oskar, interview, Tallinn, 01.10.03.

¹⁰⁷ Zinovij, interview, Tallinn, 18.09.03.

¹⁰⁸ Rein, interview, Narva 04.06.02.

¹⁰⁹ He sees the Narva Heritage Society in opposition to the Narva Museum located in the castle, which he labelled as a "Soviet Imperial War Museum" (Rein, interview, Narva 04.06.02).

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Zinovij, interview, Tallinn, 18.09.03.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Zbigniew interview, Tallinn, 03.10.03. 'White immigrants' were those Russians who already lived in Estonia during the inter-war period. He contrasts them with new Russian immigrants who came to the Estonian SSR after 1944.

¹¹⁸ Oskar, interview, Tallinn 01.10.03.

¹¹⁹ Pille who graduated from High school in 1989, told me: "during the last year new history books were published. [It was] sometime around the second half of 1988. I still have a copy of the very first edition; it was written by Mart Laar and Lauri Vahtre [both members of the Heritage Society], it is a small book (...) and it gives you a brief history of Estonia, how it actually happened. So we were taught both versions" (Pille, interview, Tartu, 06.10.03).

¹²⁰ Zinovij, interview, Tallinn, 18.09.03.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Cf. Taagepera 1993.

¹²³ Cf. Glenny 1993.

¹²⁴ See section 2. in Chapter Seven.

¹²⁵ Cf. Kivimäe & Kivimäe 1987, Kivimäe & Kivimäe 2002.

¹²⁶ In 1929 when Estonian historians still felt the need to distance themselves from the Baltic German scholars or their legacy, the Estonian historian, Peeter Tarvel (1894 – 1953), defines the purpose of Estonian history as being "a history of Estonia and its people that represents the national interest adequately and satisfies the needs of an Estonian national consciousness" (Tarvel in Kivimäe 1999: 208).

¹²⁷ Vilma, interview, Tallinn, 11.06.02. Her lack of critical reflection may derive from an idealised picture of the past that blurs out the fact that from 1934 onwards Estonia saw an authoritarian rule; as Helme underscores, ideological restrictions applied during Päts' authoritarian reign (Helme 1995). Another reading may be that she meant to indicate that Estonian teachers from the inter-war period were well trained. In the quote Vilma also appears to block out the full military occupation and War in the first half of the '40s. As a matter of fact, the first Soviet year was too short to implement drastic changes in academic research; however a great number of the Estonian intelligentsia were deported in 1941. Helme illustrates how under the Nazis ideological restrictions were in place and that from 1944 censorship pressures continued to exist (Helme 1995).

¹²⁸ In 1989 at the Institute of History at the Academy of Science, a commission of five historians was convoked to re-evaluate the events of 1940. It was concluded that Estonia was annexed and incorporated illegally (Kerner & Stompinski 1990: 29). Hanneleen mentions a conference in 1987 at which a new curriculum for history textbooks was launched; at that point party history was no longer an obligatory subject (Hanneleen, interview, Tallinn, 13.06.02).

¹²⁹ Estonia's 'restorationist path' is discussed in Chapter Four.

¹³⁰ Also Estonians who had been fighting as part of the OK, the German army or in the Forest (and who had been labelled 'fascists' and 'bourgeois nationalist' in Soviet Estonia) were now publicly rehabilitated as 'anti-Soviet' partisans and 'Freedom Fighters'; cf. section 1.4. in Chapter Seven.

¹³¹ Karlsson makes that observation for a number of post-Soviet republics (Karlsson 1998: 18 f).

¹³² Kalev refers to the Turkish minority in Germany: "but Germans mustn't learn Turkish! Once I discussed the issue with some Germans [and] I asked [them], 'can you speak Turkish'? 'But I can speak *our* Turkish'" (Kalev, interview, Tartu, 03.06.02; cf. Hanneleen, interview, Tallinn, 13.06.02).

¹³³ Tulviste & Wertsch do not limit their findings to the Estonian case, but make clear that one-dimensional or ethnocentric interpretations of history are prevalent in more established democracies as well.

¹³⁴ One could argue that this is a rebuttal to the former depiction of Soviet people as the 'chosen people' or the millennial socialist idea of their mission (Hosking 2005).

¹³⁵ As stated in many of the interviews with Estonian historians.

¹³⁶ Many Estonians have 'brought home' their dead relatives from Siberia to properly rebury them in native soil; cf. Lehtmets 1998; Viirlaid 1972.

¹³⁷ Estonian Foreign Ministry, statement on "General Laidoner's decorations are returned", see http://www.vm.ee/est/kat_137/4400.html

¹³⁸ Veera, born 1971, interview, Tartu 10.06.02. Likewise see the quote of Zahkar, in section on mutual understanding.

¹³⁹ Pille, interview, Tartu, 06.10.03.

¹⁴⁰ Some Estonians say it's like having a 'dragon's egg' laid in your nest: you wait in fear for it to hatch. The Canadian filmmaker Allan King screened the "Dragon's Egg" in 1999 in Klooga, Estonia (<http://www.allankingfilms.com/dragon-egg.html>)

¹⁴¹ Cf. Wettig 1993.

¹⁴² Cf. Lagerspetz 2001.

¹⁴³ The Estonian historian Kivimäe favours a more inclusive territorial history (Germ., *Landesgeschichte*) over a history of the people (Germ., *Volksgeschichte*) (Kivimäe 1999: 210)

¹⁴⁴ Kalju, interview, Tartu, 06.10.03.

¹⁴⁵ Zahkar, interview, Tallinn, 12.06.02.

¹⁴⁶ Ahonen's comparative study of the post-Marxist transformation of the history curricula in East Germany and Estonia, 1986 – 91, is a noteworthy study with respect to history textbooks. In her study she gives three possible scenarios for a new interpretation of history to emerge: 1) that the vacuum is filled by new mythmaking; 2) an end of history; or 3) individual images of history built from scratch. I would contend that the term 'scratch' is a misnomer, since individuals are (and have been) building on their preserved counter-memories after all (Ahonen 1992: 16); cf. Maier 1995.

¹⁴⁷ In her BA thesis, Ümarik undertook a textbook analysis starting from the 1970s to 1999. With regard to the term 'Russian Estonian' or 'Estonian Russian', which are often used interchangeably, they fall short of depicting the complex identity issues arising for children of mixed marriages, children of Russian immigrant born in Estonia, or Estonians who have been born in Russia and returned to Estonia in the 1940s.

¹⁴⁸ Laar has written a book on the *War in the Woods* (1992) based solely on oral accounts, fully in synch with the 'emotional approach' to history at the time. Only after 1991-92 a more 'rational' approach to history emerged (Jürjo 1998). Laar co-authored *Kodu Lugu* (Estonian for 'homeland history') in 1989 and in 1997 *Ajalugu 5. klassile*, a history textbook for the 5th grade. Kivimäe & Kivimäe (2002) describe the content of these books as anti-(Baltic) German, anti-Russian, populist and nationalistic. They remark that in *Kodu Lugu* the fact of Estonians fighting on the German side against the Red Army first appeared (Kivimäe & Kivimäe 2002: 163 ff). The later textbook (1997) is considered to be more critical of the Estonian inter-war Republic. Ironical remarks against these particular textbooks were voiced by several Russian historians, cf. Nicolaij, interview, Tallinn, 08.10.03; cf. Zbigniew, interview, Tallinn, 03.10.03, while one Estonian history schoolteacher was far less critical of these particular schoolbooks (Franka, born 1965, interview, Narva, 05.06.02). The term *Kodu Lugu* can be translated into 'homeland history', but the Est. word *kodu* also stands for home, as in the family home; it thus designates the counter stories held in the private sphere of the family. One interviewee, Hariton, remarked that the fact that the Estonian society is still very patriarchal compounds the division between the official history and private history in Soviet Estonia (Hariton, interview, Tartu 02.06.02).

¹⁴⁹ Evgeny, interview, Narva, 06.06.02. I believe in order to make sense of the Estonian-Russian relations in Estonia it is necessary to understand both *what* had happened, i.e. the factual history, *and* its subsequent narratives.

¹⁵⁰ Zahkar, interview, Tallinn, 12.06.02; on questions of one-sided integration cf. Chapter Five.

¹⁵¹ This shortcoming was pointed to by an assistant History professor at Tartu University (Jaak, born 1965, interview, Tartu, 02.06.02); cf. Kivimäe 199: 211; Kivimäe & Kivimäe 2002: 167 ff.

¹⁵² Also these events were still too close to be objectively researched.

¹⁵³ Kivimäe & Kivimäe 2002: 159 – 163; Maier 2002: 171 ff. In East Germany the unwinding or phasing out (Germ., *Abwicklung*) of those teachers or lecturers loyal to the old system.

¹⁵⁴ Pauls, interview, Stockholm, 19.07.02.

¹⁵⁵ Ervin, interview, Tallinn, 02.10.03.

¹⁵⁶ Hanneleen, interview, Tallinn, 13.06.02; cf. Iivo, interview, Uppsala, 17.07.02.

¹⁵⁷ The theatre director Merle Karusoo and the *Pirgu* Development Centre have conducted life history interviews since the 1980s, putting them into sociological theatre performances. Other institutions involved were the EMS, the Estonian Life History Association; the Estonian Cultural History Archive; and the Estonian National Museum. Collections were published on women's life stories, life stories of the deported et al. For published books based on the work of the Estonian Life Histories Association, see Jaago 2002; Anepaio & Kõresaar 2001; see <http://www.kirmus.ee>; <http://www.erm.ee>; <http://haldjas.folklore.ee/lii/insti/era1.htm>.

¹⁵⁸ Simon, interview, Tallinn, 07.06.02.

¹⁵⁹ Cf. Lehtmets 1998; Krepp 1981.

¹⁶⁰ It is Gurvitch who coined the term 'cyclical time', denoting the sociological phenomenon "where the past, present and future are mutually projected into one another with an accentuation of continuity and a weakening of contingency" (Gurvitch, 1964: 32).

¹⁶¹ The following categorisation represents a further step in the operationalisation of the theoretical concepts of 'national identity' and 'collective memory'.

¹⁶² Maier makes a similar observation (Maier 2002: 176). It goes without saying that this re-evaluation could not be found in public rhetoric before the late 1980s.

¹⁶³ Hanneleen, interview, Tallinn, 13.06.02; cf. Oskar, Tallinn, 01.10.03.

¹⁶⁴ According to Mark Lilla's reading, Carl Schmitt's work follows this exact logic (Lilla 2001).

¹⁶⁵ Warfare as a mobilising force of national consciousness and provider of myths; cf. Charles Tilly on the role of warfare in the process of state making: "war makes the state and the state makes war" (Tilly 1975).

¹⁶⁶ Vilhelm, interview, Tallinn, 12.06.02, transl. from German.

¹⁶⁷ Sigmund Freud defines 'trauma' as the impact of events that exceed the assimilative capacities of the human psyche. Here, the intensity of traumatic events does not allow for a transformation of lived experience into conceptual experience; instead it is these pre-conceptual experiences that remain recurring, haunting memories of traumatic events (Laplanche & Pontalis 1973).

¹⁶⁸ Loss of a beloved object, which could be a person but also more abstract ideals such as freedom or the fatherland (Freud in Ricoeur 1999: 7).

¹⁶⁹ Cf. La Capra 2001 on writing (about) trauma.

¹⁷⁰ Charles Taylor points out that "our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the mis-recognition of others, and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people around them mirror back to

them a confining or demean in or contemptible picture of themselves" (Taylor 1992 a: 25). For further reading I recommend Stanley Cohen's book States of Denial, Knowing about atrocities and suffering (2001) (chs. 5, 9, 10). He looks at questions of denial, of blocking out the past in public histories, and on the other hand modes of acknowledging past suffering.

¹⁷¹ Many respondents mention the memory of the bombings, cf. Nora, interview, Tallinn, 08.10.03 and Nelli, interview, Tallinn, 05.10.03. The history of Narva is a particularly bitter wound for Estonians, as this town was bombed to oblivion by Nazi Germany and Soviet air raids. Moreover, Stalin's population policy prevented most of the previous inhabitants, who had all been evacuated by the Germans, from returning to Narva after 1944/45; instead Russian immigrants were resettled in Narva to work in the local textile and heavy industry (Weiss-Wendt 1997). The latter is a claim made by a number of the (ethnic) Estonian respondents, whereas the Russian intellectuals denied this fact.

¹⁷² Here, the Estonian exile Siim talks about the fact that three of his cousins did their service in the Soviet army where Balts were generally pestered and called fascists or fascist predecessors. One of his cousins was killed in an accident during his service. Siim says it was not intentional, but was due to an overall sloppiness (Siim, interview, Berlin, 17.04.04).

¹⁷³ As mentioned earlier, the massive influx of Russian-speaking immigrants nurtured fears among Estonians of their ethnic disappearance. From 1945 to 1989 the ethnic Estonian population had declined from 94 % to just 61 % (D. Smith 2001: xxiii). Apart from that the fear of being sandwiched in-between the German and Russian powers existed since the 20th c. It is noteworthy that throughout Baltic literature the ethnic decline of the *Vaddalain* (Germ., *Voten*) or of the Livonians - both also Finno-Ugric people - featured as a warning (Raun 1987 introduction). To many of the Estonian interviewees, Chechnya is a living example of an ongoing military occupation and genocide accepted by the international community (cf. Lieven 1998). A hotel in Tartu named a suite after Gen. Dudajev, and a plaque has been put up in the entrance area in memory of him, clearly a demonstration of solidarity for the struggle of another small people against the former Soviet Union.

¹⁷⁴ Kalev, interview, Tartu, 03.06.02. *Morgen* is a former measure of land used in Prussia, Norway, and Denmark, and equals about 0.3 hectares. The lack of logic of Stalinist terror was astounding to several of the respondents of the older generation. In the interviews with Estonian respondents of the second or third generation, a certain logic was reinserted into the course of historical events. When asked why their families had not suffered from the mass deportations, they often replied: "we were not rich"; which was the predominant way later generations made sense of the deportations and expropriations (cf. Niils, interview, Tallinn, 11.06.02, cf. Polina, interview, Tallinn, 05.10.03; cf. Ülle-Mai, interview, Tallinn, 08.06.02).

¹⁷⁵ Cf. Horowitz 2000.

¹⁷⁶ This may be why when public recognition is given to the collective suffering of certain groups (such as the victims of the mass deportations) it is often done so only in an 'emblematic fashion'; see section 2.4. in Chatper Seven.

¹⁷⁷ Pille, interview, Tartu, 06.10.03. Taagepera writes that the Estonian word *jonn*, meaning persistence, endurance, spite or stubbornness is a characteristic trait among many Estonians (Taagepera 1993: 6).

¹⁷⁸ The former dissident Ervin distinguishes further, into passive resistance (as discussed in section 1.3.), active underground resistance (e.g. the publication and dissemination of literature), and open public resistance (e.g. appeals and memos) (Ervin, interview, Tallinn, 02.10.03). Cf. Rubie S. Watson (1994) on Memory, History and Opposition under State Socialism.

¹⁷⁹ Illar, interview, Uppsala 09.07.02.

¹⁸⁰ Cf. Hope 1994.

¹⁸¹ The great (symbolic) importance of the Estonian exile community during the 'years of dependence' was mentioned by many Estonians, cf. Oskar, interview, Tallinn, 01.10.03, Pille, interview, Tartu, 06.10.03; Simon, interview, Tallinn, 07.06.02.

¹⁸² Many dissidents from Russia proper found a *niche* at Tartu University, such as the Semiotician Juri Lotman. Hesse mentions the famous Spirit of Tartu (Est., *Tartu Vaim*) in Glasperlenspiel.

¹⁸³ Capital (Est., *pealinn*) versus town with brains (Est., *peaga linn*), Urmas, interview, Tartu, 07.10.03.

¹⁸⁴ Cf. Viktor Niitsoo's research on the resistance movement in the Estonian SSR covers the 1955 - 85 period. Whereas Laar's book dealt with the armed resistance *until* 1955, Niitsoo (a former dissident and historian) puts forward a periodisation of resistance in Estonia: armed resistance against Soviet occupation (1941, 1944, 1953); activities of underground youth organisations (1944- 62); democratic movement activities (1968-75); open resistance (1977-85); and the independence movement (1987-91) (Niitsoo 2001).

¹⁸⁵ Ervin, interview, Tallinn, 02.10.03.

¹⁸⁶ Iivo, interview Uppsala 17.07.02.

¹⁸⁷ Vilhelm interview, Tallinn, 12.06.02.

¹⁸⁸ Illar, interview, Uppsala 09.07.02, this coincides with the Estonian-Swede Kalle, interview, Uppsala, 11.07.02, born in 1973, whose grandfather was a 'Forest Brother.' In the historical situation, members of the OK may have referred to themselves as 'partisans' in order deceive that they were in fact under German command.

¹⁸⁹ Ervin, interview, Tallinn, 02.10.03. The full quotation is illuminating, because he takes an empowering view of his own life in that he realised that they had choices: "But we had a choice. We could live very organised Soviet lives and nobody troubled us. (...) We made our choice and began (...) activities against the [Soviet] regime. This was our choice, nobody forced us! This was the difference between Forest Brothers and between us."

¹⁹⁰ Kalev, interview, Tartu, 03.06.02.

¹⁹¹ Ülle-Mai, interview, Tallinn, 08.06.02.

¹⁹² Polina, interview, Tallinn, 05.10.03.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Nicolaij, interview, Tallinn, 08.10.03; Zbigniew, interview, Tallinn, 03.10.03.

¹⁹⁵ Siim, interview, Berlin, 17.04.04.

¹⁹⁶ Cf. Hanneleen, interview, Tallinn, 13.06.02; cf. Oskar, interview, Tallinn, 01.10.03.

¹⁹⁷ Vilma, interview, Tallinn, 11.06.02, on Song Festivals quoted earlier.

¹⁹⁸ The Singing Revolution harked back to songs and folklore to move forward and to change the *status quo*. Since revolution means a forced break in the continuation of history, one could argue that what we saw in Estonia was in fact *not* a revolution,

but a return to or restoration of the independent national statehood of the interwar republic, all however with a clear future-orientation.

¹⁹⁹ Urmas, interview, Tartu, 06.10.03. High standards in schooling during the inter-war period, and the insight that education (esp. the knowledge of foreign languages) was considered the most important asset was clear from the interviews with many Estonians.

²⁰⁰ Kalev, interview, Tartu, 03.06.02.

²⁰¹ Vilhelm, interview, Tallinn, 12.06.02.

²⁰² Oskar, interview, Tallinn, 01.10.03, cf. section 1.4. in Chapter Seven.

²⁰³ Pille, interview, Tartu, 06.10.03.

²⁰⁴ Zinovij, interview, Tallinn, 18.09.03.

²⁰⁵ "The past is not dead; it has not even passed away. We separate it from ourselves and play being estranged" (Wolf 1999: 1; transl. from Germ.). Wolf's book *Kindheitsmuster, or Patterns of Childhood*, was published first in the GDR at the end of the 1970s. It is an autobiographical account of the recent history of her family which was expelled from Poland at the end of the Second World War and repatriated in the GDR, where their memory soon became a political taboo.

²⁰⁶ As these issues are controversial, not many of the Estonian respondents were willing to speak openly about them, as they did not want to foul their own nest. Thus it was rather with the Estonian Russians, Russians and exiles, as well as with the younger Estonians that these taboos were raised.

²⁰⁷ Oskar, interview, Tallinn, 01.10.03.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Pille, interview, Tartu, 06.10.03. This poem in question was called "eternal arrival, or return" (Est., *igavene tulemine*) by the Estonian composer Tõnu Kalljuste.

²¹⁰ Collaboration carries a moralising connotation as it is connected to questions of loyalty towards one's nation; this is why Dieckman prefers the term 'cooperation under military occupation' instead. The Hague convention (*Haager Landkriegsordnung*) of 1907 allowed for cooperation with the occupying power to secure the day-to-day life of civilians; however if the main objective of the occupying power is to eradicate certain segments of the civilian population the 'cooperation' needs to be reassessed (Dieckman et al 2003: 11 ff). In contemporary Estonia the term 'collaboration' is connected mostly to the Soviet period (and not to the German occupation).

²¹¹ Consequently, some family members were conscripted into the Red Army, whereas others fought alongside the Wehrmacht or became Forest Brethren, still others fled to fight in the Finnish army. Siim related an anecdote to me about his uncles meeting unexpectedly at night at their parents' house, one of them in German uniform, the other in Soviet regiments (Siim, interview, Berlin, 17.04.04).

²¹² Cf. Iivo, interview Uppsala 17.07.02; cf. Vilhelm, interview, Tallinn, 12.06.02. A recent book on Estonia by David Smith does not mention this fratricidal war (D. Smith 2001).

²¹³ Cf. section on 'Estonians who deported their fellow citizens on stage' in Chapter Seven.

²¹⁴ Zahkar, interview, Tallinn, 12.06.02.

²¹⁵ As a 'justified' collaboration for a national cause and as "the lesser of the two evils"; see section 1.4. in Chapter Seven.

²¹⁶ In post-communist Latvia, 'resistance' when used in the public discourse virtually always refers to 'national resistance' (Onken 1998; Onken 2000a: 5 - 16). Armstrong does not view nationalism and collaboration as antagonistic concepts; instead he demonstrates a connection between (integral) ethnic nationalism and collaboration for the cases of Ukraine, Slovakia and Croatia (Armstrong 1968; cf. Lemberg 1971).

²¹⁷ A similar example of partial *amnesia* in the reconstruction of Lithuanian national history can be found: the Lithuanian independence movement (Lithuanian *Sajudis*) insisted on the illegality of the Soviet occupation, but did not consider the return of Vilnius to Poland, although the city (and region) had been awarded to Lithuania by Stalin in 1939 (Burant & Zubek 1993: 375). See section 1.1. in Chatper Seven.

²¹⁸ A conference on "Reichskommissariat Ostland. Collaboration and Resistance during the Holocaust" (18. -21.04.02, Stockholm & Uppsala, Sweden). My usage of the term 'closed' ought not to be confused with Karl Popper's concept of the 'closed society'. See section 1.3. in Chapter Seven.

²¹⁹ Cf. Ülle-Mai, interview, Tallinn, 08.06.02; cf. Pille, interview, Tartu, 06.10.03.

²²⁰ Hanneleen, interview, Tallinn, 13.06.02. The purges of the so-called 'national Communists' in June 1950 is remembered only by a marginalised group, it is not part of the official narrative (Aarelaid-Tart 2003b); cf. earlier section on the Estonian language.

²²¹ Vilma, interview, Tallinn, 11.06.02.

²²² Cf. section on 'public uses of history' in Chapter Seven.

²²³ Simon, interview, Tallinn, 07.06.02.

²²⁴ Kalev, interview, Tartu, 03.06.02. This argument has tradition, around 1900 Jaan Tõnisson denied that class struggle is of importance in Estonia, calling it "a plant imported from abroad" that could not become domesticated in Estonia (Laur & Lukas 2002: 189).

²²⁵ The idea of legal continuity and non-recognition as mentioned before; still it cannot be denied that Estonia as a Soviet Republic holds a different legacy of structures and institutions than do the former satellite states such as Poland or the ČSSR.

²²⁶ Vilma, interview, Tallinn, 11.06.02.

²²⁷ Geese were attributed to Juno and Mars; similarly the Celts connected the goose to warfare and the respective marital gods.

²²⁸ Zahkar, interview, Tallinn, 12.06.02.

²²⁹ See section 1.2. in Chatper Seven. Raun refers to the Great Northern war as 'holocaust' since 170,000 of the total population died (Raun 1987: 312). Raun's usage of the term may be influenced by the North American context, where he lives and works and where certain hyphenated ethnic groups elevate their experiences of suffering to become holocaust experiences in the hope of gaining recognition through the usage of this discursive device (e.g. Irish Famine, Slavery).

Likewise, Vilhelm (interview, Tallinn, 12.06.02) called the mass-deportations of 1941 the “great Baltic holocaust.” There are other ways to draw on events of collective suffering, such as glorification of defeat as a road to transcendence or claiming the high moral ground by reason of having suffered, as is the case with Poland or Serbia.

²³⁰ Pille, interview, Tartu, 06.10.03.

²³¹ Participant observation at the conference on “*Reichskommissariat Ostland. Collaboration and Resistance during the Holocaust*” (18. – 21.04.02, Stockholm & Uppsala, Sweden).

²³² The idea of a “return to Europe” in connection with the understanding that the country (Estonia) is at the “border of civilisations”, i.e. that it acts as a “bulwark of Christianity”, is an interpretative framework (the so-called ‘*antemurale christianitatis*’) found also in other East and South East European societies since the 14th c.

²³³ In a speech in 1998 Estonia’s former Prime Minister Toomas H. Ilves remarked: “the German conquest (...) [is] today celebrated for having brought the Estonians within the ambit of European culture” (in D. Smith 2001; Ilves 1998).

²³⁴ This was the case in the 1860s; in the 1920s and again in 1991, so the author Matt Mihkel; see <http://www.einst.ee/publication/people>.

²³⁵ Zahkar, interview, Tallinn, 12.06.02.

²³⁶ Kalev, interview, Tartu, 03.06.02.

²³⁷ Zahkar, interview, Tallinn, 12.06.02.

²³⁸ Nora, interview, Tallinn, 08.10.03; Niils, interview, Tallinn, 11.06.02.

²³⁹ Zahkar, interview, Tallinn, 12.06.02.

²⁴⁰ Vilhelm, interview, Tallinn, 12.06.02.

²⁴¹ Most recently on BBC Radio 4 (22.08.05) in a series called: “Six places that changed the world: Yalta” the former Estonian prime minister Mart Laar maintained that the Second World War began with the signing of the MRP secret protocols and ended with the withdrawal of the Russian troops 31.08.94. In this context I suggest that researchers take extra care when using terms such as ‘Soviet occupation’ or the ‘long Second World War’, since they are premised upon certain political beliefs. Thus, one needs to distinguish between the time of ‘Soviet occupation’ (i.e. wartime and Stalinist terror) and the period of Soviet Estonia (Soviet consumerism and stagnation period).

²⁴² This metaphor, although employed predominantly by the older respondents, is also known by younger Estonians and Estonian exiles (cf. my class with young Estonian students, EHI, Tallinn, 07.10.03; cf. Niils, interview, Tallinn, 11.06.02). This moral argument has been employed by Toomas H. Ilves in a public talk on “Estonia and the state of change in European security”, in Chatham House, London, 04.05.99.

²⁴³ Vilma, interview Tallinn, 11.06.02.

²⁴⁴ Nelli, interview, Tallinn, 05.10.03; here the helicopter represents the Allies.

²⁴⁵ Juhan, interview, Tallinn, 26.09.03.

²⁴⁶ According to a qualitative research study on historical consciousness among Estonian and Russian high school students of this generation that had been carried out in the early ‘90s, differences between the two groups were weighty (Rüsen & Borries 1994b: 139). A further interesting finding brought forward in this study was that at the time both groups identified themselves rather with the larger category of ‘humanity’ than with being Estonian or Russians respectively, which may have to do with the ‘Soviet identity’ that had just ceased to exist (Ibid.: 143). On national stereotypes.

²⁴⁷ During the Stalinist period, Sovietisation was perceived by Estonians as a policy of Russification, imposing Russian history, culture and most of all the language on them (Kallas 2002: 52); cf. S. Ōispuu 2002; see Chapter Four.

²⁴⁸ Hanneleen, interview, Tallinn, 13.06.02.

²⁴⁹ Hariton, interview, Tartu, 02.06.02.

²⁵⁰ Evgenij, interview, Narva, 06.06.02; cf. Chapter Seven.

²⁵¹ Cf. Zimmermann (2002) on dichotomies of victims and perpetrators.

²⁵² Something that may be untimely so shortly after Estonia regained her freedom, still I believe it is an apposite proposition to make.

²⁵³ As expressed in the interview with Zahkar; cf. Glenny 1993: 51 f; see section on the existential dimension of history in Chapter Seven.

²⁵⁴ Zahkar, interview, Tallinn, 12.06.02.

²⁵⁵ Paula, interview, Tallinn, 09.10.03. An Estonian historian of the older generation related to me how she was surprised when Russia wanted to leave the Soviet Union, as it was only then that she realised that being Russian and being Soviet are not the same (Hanneleen, interview, Tallinn, 13.06.02).

²⁵⁶ In his discussion of the ethics of memory, Ricoeur writes about the duty to remember a parallel history of the victims or of victimisation as opposed to the successful history of the victors (Ricoeur 1999: 10).

²⁵⁷ Nikitor, interview, Tallinn, 02.10.03. Understanding is of course a broad term, it can denote human empathy, sharing the same cultural beliefs, or more literally speaking the same language. Here, Zbigniev, a local Russian, makes an almost Herderian statement: “those who don’t know the Estonian language, they don’t know the Estonian soul (...) as this is very much the same, the language and the soul [Est. *hing* – the author]” (Zbigniev, interview, Tallinn, 03.10.03).

²⁵⁸ Zahkar, interview, Tallinn, 12.06.02.

²⁵⁹ Nicolaij, interview, Tallinn, 08.10.03.

²⁶⁰ Oskar, interview, Tallinn, 01.10.03

²⁶¹ See Michnik 1999, on the notion of “amnesty yes and *amnesia* no!”

Chapter Seven:

Public uses of history and private counter-memories: Codification of collective memories in post-Soviet Estonia

0. Introduction

In this Chapter a few themes are explored in more detail: 1) the disputed memory of President Päts; 2) the work of the 'Estonian Occupation Museum'; 3) the 'Estonian international commission for the investigation of crimes against humanity'; and 4) the conflicts over memorial monuments to the Estonian SS Legion. All cases concern public ways of dealing with the enduring ambiguities of Estonia's troubled past.¹ All themes represent attempts to agree on a canon of how to remember contemporary Estonian history, particularly in the controversial area of complicity with an undemocratic regime. As these taboo topics cause conflict within the Estonian society, they provide a constructive basis upon which to elaborate and contrast the different memories of intellectuals in post-Soviet Estonia.

A systematic overview (and synopsis) of the different 'public uses' of history employed in Estonia is presented in the final part of this Chapter. The political elite, social pressure groups and other official organs employ these various 'public uses' of history to regulate and synchronise individual and group memories into official, collective memories.

"All history is the history of past politics"

- F. R. Ankersmit

"History is a back-up for the future"

- Jocelyn Létourneau

1. Public Uses of History: Expressions of 'historical culture' in Estonia²

In previous Chapters some landmarks of Estonia's historical culture have been discussed, such as the MRP-AEG, the 'Heritage Society', and the overall changes in writing Estonian history since the late 1980s. In this section I limit myself to a more detailed discussion of the four already enumerated examples of the 'public uses' of history, some of which have caused public debate and continue to do so.

1.1. *Battles over Historical Interpretation: On Regicide – A debate between Estonian Historians*

Magnus Ilmjärv, a younger historian specialising in Estonia's foreign policy during the 1930s, triggered the Estonian historians' debate in 1999 when he published his findings on President Päts from the Moscow archives in the Estonian daily *Postimees*.³ The article sparked an emotionally charged public debate, in which some branded Ilmjärv a traitor. The debate became heated as the honourable memory of Päts was at stake. Päts, who is commonly regarded as the 'founding father' of the Estonian Republic and as a national symbol of Estonia's independence, was in danger of being degraded and found guilty of nothing less than high treason. Thus, for some, the attempt to dishonour the former President seemed an attack on Estonia itself (Plath & Brüggemann 2000: A 334). Ilmjärv's research claimed that Päts was one of the most prominent informants to the Soviet embassy in Tallinn on internal political affairs during the late 1920s and '30s, and was paid thousands of US dollars over several years to do so (Plath & Brüggemann 2000: 331 f.).⁴ Ilmjärv raised the sensitive question of whether or not the structural changes brought about by Päts' authoritarian rule facilitated the Soviet takeover in 1940. Also, he shed new light on the military base treaties of 1939 and the sham elections of 1940.⁵ Ilmjärv concluded that, even if Päts compromised his conscience and "rode the tiger" for Estonia's best interest, he also did so for personal gain (Huang, 27.09.99; Brüggemann 2001: 818).⁶ It is remarkable that while at that time the historical figure of Päts had already undergone critical revision in expert circles, this was not

the case with regard to a debate among the general public. The controversy revealed a generational rift in Estonian society, with especially older Estonians unwilling to dismantle their national icon. The writer Jaan Kross, born in 1920, was suspicious of Ilmjärv's 'sponsors', and accused him of sensationalist journalism. Others, such as the historian Toomas Karjahärm, born in 1944, questioned the overall validity of Ilmjärv's sources and his way of interpreting them (Plath & Brüggemann 2000: A 337 f). This academic criticism is shared today by Oskar, who opines that Ilmjärv read history backwards and took facts out of their historical context, thereby risking "falsification."⁷ I encountered a more emotional reaction from an Estonian-American, born 1960, who saw Ilmjärv's claim as nothing but a desecration, particularly since the former President died alone in Siberia.⁸ Hanneleen likewise dismisses Ilmjärv's claims: 'Estonian people like Päts, they are convinced of the fact that he was not an agent of Russia, of the Soviets, and the living standard was high under Päts. It's not such an important discussion for Estonians.'⁹ The writer Kivirähk, born in 1970, comments on the psychological dimension of the debate. According to him the allegations against Päts functioned as a painful reminder to most Estonians, touching the collective taboos about compromise with and accommodation to the Soviet system, in which the majority of Estonians had to engage (Plath & Brüggemann 2000: A 339 f).¹⁰ As Simon explains:

"Small nations can't afford heroes [since] they lack the physical capacity (...) [whereas in] big nations there are heroes, who die for very small principles, and it's very important for the national consciousness to have heroes. Small nations cannot do that, because then they wouldn't survive (...). Of course we have our heroes, but our heroes are tainted. (...) I don't think that Päts was a criminal. I think he was greedy; like everybody else he had his problems."¹¹

Simon adds that even if Ilmjärv's allegations were proven correct, Päts would not play a different role in history.¹²

Nora told me that a biography on Päts by the Finnish author Martti Turtola, published in Estonia in 2003 with an initial run of 10,000 copies, was immediately sold out. She tells how Estonian historians were critical of a non-Estonian writing such a book.¹³

Iivo, an Estonian exile in Sweden, remarked:

"Ilmjärv is not socially acceptable in Estonia, since one is not allowed to criticise Päts," and that Ilmjärv could not defend his thesis in Estonia, but had to do so in Helsinki. He continued:

"To this day people do not acknowledge that it was an undemocratic regime. [They say] 'it all got better economically' and this was certainly the case when Germany began to re-arm and snapped up Estonia. But still it was an undemocratic regime. [They say] 'no, don't touch the subject.' The argument

has always been: 'don't criticise the Estonian Republic', because by doing so we would pair up with the Soviets."¹⁴

Iivo's last statement reveals the perspective of an Estonian exile, and the fact that this community exerted a lot of socio-political pressure on its individual members. A quote from Juhan, another Estonian exile from Uppsala, born in 1953, substantiates this:

"Tallinn was opened up in 1958 or 1959. The ferry-line was opened from Helsinki to Tallinn and at the beginning of the 1960s a very fierce discussion about whether it was politically correct to travel to Soviet occupied Estonia, as it was then called, emerged in the exile community. Behind this was the question of whether an Estonian refugee should go to the Soviet embassy in his country [of residence] to ask for permission to visit his home country. And a lot of people said 'no; visiting Soviet Estonia is the same as betraying everything you stand for' and so this caused very serious internal quarrels.

(...) The older generation, the more conservative, more nationalistic (...) did not want to have anything to do with people of my generation born in Sweden, who had never seen Estonia, but had the opportunity to go there (...) and many of us did. (...) In the Estonian newspapers published in Sweden during the '60s and '70s you can find a column with the names of the people (...) who visited Soviet occupied Estonia. (...) Now you also know that since I visited Estonia for the first time in 1971, how I was classified, the attitude towards me, and also towards my father."¹⁵

Complicity vs. normality

This battle over President Päts' memory still rages, as it connects to the difficult questions of compromise and collaboration, which faced every Estonian family, both during and after the periods of occupation and undemocratic rule.¹⁶

In the interviews the respondents can, of course, only discuss their lives under German or Soviet rule in retrospect; it therefore remains unclear whether they perceived their lives during the 1960s, '70s and '80s in Estonia as 'life under occupation', or accepted it as normal and got on with their daily lives (e.g. work and bringing up a family etc.). It may well be that only with change in context, i.e. the liberation of Estonia in 1991, were the last thirty years in the ESSR re-evaluated, not as a period of normality but of occupation. Again, generational differences in perception can be detected: those that were born before the Second World War viewed the ESSR up to 1991 as Soviet occupation. Vilhelm recalled:

"Well (...) to me the whole situation right until the end [of the occupation] was totally abnormal. It was no life all these decades. It was something disgusting. It was far more horrible than Hitchcock's movies and scripts. 'The Birds', do you know it? What one could watch there was like a children's game, not horrible at all. But what one could experience here [post-war Estonia – the author], that was really horrible. For instance, the first weeks of

September 1944 when they all [Soviets] came back. Those days full of uncertainty. 'Will we all be slated, or deported'. (...) I believe my parents could not sleep and I was sleepless too. (...) My family was not deported, but I witnessed it all. The train wagons and trucks and the despair all around. But I can well understand that the younger generation, those born later, they couldn't realise this. It would be impossible to live like that, right? They were born into the situation. (...) Born into it, [to them] this really is life, (...) the real life. I lived with such a sentiment, a kind of certainty that this '*imperium of evil*' must crumble. Absolutely! But I was just as convinced that my eyes would not see this happening."¹⁷

Paula, 10 years old at the time of her family's relocation from Russia to Estonia by the Germans in 1943, witnessed the March 1949 deportations as a young woman. She recalled the traumatic experience of her classmate being deported:

"And then in 1949, I experienced personally what deportations (...) [meant]. I was living with other students in a dormitory, ten girls in one room and very late at night the soldiers came in and one of our friends, Mare Rätsepp was her name, was arrested and taken away. Her story was that her family, (...) had been deported in 1941 and after the War children were allowed to come back to Estonia and she was an excellent student at the teachers training school (...) and in March she was deported once more to Siberia. I remember that morning; it was awful. My initial reaction was that I drove home. My family was there, but a lot of people around me were taken away. But people have to live!"¹⁸

As subsequent quotes illustrate, Paula (in contrast to the previous respondent Vilhelm) managed to repress her direct experience of terror and violence. It is astonishing how, immediately after recalling this traumatic event, she described how she was co-opted into joining the Young Communist League:

"My co-students, who were members of the Young Communist League, tried in the course of this first year [of my studies] to mobilise me into the Young Communist League. I refused this [pause] but it became psychologically so difficult, because I was sure that I wanted to become a teacher and most of the students in this training school were members of the Communist League. And I was simply tired."

Somewhat belittling her decision, she continued: "The young man or boy who was very active to mobilise me, I was a bit fond of him. Yes, and so it just happened."¹⁹

Over the course of her life, she became a *Komsomol*, joined the ECP, became active in cultural politics, was secretary of the Central Committee, and taught the so-called 'red subjects' at the University. In the course of the interview she related that the system trained them "not to actualise things."²⁰ Paula explained how in the 1960s:



“(...) we felt that the time had come to no longer be afraid. (...) [It was] the time of the criticism of the Stalin cult and the homecoming of the deported. The powers were acting in a new way. (...) Repression was not so visible for ordinary people. And people were tired of living under this psychological and ideological pressure. The first opportunities emerged for life under better material conditions. I think that people can only suffer for so long. We have to accommodate to the situation. And in cultural (...) life there were some free *niches*.²¹

Clearly, Paula’s social strategy (of not actualising things) at the time can be described as self-defensive²² Generally, many Estonian intellectuals born in the 1940s and ‘50s, the so-called “after-war children”²³ as one respondent describes herself, were more interested in going about their daily lives.²⁴ Ülle-Mai, born 1948, told me: “I did not consider it occupation until the 1990s. I don’t know how it would have been if we had known right from the start that it was an occupation? (...) You cannot live then. It’s too much pressure to think that you are living under occupation all the time.”²⁵

1.2. *On the problem of historical comparison: the Estonian Occupation Museum*

Olga Ritso, an Estonian exile from the United States, came up with the funds needed to build the Estonian Occupation Museum (at the foot of Toompea hill in the heart of Tallinn), which was opened to the public in 2003.²⁶ The museum documents the suffering that Estonians endured mostly at the hands of the Soviets between 1940 – 91, while paying little attention to the victims of the Holocaust in Estonia or questions of indigenous collaboration with the foreign regime.²⁷ This focus is consistent with the fact that the repression by the Soviet authorities stands out as *the* main public concern regarding Estonia’s recent past;²⁸ something that only changed with international pressure, i.e. a ‘prescribed public remembrance’ of the events surrounding the German occupation.²⁹ Why the public debate about the occupations in post-1991 Estonia mainly concerned the Soviet terror, while Estonian collaboration during the Nazi occupation was hardly touched upon, can in part be understood as an overreaction against the long-endured bias in Soviet historiography, which mostly focused on the atrocities committed during the Nazi occupation of Estonia. A further cause may lie in Russia’s failure to acknowledge the events of 1939 – 41; specifically, that the 1940 annexation of Estonia was an illegitimate act.

Besides informing the younger generation and foreigners about Estonia’s recent past, the museum collects artefacts, documents and memoirs, and conducts research into the

periods of occupation.³⁰ Battered suitcases, prison doors, aluminium cutlery, a refugee boat, a range of trivial objects of daily use, as well as letters and newspapers constitute the core of the exhibition; otherwise it relies on new media, including video testimonies and a series of CD-ROMs covering the time period in question.³¹ In Simon's words, the museum "has to be like a monument or a tombstone for the many people who have not returned. And I believe that for the people who still live, but went through this period, this [museum] would be something to make them feel a little proud; that something like this is built for them".³² Equivalents of the Estonian Occupation Museum can be found in Riga (Documentation Centre of Totalitarianism, TSDC, founded 1998) and in Vilnius (KGB Museum, also called Museum of Genocide Victims, founded 1992).³³

Apart from the State commission (subsequently discussed in section 1.3.) many lay-historians and private organisations of former victims of Soviet terror emerged in the 1990s, compiling lists, convening conferences, and documenting the repressions of the war and post-war years. Examples include the 'Research Centre of the Soviet Era in Estonia' (Est., *S-Keskus*) or the '*Memento* Union', which includes the 'Estonian Association of the former Members of the Labour Battalion', the 'Estonian Union of Political Prisoners', and the 'Estonian Repressed Persons Records Bureau' (ERPRB) (Kivimäe & Kivimäe 2002: 163 ff). The latter is headed by Leo Õispuu, who gathered registers of names of political arrests carried out under Soviet occupation and of the deportations from Estonia to Russia.³⁴

It appears that, in the post-Soviet societies mentioned above, a different 'regional logic or perspective' operates. The fact that these societies experienced both the Nazi and the Soviet occupation (while lacking an independent national government or a national army) leads to a specific interpretation of history different from that predominant in Western European countries, which had "only" been occupied by Nazi Germany. For if one were to pass by a 'museum of occupation' in Amsterdam, Paris, or Oslo, one could conclude from the name alone that the museum mainly concentrates on mass-deportations of Jews and communists, and anti-German résistance fighters; but the curators of the Estonian Occupation Museum clearly adhere to a different agenda. Here, it is the 'national suffering' of ethnic Estonians during the various occupations that is at centre stage.³⁵

When asked about her memories of the German occupation, Hanneleen replied:

"No! I know it was terrible, I accept that; (...) all those children in the Holocaust, really we all acknowledge that. But with regard to my own memory, I know thousands, thousands of people who I saw in the mass-deportations. Ten thousand on one day. Twenty thousand on the other day. I have seen the railway station and many relatives and friends. (...) Thousands! But based on my own memory, I know only two people who were victims of

the Germans. And I did not know them personally. I have merely heard [of them]. And they were both members of the Communist Party.”³⁶

Coming to terms with the Soviet legacy: condemning communism

At the time of the inauguration of the museum, the President of the parliament Toomas Savi issued a statement “on the crimes of the occupation regime in Estonia”, that represents a carefully balanced attempt to settle accounts with the past. In the statement, he first points out the injustice of the Soviet Union’s crimes not having been internationally condemned, while those atrocities carried out by Nazi Germany have been. After reiterating the illegitimacy of Estonia’s annexation in 1940, the statement therefore condemns as criminal the Soviet Union’s communist regime and the organisations and institutions that forcefully implemented Soviet power. This is followed by a general assessment of the results of Soviet aggression and occupation in Estonia, such as: “genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes [carried out] on the territory of the Republic of Estonia, unlawfully expropriated property and deliberately destroyed Estonian national culture (...) [as well as] massive resettlement of Soviet citizens into Estonia in order to destroy Estonians as a people” (Savi 18.06.02: 3).³⁷ Even though both the Nazi and Soviet regimes are mentioned at the outset of the declaration, the ensuing statement exclusively concerns the crimes of the Soviet occupation power. Subsequently, the critical question of responsibility is tackled. Here, complete accountability for all crimes committed during that period is assigned to the CP of the Soviet Union, the ECP, and its organisations. It is further specified that individual involvement cannot be judged only by membership in one of these organisations, but must be based on an individual’s activities. Thus, the principle of ‘collective responsibility’ is rejected. The statement ends on a general note locating “the crimes of the occupation regime in Estonia (...) [as] part of the inhumane activities by totalitarian regimes in the world of the 20th c.” (Savi 18.06.02: 4).³⁸ In the context of the statement, Nelli remarked: “they put them together [communism and fascism] because they were too cowardly to speak against communism alone. (...) They changed it over and over again. I am not interested in what it is now because it’s [worth] nothing.”³⁹ She continues to say that, ideally, with the end of the occupation those segments of the population that came with it should have left Estonia altogether, but that the Estonian government was too weak to stipulate this. Nelli then introduced the concept of ‘permanent collaboration’:

“At the beginning I was sure that no former member of the ECP can become a member of our parliament, but we allowed them to do all the things that others can do. This means (...) it’s very good to collaborate with the power, because

(...) if you are a 'big man' in this period you will be a big man next time around as well. This is the morality of our behaviour and it's sad.”⁴⁰

She added:

“This ‘soft collaboration’ (...) is more dangerous, because you can’t say anything against this person. He is smart and didn’t do anything very bad. He was just a member [of the ECP], one of many. This (...) is the lesson to others: ‘remember! (...) Today I have one kind of principles and tomorrow I can have another set of principles, because they serve me better. (...) You can do anything and be sure that nobody will punish you for it’.”⁴¹

Oskar points to the great symbolic significance of morally condemning those who had taken part in the deportations, even if they may now be too old to be actually imprisoned.⁴² Since the late 1990s, legal investigations into the crimes committed by the NKVD and KGB (mostly against individuals implicated in carrying out deportations) were pursued in Estonia.⁴³ In answer to my question of whether it is morally acceptable to pass judgement, he replied:

“Yes, you can’t tell after forty years what the *real* motives were. Maybe the person was threatened, maybe his wife and children were shown to him at the other end of the corridor and he was asked whether he ever wants to see them again. You cannot start a ‘witch hunt’ (...) [but] you cannot keep silent either: you have to say something about it.”⁴⁴

Regarding why it took so long to issue the statement, he explained:

“Part of the people, these collaborators, were so afraid that they would be arrested [or] tortured (...) since people like me had come to power in 1992. Really those people projected their way of thinking and acting on us. They (...) thought we would act like them, when they were in power. But (...) we just wanted a moral resolution, the moral approach to things. ‘Let’s at least say what was wrong and what was right!’ But they were so afraid of the process and the new balance of power that they quite successfully acted against such a paper, [such a] decision by the *Riigikogu* [*the Estonian parliament – the author*]. And really after a long time, when people saw that we were not ‘cannibals’ and we were not going to eat anybody, it was passed.”⁴⁵

Kalev, born 1930, also emphasised the fact that Estonians had not been brute man-eaters, and compared the changes of 1991 to England’s Glorious Revolution, as in both events nobody was killed.⁴⁶ He continued:

“I thought that maybe somebody who was in prison for 25 years, sitting for nothing, (...) [could] (...) take a landmine and vodka and (...) kill some Russians. But no, (...) Estonians are cold. We have been slaves for so many centuries, but we resisted and are against killing.”⁴⁷

Today he said people cannot give the Soviet occupation a word of praise,

“[Yet] (...) no communist leader was in prison, and when we discussed this with people from Norway, who had their *quislings* under the [German]

occupation (...), I said that nobody is in prison, and nobody has been killed. And this creates many problems. Our communist leaders can campaign and we don't know which of them are 'Russian agents'. (...) Normally after an occupation ends, people get arrested if not killed. [But] not in our country!"⁴⁸

That Kalev repeatedly pointed out how atypical it was that there was no carnage in 1991, led me to conclude that his comparative frameworks for understanding the end of the Soviet occupation in 1991 were the historical events of the summer of 1941 after the Red Army's withdrawal (i.e. the end of the first Soviet occupation), when Estonians lynched alleged Estonian and Russian communists in acts of revenge.⁴⁹ Vilhelm, who belongs to the same generational context as Kalev, recalled these bloody events of the summer of 1941 from a boy's perspective:

"Yes, the story goes that a couple of our people drove to Wesenberg, Rakvere [*in Est. – the author*], the county capital, to complain to the [German] commandant that order needed to be restored. My father's position was that this is unlawful, that one needs some kind of proper investigation and jury. But at the time, I remember, I was eight years old, I believed that this was normal. An old woman 80 or 90 years of age from the neighbouring village asked me if it was right that this and this person shot the blacksmith. I replied that it was correct and then she asked me whether they will be arrested. I only smiled inside being only eight years old, which means that although I was no more than a child, I approved of such deeds. That shows that after having survived the first Soviet year, I believed that all the bad things one could inflict on them were justified. And I still hold this belief today. (...) All those genuine spies and top communists, who were caught, they were treated in the right way, for example the father-in-law of our President. (...) One has to assume responsibility. Not all had a Nuremberg [trial], unfortunately."⁵⁰

Estonians who deported their fellow citizens

Nelli's (public) way of dealing with collaborators is to "just (...) let them talk about [it], because if they can talk about what they did they can make peace with themselves. And if they are at peace it's easier [for them] to have peace with us as well." A producer of theatre, she produced a play on those Estonians who assisted in the deportations of 1949. She explained that these Estonians were blackmailed by the Soviet regime into following the orders, "because, they had some kind of 'sin' in the family. For example, a brother who had served in the German army, or a sister who had left the country in September 1944 and so on."⁵¹ She continued that if they refused "they went to Siberia themselves." Essentially in her play Nelli deconstructed the myth that it was only Russians who deported Estonians. She stated:

"No, they were not Russians. They had a team usually lead by (...) an Estonian who had lived in Russia and returned to Estonia only after the Soviet

regime [had been installed]. The second [group] were (...) soldiers, mostly from Ukraine, and they helped people, because the deportations from Ukraine took place at the beginning of 1930s. So they knew what people needed to take with them to Siberia. And the others were those Estonians I wrote the play on.”⁵²

She then related that part of the audience did not comprehend the play at all when it was first performed at the Estonian Drama Theatre in 1999:

“There were misunderstandings among the audience. (...) These people who had been deported were very moved by the play, but those who weren’t part of the problem, got very excited and even angry. ‘How could one laugh about this situation’. (...) So it wasn’t very popular. (...) It was not meant as a comedy or *farce*, but I think that the audience has to make up their own minds about the meaning of the play (...). I will not say these are ‘bad guys’. (...) I can’t, because these ‘bad guys’ told me their story and without them I would not even know that the ‘deporters’ were mostly Estonians.⁵³ And nobody seriously calls them ‘deporters’ nor do they call themselves ‘deporters’. [Instead] they are thinking of themselves as victims. And I want the audience to decide whether they were victims or not. (...) These are very difficult decisions to make for the audience. Just like the entire nation, they can’t decide on what to do and on what’s right or wrong.”⁵⁴

With regard to the Soviet legacy, Oskar stressed:

“To collect the memories and data about the collaboration (...) is a very good thing, because you cannot view the history of our society as one in which the Reds had been in power for half a century and now there are the Whites. No, there is a big part of our nation, which is still quite Soviet in their attitude, their worldview, and their moral principles. (...) They still influence very much the opinion [of society]. (...) To talk about collaboration is not very popular. It’s not forbidden of course, but (...) it’s hard to find an audience, and the main reason for that is that the very basis of society has still not recovered. The very basis of a society should consist more or less of a unified understanding of the most basic moral principles. (...) [But] sometimes it feels almost as if there are two [kinds of] Estonians (...) and they treat the same events, the same trends, in history or in our present, differently and this is possibly the biggest crime of Soviet rule.”⁵⁵

In response to the question, how would he characterise these different types of “Estonias”, he further elaborated: “[there is] an Estonian Republic and an Estonian Socialist Republic.”⁵⁶

The quagmires of historical comparisons

In the centre of the main entry hall of the Estonian Occupation Museum stand two massive iron locomotive replica, that serve as a sort of gateway to the exhibition.⁵⁷ The models are exact copies of each other, except for the fact that one displays a red star, whereas the other

bears a swastika. This highly symbolic sculpture suggests railroad tracks and cattle wagons to the spectator, and thus serves as reminder of the mass-deportations which took place under both totalitarian regimes. This artistic expression, which places both regimes on parallel tracks, raises the pertinent question about the dangers inherent in historical comparison. At the opening of the museum the Russian Foreign Ministry issued a statement that the museum's creation was informed by a political bias, as it equated Fascist Germany and the former Soviet Union (in Tarm 2003: 12). Although it is crucial to avoid the pitfalls of historical comparison, such as attempting to relativise individual or collective suffering and injustices by means of comparison, it is also necessary to bear in mind that comparison deals with both resemblance and difference, and that to compare does not mean to justify. Hence, the crimes committed in the name of Hitler's Germany cannot be explained by the atrocities committed in the name of Stalin, nor *vice versa* (Todorov, 1996: 16 ff). In the mainstream academic debate in the former FRG, comparative approaches to understanding the totalitarian systems of Stalinism and Nazi Germany were frowned upon, and left to the fringes.⁵⁸ After the break-up of the Soviet bloc and the German reunification, comparisons between the systems became more *en vogue*; this was particularly the case in the debates emerging in newly independent Eastern Europe.⁵⁹

With reference to the uniqueness of Nazism and the Holocaust, Gallerano asks whether we should not confine the more contentious historical comparisons to the domain of scientific research. At the same time, he concedes that the public use of history cannot be equated with political manipulation *per se*; rather, it can lead to a more active participation of citizens, and thus a more active historical culture. Consequently, even problematic topics must be discussed in wider public forums (Gallerano 1994: 87).

A list of four possible responses to the comparison of the two totalitarian systems helps identify the standpoint of the individual making the comparison, and to what end the comparison is carried out (Todorov, 1996: 16 ff): 1) 'Hitler's hangmen' favour the pairing with Stalinists because it serves to excuse their own actions; 2) Hitler's victims oppose a pairing, because they are aware that the 'hangmen' use it as an excuse; 3) 'Stalin's hangmen' oppose a pairing, because it is used against them as an accusation; 4) Stalin's victims favour the pairing, because they can use it as an accusation. Although I do not fully concur with Todorov's use of language, I nonetheless concur that these four positions, when applied to the Estonian case, can be insightful. In the public debate in post-Soviet Estonia, there was little hesitation in comparing the two systems, which would indicate that it is not the victims of the Nazi occupation (i.e. Jewish survivors) or communist sympathisers who dominated the

debate, but victims of Stalinism and those that believed that the Nazi occupation was the lesser of two evils.⁶⁰

1.3. The Estonian international commission for the investigation of crimes against humanity and the memory of the Holocaust

Whereas the museum's primary objective is to collect and exhibit artefacts, memoirs, and eyewitness accounts to document the periods of occupation, the Estonian international commission for the investigation of crimes against humanity (hereafter 'commission'), established by the Estonian State in October 1998, was set up to produce objective research reports on the same periods, and which are clearly tailored towards an international readership.⁶¹ It was decided at the outset that a team of researchers selected by the commission's board would first investigate crimes against citizens of Estonia committed during the German occupation (or on the territory of the Estonian Republic), and subsequently explore crimes committed under the Soviet occupations.⁶²

The report attributes overall responsibility for the crimes committed during the German occupation to the Germans, but it identifies individual Estonians who served in the Estonian military units, Estonian Police Battalions, and Estonian Security Police, stating that they shared responsibility through their own actions in and outside of Estonia.⁶³ Moreover, the commission holds all members of the Estonian Political Police responsible for war crimes, and asserts that eight members of the Estonian self-government were also responsible for war crimes committed in Estonia, since they had retained a significant amount of autonomy.⁶⁴

It is remarkable that the commission debunks the myth of the 'just war' of the OK in 1941 by emphasising that the bulk of the killing of alleged communists during the early stages of the German occupation happened at the hands of the OK, and that, in assisting the *Einsatzkommando 1 A*, the former played an active role in the extermination of local Jews in 1941 – 42.⁶⁵ The report also mentions that the majority of members of the destruction battalions were ethnic Estonians, thus touching on another taboo—viz. that of the fratricidal war in Estonia. The report ends on the broader note that historical events made Estonia a 'victim nation', but that this "does not preclude acts of perpetration."

According to its statutory report, the commission is not intended to be a fully-fledged 'Truth Commission'. Meri, who headed the commission until 2001, explained the two-pronged approach:

“It reflects our hope in Estonia, that shining the bright light of truth on some of the tragedies of the past will not only contribute to reconciliation within our society and its further reintegration into the international community of nations, but also prevent the repetition of such tragedies elsewhere.”⁶⁶

From this it is evident that the commission is not a juridical or prosecutorial body, which is why it did not initiate tracking down those few Estonian perpetrators still alive, who were identified in the report on the German occupation (publ. in 2001), in order to extradite and try them.⁶⁷ However, one may argue that the commission is not *just* a scholarly body of historians, since it is a state-funded institution. Also, questions arise as to why the commission did not instruct the respective governmental body to follow up these cases.

One critic is Efraim Zuroff, who rebuked the current Estonian Security Police for not investigating those suspected criminals identified in the commission’s report. In autumn 1991, Zuroff made a failed attempt to arrest the Estonian Evald Mikson (who lived in Island at the time) for war crimes committed during the Nazi occupation of Estonia (Zuroff 1996: 318 ff; Kruus 1966).⁶⁸ More recently, Zuroff presented the Estonian Security Police with a list of 16 members of the 36th Police Battalion, who according to the commission’s report participated in the execution of Jews in Belarus in 1942; but, contrary to the commissions’ findings, the Estonian Security Police concluded that they had no evidence to confirm this indictment.⁶⁹ In obvious frustration, Zuroff announced an award of 10,000 USD for anyone who turned in information leading to the arrest of these men. His effort to place an ad reading “during the Holocaust, Estonians murdered Jews in Estonia as well as in other countries” in local newspapers, however, came to nothing (TBT, 30.01.03).⁷⁰ Consequently, in the reports of 2001 and 2003, Zuroff classified Estonia as making “insufficient and/or unsuccessful efforts to prosecute perpetrators of the Holocaust.”⁷¹ This substantiates the idea that the commission’s carefully-worded and well-balanced report may not reflect the predominant opinion among Estonian historians, or indeed of Estonian society at large. Rather it can be seen as, if not as a token gesture, at least as an ‘emblematic’ use of history.⁷² Karlis Kangeris, historian and member of the corresponding Latvian commission, described how both NATO and the EU saw the establishment of such a commission as precondition for future membership in these organisations.⁷³ Similarly, in Estonia the commission came into being due to international political pressure, and its work may be seen as an attempt to restore Estonia’s moral standing in the international community.

Contrary to the objectively written report of the commission, the paper of a younger Estonian historian (who worked in the commission’s research team on the German occupation), which he presented at a conference in Sweden on “Collaboration and Resistance

in Estonia 1940 – 44”, was biased. In it he deliberately only included the genocide of the Estonian Jews, while discounting the fate of those thousands of European Jews who were deported to Estonia to perish in the camps there.⁷⁴ This limitation that allowed him to claim that less than 1000 Estonian Jews were killed in Estonia during the German occupation. Moreover, he suggested that the “evacuation” of approx. 500 Estonian Jews to Russia by the Soviets was the “first act of the Holocaust.” All this led him to conclude that Estonia, although it was the first country to declare itself ‘free of Jews’ (Germ., *judenfrei*), was also the country in which the smallest number of Jews was exterminated under German occupation. The presentation stands as an example of a highly selective and ethnocentric approach to the study of the Holocaust in Estonia.

In May 2002 the newly appointed American ambassador to Estonia, Joseph M. De Thomas, caused uproar when he drew attention to the fact that after 1991 no Estonian war criminal had been prosecuted for crimes committed during the Holocaust. He went on to say that the Holocaust needed wider recognition, generally and within the educational system, as part of Estonia’s national history.⁷⁵ His remarks were seen as “interference in the internal affairs of Estonia” by the Estonian Justice Minister, who replied that De Thomas’ statement was like “breaking in through an open door, since only a few states have done as much work as Estonia in investigating the crimes of the Holocaust” (*Leta Daily News Review*, 30.05.02). De Thomas’ comments were not entirely without merit: as recently as October 2000 the Estonian Minister of Education declared that a Jewish Holocaust Day in schools was not required. This opinion was only revised in 2002, when the Estonian government declared January 27 Holocaust Day in schools (*Newsletter Swiss Baltic Chamber of Commerce*, 27.10.00).⁷⁶

This illustrates how Estonian politicians can act as if beleaguered when it comes to the internationally-voiced demand for research into the Nazi occupation of Estonia (Brüggemann 2001). This defensive reaction may be understood to stem from the fact that during the Soviet period Estonians (along with the other Baltic nationalities) were collectively branded as ‘Fascists’ and ‘collaborators’. Hence there is a tradition of defiance of these kinds of allegations.⁷⁷

Nicolaij, a Russian Jew born in Estonia in 1961, expressed anger about certain suggestive questions that can be found in contemporary Estonian history textbooks, such as the question of what would have been different if Hitler had not been defeated. He stated: “in Kiev, in Babi Yar 3400 Jews were killed, in Treblinka 2 million, in Auschwitz 6 million. So how can a normal person ask such a question?” And he continued that it is as if asking in “an

English history textbook how it would have been if Hitler had not destroyed Coventry".⁷⁸ When it was pointed out to him that many Estonians consider the Soviet system to have been worse when compared to the German occupation, he replied:

"Jews who have lived here for several hundred years do not agree! Estonia was the first country that reported being 'free of Jews'. There were 6 concentration camps in Estonia where Jews from Europe were deported to and killed. Everyone has their own pain [but] these things cannot be compared."

I asked him how his Jewish mother survived and he explained that

"She was evacuated. In 1944 she came back. My grandmothers, three sisters and one brother were killed in concentration camps. My grandfather was in Vorkuta, in Russia, for 14 years. 14 years! But survived and died in 1982. That's why SS uniforms are much more frightening to me! And there are questions on which we never argue!"

On our way out he provided an example of Estonia's non-sensitive dealing with the genocide of Jews:

"In the textbook there are two pages on the Holocaust. At the end a table gives the figures of how many Jews have been killed in various European States. Estonia is not listed in the table. At the end there is a question 'please find out how many Jews have been killed in Estonia.' How can a pupil from the secondary school discover this number?"⁷⁹

1.4. When private memory goes public – fisticuffs over monuments

Not all the privately held counter-memories that resurfaced in the public discourse of newly independent Estonia became part of the public memory or official history. The memory of the veterans who fought in the German army (and the commemoration of those Estonian soldiers who fell in the German army) is an example of an unofficial account that became part of the public memory, but was then once again pushed back into the private sphere.⁸⁰

During the Soviet period, narratives of fighting side-by-side with the Germans against the Red Army were passed on as essentially unquestioned heroic stories of national resistance in the private family realm of many Estonian families. Nelli's father fought in the German army, and left her and her mother behind when he fled Estonia in 1944. The official version held to by Nelli's family was that he went missing.⁸¹

Simon explained about the stories at his home:

"Of course I asked how it was in the [Second World] War and my father told me stories which were lies, because he wanted to fight for the Germans, but he was not taken [because] he was too young, and he was upset about it. Even

when he was 50 years old, he told me stories about his time in the German army.”⁸²

Earlier it was mentioned that a different ‘regional logic’ prevails in those East European societies, which experienced both the Nazi occupation and the Soviet regime. In his speech at the conference on “Crimes of Communism” in 2000, Sarv’s recollections on the situation of Estonians in early 1944 reflect this specific Estonian reading of the past:

“In order to obtain weapons, [Estonian] men were forced to fight in German uniform (...), but they considered themselves an Estonian army. They had managed to gain the right to wear a coat of arms with the colours of the Estonian national flag on their sleeves. In February, Estonian SS-fighters removed the SS symbols from their collar without authorisation and replaced these with the emblem of the Estonian Cross of Freedom. (...) Our main enemy, the Soviet Union, was about to invade Estonia, once again aiming to destroy our nation: so the War had become our own War” (Sarv 2000: 36).

Oskar related that his father and both his uncles fought in the German army. In response to the question “whether his father joined the German army voluntarily”, he clarified:

“To fight against Russians of course! You know pretty well that Germans had been our historical enemy and we Estonians didn’t like them very much. But only one year, 1940 – 41, made us love the Germans so much and greet them as ‘liberators’. Nazis as ‘liberators’, isn’t it awful? But it only gives you an idea what the communist occupation had been like. Not that we are Nazis or Nazi-minded, no, never!”⁸³

Oskar insisted that they did not expressly fight *for* the Germans or on the German side, but that they had no other choice. This is the line of argument the veterans themselves take. Ilmar Haalviste, a veteran of the Waffen SS, exemplified this specific Estonian standpoint when he stated: “At the end of the day there was no right or wrong side. The War was thrust upon us. We were on our side, defending our homes” (BBC News Week, 09.05.05). Veterans of the Red Army in Russia vehemently deny this claim (Itar-Tass, 27.04.05).

The Estonian exile, Illar recalled how he chose a third way:

“I fled to Finland, as did many others of my age. We wanted to fight against our Russian enemy, but not in the German army. There we formed our own regiment on foot, the so-called I R 200. I then came back to Estonia in 1944, only to leave again via Finland to Sweden, where I arrived in September 1945.”⁸⁴

More contemporary eye witness accounts of the German occupation

In the interview with Oskar’s father Urmas, born in 1926, he related that he got conscripted in 1944 and worked in close proximity to the Klooga concentration camp:

“The concentration camp was there as well. Yes, I saw Jews there. They were not from Estonia. They came from Poland (...) well dressed, very pretty women. (...) Yes, but, we heard this: how they got shot in September 1944. No, we did not hear it. I know it, because we saw it. This was a *Sonderkommando* that came. And this was the reason why I did not want to go to Germany. I was in Klooga then. The camp was evacuated to Paldiksi. I ran and drove back to Tallinn. And on the 22nd of September [1944], when the Russians came, I was in Tallinn still in German uniform.”⁸⁵

Urmas is the first to mention the Gypsy community of Laiuse, as they had their main base close to where he had been brought up. He had witnessed their deportation, and displayed regret that they had all been liquidated during the German occupation. Compared to the Gypsies, he remarked:

“In the year 1940 - 41 many Jews, more than Estonians and Russians, participated in the KGB and the destruction battalions. (...) Somebody told me: ‘we shall fear the Jews more than the Russians’. That means that the Jews are our enemy, even more so than the Russians.”⁸⁶

When asked who disseminated such ideas, he replied: “This was some oral information. All knew it. Many Jews were deported by the Soviets [in 1941], but very many others were in support of the Soviets at the time, which means that they were against Estonians.”⁸⁷

Vilma, born 1921, told me that she knew of the concentration camp at Klooga since they had their summerhouse close by, although she did not have a full picture of the extent of the Holocaust then. She also recalled the days in September 1944 when the camp was liquidated: “I just came from Tallinn to our summerhouse, and I smelled this terrible smell. I did not see it, but I smelled this terrible smell and I can’t forget this terrible stench.” Vilma conceded that there were Estonians who worked for the German organs but that they were few in number. She also stated unequivocally that there had not been any anti-Semitism or pogroms in Estonia before these events.⁸⁸

In response to the question of what he knew of the Holocaust in Estonia, Illar similarly stressed that historically there had not been any anti-Jewish sentiments in Estonia. The whole complexity becomes apparent in an anecdote he then remembered: “When the Germans arrived, he [*the co-student Karl Linnas – the author*] came up to me, giggling somewhat [and saying that] ‘now I am a chief of a Jewish Camp’.” Illar then harked back to an event of the first Soviet occupation:

“He was a doctor [of philosophy], Leopold Silberstein, a Jew from Czechoslovakia, (...) [who] was very nice. (...) At one point Karl Linnas suggested inviting him to a restaurant. (...) Linnas, me and another friend, we [all] sat down in a small restaurant and ate *Soljanka* discussing politics. And all of us came to the same conclusion that communism is a good ideology but

essentially impracticable. And then Leopold Silberstein was killed. I don't know if it was the German SD or the Estonian [SD or Sipo].”⁸⁹

In his conclusion Illar is more reflective than the majority of Estonians who did not emigrate: “The Russian terror was really horrible, but the same is true for the reaction to it or the revenge for it.” He added: “They now try to blame all Estonians, but things occurred that were not nice, that one cannot defend or undo. Absolutely not!”⁹⁰

The memorial stone in Pärnu

In July 2002 a privately-funded memorial stone depicting an Estonian soldier in Waffen SS uniform was put up at the sea resort town of Pärnu. After the memorial had attracted a negative response from the national government, the memorial was removed and town officials ordered its redesign and a replacement of the inscription, that originally read “to all Estonian soldiers who fell in the Second World War to liberate their homeland and to free Europe in 1940 - 45” (*BNS*, 03.06.04; *Agence France-Presse*, 25. – 31.07.02: 3, O’Connell 31.08.03).⁹¹ The ‘amateur historian’ Leo Tammiksaar, born in 1962, who has run an organisation called the ‘Estonian SS Legion Museum’ (Est., *Eesti SS Leegioni Muuseum*) since the early 1990s, was behind the memorial (Gunter 10.06.04). To infer from the original inscription and Tammiksaar’s statements in newspaper interviews, his understanding is that the Estonian SS soldiers prevented the Red Army from occupying all of Europe.⁹²

Continuation: the Lihula controversy

The Pärnu monument was altered and once more erected in the Estonian village cemetery of Lihula in August 2004. The local authorities and about 2000 people who witnessed the unveiling ceremony wanted (in the words of the former dissident and historian Tiit Madisson, major of the Lihula parish) “to honour those who chose the lesser evil” (*BBC News World Edition*, 20.08.04.). Whereas the monument still depicts an Estonian soldier in a German uniform, the altered inscription now is “to the Estonian men who fought in 1940 – 45 against Bolshevism and for the restoration of Estonian independence” (Gunter 09.09.04). A fortnight after its inauguration police forces removed the monument in the face of an enraged, stone-throwing crowd of several hundred.⁹³ After the removal only the base of the memorial was left, where a simple plate was installed, reading: “at this place the monument for the Estonian men used to stand 20.08.04 – 02.09.04” (Kolb 27.04.05). The national government maintained

that it is not appropriate “to build a monument that may be interpreted as an attempt to commemorate totalitarian regimes that had occupied Estonia” (*TBT*, 02.09.04). The announcement of the Estonian Foreign Minister Kristiina Ojuland expressed a similar view:

“Estonia must not isolate itself from the international community and damage its reputation. (...) Local inappropriate action often results in very serious and far reaching international consequences. (...) Estonia (...) acknowledges the need to commemorate the fallen. This must be done in a manner that does not bring forth past evils to poison the future” (Ojuland 03.09.04.).

At the same time the Estonian government offered its cooperation in establishing a more apposite memorial (*TBT*, 02.09.04). In a general response to the fisticuffs over the monument in Lihula, they planned to form yet another commission of ministers to decide on the official representation of Estonian contemporary history (Gunter 01.11.04; Kolb 27.04.05).

The summer of 2004

On July 6, 2004 about 1,500 Estonian veterans commemorated the 60th anniversary of the battles against the Soviet army. This public annual celebration in Tallinn has been organised by the ‘Estonian Freedom Fighters Association’ since the early ‘90s (Shafir 22.07.04).⁹⁴ Over the course of the celebration, the Estonian government was pressed to give those Estonians who fought against the Soviet occupation the national status of ‘Freedom Fighters’, equal to that of the veterans of the War of Independence, for their claim to have fought for Estonia’s freedom and democracy. In their appeal the former veterans sought the protection of the Estonian State against accusations from Russian and Jewish organisations that they were Fascist in outlook (Staff and wire reports 05.08.04).⁹⁵ During that summer the ‘Estonian Freedom Fighters Association’ planned to install a monument in the district of Maarjamäe (located on the outskirts of Tallinn), which was to include the names of 16 Estonian units who fought as part of the Wehrmacht and a map indicating the battle sites of SS units against the Soviet army (*Jerusalem Post*, 22.05.04). In April 2005 the government decided against the unveiling of the monument, originally planned for May 8, 2005 (*Itar-Tass*, 27.04.05).⁹⁶

Some concluding remarks

In the course of an increasing orientation towards Western Europe, the specific Estonian interpretation of the events of the Second World War clashed with the interpretive framework

underlying the Western discourse on the topic.⁹⁷ It can be concluded that, compared to the early and mid – ‘90s, a reorientation took place in the Estonian public in the late ‘90s that no longer allowed the veterans any public space for their commemoration (Seaver & Rooväli 23.07.02; Seaver & Ojakivi 24.07.02). Consequently, the odd situation occurred that the individual memories of Estonians who had fought in the German army were once more confined to the private sphere. The battles over the monument are in fact battles between contradictory frameworks of interpretation (i.e. the specific Estonian logic, the Western interpretation of the Second World War, and lastly the Russian or Soviet view of the past). The official canon that describes *how* to remember the fallen remains unresolved; nor is it decided whether the fallen on *all* warring sides shall be honoured or just selected groups.

Brüggemann states that in the late ‘90s, for the majority of the political elite in post-Soviet Estonia, history turned into a burden. Whereas the older generation feared revelations from their past involvement with the previous regime, the younger equated history with conflict they wanted to avoid (Brüggemann 2001: 813, 819). His assessment is pertinent to the examples given in this section. Another case is the June 26, 1999 reburial of Alfons Rebane, a Forest Brother and later a commander of the Estonian Legion. Although the Estonian government contributed (financially) towards a reburial ceremony in full military honours, only two MPs and the commander of the Estonian Defense Forces attended the occasion. Most representatives of the Estonian government may have feared international criticism and thus avoided a public appearance (Huang 05.07.99).

However, Brüggemann’s contention that historical debates in Estonia are taking place far from the public, and that differences in interpretation of historical reality are no longer of great public interest or of importance for the national identification, needs to be reconsidered in the light of the ‘Lihula controversy’ and the row over historical interpretations connected to the 60th anniversary of the end of the Second World War.

2. Cui Bono? A typology of the public uses of history in Estonia

It is in the public sphere that the different societal groups attempt to gain recognition for their individual memories (or for certain group memories). I see the different public uses of history outlined below as part of the codification of collective memories in the public sphere (i.e. the politics of memory). This section provides a taxonomy of the ways in which history has been appropriated in Soviet and post-Soviet Estonia (based on my discussion in this and the preceding Chapter).⁹⁸ This is an attempt to reduce complexity, while being aware that the list

is far from complete. Also, this is not meant to cement dichotomies, but rather to endow the reader with some ‘food for thought’.

My starting point is Karlsson’s basic scheme of the various ‘uses’ of history, to which I add the ‘emblematic’ dimension of history and the category of ‘producer’ (as separate from ‘user’) in the process of ‘history or knowledge production’ (Wertsch 1994: 249).⁹⁹ The term ‘user’ designates intermediaries such as politicians and teachers, disseminating historical facts, as well as the wider audience of consumers (e.g. newspaper readership, students). The term ‘use’ implies that, alongside of an ethically and morally decent way of utilising history, its misuses or abuses exist as well. However, ‘uses of history’ cannot be equated with manipulation or deception *per se*. This is intimately connected to the question of principles, rules, and standards of ‘history production’, and to whose or what end historical facts are employed. Once again, the concept of ‘historical culture’ includes both processes of ‘history production’ and the moral standards operative in the respective society (Todorov 1996: 15; Karlsson 2003: 42 f.).

Lastly, I introduce the category of a private and a public sphere in the taxonomy. In societies that experienced long-term foreign rule (and consequently a deepened division into a public and a private sphere), some dimensions of history are more confined to the private sphere as compared to the public discourses about the past in Western democratic societies.

7.1. *Figure VII: Taxonomy of the various public uses of history*

Purpose	Dimension	User	Producer	Function	Sphere
1 Rediscovery, Re- construction	Scientific use, cognitive, knowledge- based	Historians	Historians	Verification, Falsification, Interpretation	Scientific domain (not public)
2 To forget	Non-use	Large segments of society, political elite	Historians, Intellectuals	Legitimising	All
3 Rediscovery	Moral, Ethical	Large segments of society, political elite	Historians, intellectuals, and others	Restoration, Rehabilitation, Legitimising	All

4	To remember	Emblematic use	Political elite	Special interest groups	Legitimising	Public sphere
5	National regeneration	Ideological	Political elite (e.g. national leaders)	Historians, Intellectuals	Restoration, Rehabilitation, Legitimising	Public sphere
6	Construction	Political, Pedagogical, Prescriptive	All	Historians, Intellectuals	Rationalising, Legitimising	Public sphere
7	<i>"To remember in order not to forget"</i>	Existential	All	All	(Group-) identification, Orientation	At times exclusively private sphere
8	To remember	Aesthetic, Emotional-affective	All	Historians, Intellectuals, Artists	(Group-) Identification, Orientation, Restoration, Rehabilitation, Legitimising	Public sphere

'Scientific' dimension

1) The 'scientific' dimension refers to the professional historian as user and producer of objective historical research, distinct from the wider public or political sphere. Accordingly, Gallerano holds that the public use of history is "all that developed outside of the domain of scientific research in its strictest sense, outside the history of historians which is usually written by scholars and intended for a very limited segment of the population." Thus, all that does not fall under this 'scientific' dimension of history falls under its public use instead (Gallerano 1994: 85).¹⁰⁰ However, the earlier discussion on national history writing and 'ethno-historians' emphasised that the scientific domain does not exist as separate from other ideological and political currents of the respective society.¹⁰¹ The Estonian SSR is an example of a society that experienced an all-pervasive 'scientific' dimension in their historical culture. On the other hand, historical research can function as a counter-weight for any 'historical absolutism'; therefore it is feared by regimes, and attempts are made to restrict and control it (Karlsson 2002; Todorov 1996: 12).

Taboo, 'non-use' of history

2) The 'non-use' of history (e.g. censoring and silencing of taboo topics) was much employed by the ruling elites during the Soviet period.¹⁰² 'Non-use' is a successful strategy in future-orientated societies, such as socialist societies, where the legitimacy of the state (or of the

political elite) is derived not from history, but built on the notion that the existing system is most commendable (Karlsson 2001: 8).

Adapting the distinction in Lèvi-Stauss' work, Jan Assmann holds that societies have both 'hot' and 'cold' cultural options at their disposal (Lèvi-Stauss in Assmann 1997: 68 f); 'cold' strategies are system-reinforcing, whereas 'hot' options stand for heated political debate and eventually change. When 'cold' strategies outweigh, we speak of a rigid or even totalitarian political system in which social institutions effectively inhibit change and *certain* memories are 'frozen' and merely reproduced. A similar metaphor is used by Estonians when describing the 'years of dependence' as being "frozen out of history" (Woods 1999: 275).¹⁰³

Moral dimension

3) The moral dimension of history is based on past insults, and can be found in the endeavour of the political elite to restore or rehabilitate 'historical wrongs'. Hallik points to the moral use of history as part of the nationalising policies in Estonia during the early 1990s as compensation for 'historical wrongs' committed during the Soviet period (Hallik 2002: 68).¹⁰⁴ The narrative of the 'white ship', the prominent metaphor of disillusionment discussed before, falls under this type of public use of history. In the public discourse surrounding Estonia's accession into the EU, the narrative of "being wronged by history" appeared in moralising arguments. It was stated that Western Europe holds a moral responsibility towards Estonia.¹⁰⁵ A further example of the moral use of history was the wider public response to *glasnost* in Estonia and the former Soviet Union, when many thousands of private stories about discrimination and repression during Stalinism were exposed (Karlsson 1998:16).¹⁰⁶

'Emblematic' use

4) At times, the moral use of history can be identified as 'emblematic' (Benjamin 1991).¹⁰⁷ This is the case when the discussion of certain historical facts remains mostly on the surface. For instance, it can be said that a fundamental settlement with the Soviet legacy through 'lustration' or a 'Truth Commission' has not been achieved in post-Soviet Estonia. Hence, most attempts in this direction can be labelled 'emblematic'. Another example is the historical fact of the mass-deportations, which are recalled in public to cement the ethnic Estonians' status of victimhood, while it appears that the deportees themselves lack much of a public voice in post-Soviet Estonia (Anepaio 2002). A further example of the 'emblematic' use of

history in Estonia is the recently introduced January 27 'Holocaust Day', which lacks meaning for most pupils in Estonian schools since the Holocaust plays such a minor part in most family narratives or in the official narrative.¹⁰⁸

Ideological dimension

5) The use of history by intellectuals for a national purpose can be defined as the ideological dimension of history. This 'ideological take' on history was prevalent in the programme of the Estonian People's Front, mobilising mass-support for Estonia's independence, and it informed the legislation in Estonia of the early '90s.¹⁰⁹

What then is the difference between the 'production of history' and that of ideology, when the producers are in each case intellectuals who have to draw up a meaningful, coherent picture of the past? I concur with Karlsson, who contends that ideologues invent some or all of their historical construction, while professional historians aim to anchor their constructions in historical evidence (Karlsson 2002: 158). Both the ideological and the moral dimensions of history are linked to ideas of absolute 'Truth'. Here, history is not a gradually evolving process but a story of mistakes that need rectifying.¹¹⁰

Political dimension

6) The political dimension (as illustrated by the work of the Estonian Occupation Museum or the 'commission') denotes the rhetorically convincing use of historical arguments to tackle or attack existing socio-political problems, e.g. the reintegration into an international community of nations.¹¹¹ In this way, historical arguments are employed in a comparative, metaphorical way (often taken out of a different context). An overbearing political dimension translates into an inflationary use of historical arguments in the political arena, as can be seen in political propaganda employed at the expense of historical 'Truth'.¹¹² This highlights the fact that history and politics cannot be separated neatly; and for this reason, Gallerano insists that "history is used above all as an instrument of the day-to-day political battle" (Gallerano 1994: 100).

'Existential' dimension

7) At all times, history plays a pertinent role for the identity of a community. It can be noted that the existential dimension of history is more pronounced among groups that have been strengthened in their identity due to external pressure or inter-ethnic conflict. When a society is facing external or internal pressures of cultural homogenisation, the existential use of history is confined to the private sphere as counter-history.¹¹³ Many of my respondents argued that the SU had in fact 'helped' to preserve the Estonian identity.¹¹⁴ But the existential use of history can also be employed in the public sphere, as has been the case of the Estonian independence movement. The example of the memorial monument illustrated how the battles over historical interpretation are heated and fierce in Estonia up to this day, as they are closely linked to questions of identity.

'Aesthetic' dimension

8) An example of the aesthetic use of history can be found in the commemoration of the national day of mourning on the 14th of June, when the Estonian flag is flown at half-mast on all public and many private buildings, in remembrance of the victims of the mass-deportations of 1941 (and 1949). During a visit, I experienced an almost omnipresent silence (and silent accusation) that day. The national flag in this instance really functions as a boundary between Estonians and the Russian-speaking community (as representatives of the 'perpetrators'). Not just for the post-Soviet states, as Karlsson remarks, but in fact for all modern nation states, the aesthetic dimension manifested in public celebrations can be identified as crucial (Karlsson 1998: 24; Mosse 1993).

Some concluding remarks

As stated at the outset, all these differentiations are ideal typical, since in practice all dimensions overlap in various ways.

Whereas the Soviet regime employed censorship as a 'system-enforcing' 'cold' strategy, the oppositional movement in Soviet Estonia drew on the 'existential' dimension of history as a 'hot' strategy, which ultimately aided the socio-political transition. Soviet societies all saw an overbearing 'scientific', ideological and political dimension in their historical culture. While the ideological and political dimensions of history are always employed to claim and

legitimise political power, the Estonian RR also drew on a moral use of history until independence was consolidated. In more recent years the political elite in Estonia utilised the ‘emblematic’ dimension of history with respect to the memories of former deportees or the veterans. While societies have a whole range of ‘hot’ and ‘cold’ cultural options at their disposal, what changes is the *ratio* with which these different dimensions are employed.

3. Chapter summary

This Chapter discussed some of the central problems that occur in finding an official canon for the collective memories in post-Soviet Estonia (i.e. in the politics of memory). Particular consideration has been given to the question of *how* the Estonian society comes to terms with its Soviet legacy, i.e. with issues of complicity and collaboration with the Soviet regime as well as the trauma inflicted on the Estonian society by Soviet terror. The case of the Estonian veterans, who had fought in the German army and are presently demanding official rehabilitation, was elucidated. Then the example of the disputed monument for the Estonian SS Legion brought to light how counter-memories can enter into the official representation of the past, but can then be pushed back into the private sphere once the official interpretive framework changes. Chapter Seven identified eight different uses of history in a systematic taxonomy. The description of the Estonian Occupation Museum provided a case in point of the political use of history and the quagmires that historical comparisons so often entail (e.g.. equating the Holocaust with the mass-deportations of Estonians in 1941 and 1949); whereas the Estonian commission exemplifies the ‘emblematic’ use of the past. I like to conclude that it really is that intersection of ethnic and political concerns in Estonia today which makes the codification of an official memory and any attempts (public or academic) to deal with the recent past so complex.

Endnotes of Chapter VII:

¹ The Estonian Occupation Museum and the commission did not generate public dispute, but discussing them in the interviews often evoked strong opinions, since both institutions are connected to contentious issues of indigenous collaboration with the Soviet and Nazi occupying powers and the claim for Estonia’s status of sole victimhood.

² ‘Historical culture’ includes every articulation and contestation of ‘historical consciousness’ and all the ways in which ‘historical memory’ is processed in the daily life of a society (Rüsen & Jäger 2001: 399; cf. Rüsen, 1994: 213; cf. Rüsen & Gütter & Füssmann 1994: 3 – 26). Rüsen distinguishes historical culture, into “its cognitive dimension, where the experience of the past is interpreted, the political dimension, where historical knowledge plays a role in the struggle for power, by establishing, legitimising and criticising political domination, and the aesthetic dimension, where the forces of images and

rhetoric move the human mind in its understanding of the world and in its relationship to itself" (Rüsén & Pok & Scherrer 2002: 9 f); see Chapter One.

³ Ilmjärv 1999, his earlier book on the Estonian orientation towards the German Reich in the mid - 30s also elicited controversy, see Ilmjärv 1993. The *Postimees* is one of Estonia's biggest dailies.

⁴ Ilmjärv argues that the Soviets wanted to influence political developments in Estonia through Päts as their middleman; because of this, they supported him in the presidential elections and backed his *coup-de-etat* in 1934; see Chapter Three.

⁵ Another taboo question is why Päts did not revert to armed resistance at the Soviet invasion in 1940 (such as Finland did); this is connected to issues of fatalism, defeatism and resignation. See Chapter Three.

⁶ In this context 'riding the tiger' refers to the strategy of accommodation with the foreign power for the sake of national survival. In Lithuania and Latvia similar allegations against Antanas Smetona and Karlis Ulmais respectively for having had 'consultations' with the Soviet embassies surfaced.

⁷ Oskar, interview, Tallinn 01.10.03.

⁸ Henrik, interview, London, 30.3.03, 20. - 21.4.03.

⁹ Hanneleen, interview, Tallinn, 13.06.02.

¹⁰ Kivirähk's attitude is highly cynical, as he describes the Estonians complying with the Soviet system during the day but cursing the state for all ills over a glass of schnapps in private. I identify this social strategy as 'cynical distancing'.

¹¹ Simon, interview, Tallinn, 07.06.02.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Nora, interview, Tallinn, 08.10.03.

¹⁴ Iivo, interview Uppsala 17.07.02, transl. from German.

¹⁵ Juhani, interview, Tallinn, 26.09.03. This goes back to the principle of 'non-recognition' of the *de jure* Soviet occupation of the Baltic States adapted by many Western democracies; i.e. if you travelled directly to Estonia, you breached the principle of non-recognition.

¹⁶ To put it differently, each individual family was faced with this challenge, but certainly not all decided to discuss the past openly, instead they remained silent about it (i.e. a more or less vivid family memory).

¹⁷ Vilhelm, interview, Tallinn, 12.06.02, transl. from German.

¹⁸ Paula, interview, Tallinn, 09.10.03.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Paula repeats the expression of 'not actualising' reality (i.e. the actual state of things) many times; and that she did not (or could not) realise the nature of the system until the early 1960s.

²¹ *Ibid.*; according to her, one incentive for the accommodation with the Soviet system was the fact that Estonians had a higher living standard when compared to Georgians or Russians.

²² This meant engaging in double-standards and is a feature found in many interviews with respondents of that generational context, e.g. Paula (interview, Tallinn, 09.10.03), Ülle-Mai (interview, Tallinn, 08.06.02), and Nelli (interview, Tallinn, 05.10.03).

²³ Ülle-Mai, interview, Tallinn, 08.06.02.

²⁴ The common slogan of "people had to live" quoted earlier and the overall tenor of the interviews with Hanneleen (interview, Tallinn, 13.6.02), Paula (interview, Tallinn, 09.10.03), and Nora (interview, Tallinn, 08.10.03).

²⁵ Ülle-Mai, interview, Tallinn, 08.06.02. A respondent of the G 4 context remarked in the interview that if the 'Soviet occupation' had not ended in 1991 she is uncertain whether she might interpret her childhood and life differently; Pille, interview, Tallinn 06.10.03.

²⁶ The Kistler Ritso Estonian Foundation (KRES) has been working on the projects since 1992 and Lennart Meri has been the patron.

²⁷ It remains somewhat ambiguous whether by 'Estonians' all the inhabitants of the territory of the Estonian Republic are signified or whether 'Estonian' is confined to Estonian citizens only, which would exclude POWs or Jews etc. deported to Estonia. A special exhibition of parts of the Estonian Occupation Museum could be seen in Berlin in 2002 ("Kunst und Gebrauchsgegenstände aus sowjetischen Lagern, Informations- und Dokumentationszentrum der Bundesbeauftragten für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen DDR, Abteilung Bildung und Forschung, 27.08. - 30.10.02); for the virtual Estonian Occupation museum, see www.okupatsioon.ee

²⁸ It connects back to the narrative of victimhood which leaves little space for another people's suffering (hierarchy of victimhood) and the strategy of historical whitewashing both expounded in Chapter Four.

²⁹ Namely the work of Efraim Zuroff (head of the Jerusalem office of the Simon Wiesenthal Centre), pressure from Russia and pressure applied to Estonia in the course of the EU and NATO accession process.

³⁰ The museum convened conferences on questions of methodology and periodisation of the recent past and employed researchers to investigate the role of Soviet institutions in Estonia, such as the organisational structure of the CC of the ECP etc.

³¹ Videos 1 - 7 titled "Occupation in the Recent history of Estonia 1940 - 91": 1) First Red Year; 2) War and the German Years; 3) Stalin's Era 1944 - 50; 4) Stalinist Era 1950 - 56; 5) The Sixties 1956 - 68; 6) Stagnation 1968 - 87; 7) Liberation.

³² Simon, interview, Tallinn, 07.06.02. The interview was conducted before the Estonian Occupation Museum was inaugurated.

³³ The Lithuanian KGB Museum is located in the Cellars of the former KGB head quarter. The Institute of National Remembrance (*Instytut Pamięci Narodowej*, IPN) in Warsaw had existed prior to 1998, but under a different name.

³⁴ So far the ERPB has published four name register books (and provides an electronic database on 115,000 victims of repression): Political Arrests in Estonia 1940 - 88; Political Arrests in Estonia under Soviet Occupation; Deportation from Estonia to Russia. Deportation in March 1949; and Deportation from Estonia to Russia. June deportation in 1941 and deportations in 1940 - 53. There are works planned on the so-called 'Freedom Fighters'; on those forcibly mobilised into Russian Labour Battalions; on Estonian refugees; on the expropriation; and on the fate of Estonians in Russia.

³⁵ I.e. mainly the Soviet occupations. This is also the overall tenor of a publication displayed at the Estonian Occupation Museum, which contains a collection of speeches by Mart Laar, Tunne Kelam, Enn Sarv et al, held at an International Conference on “the Crimes of Communism” Tallinn, June 14, 2000.

³⁶ Hanneleen, interview, Tallinn, 13.06.02.

³⁷ The statement of Gregory Krupnikov, co-chair of the Latvian-Jewish Community, is significant here: “being Jewish or Gypsy (and an alleged Communist, one should add) meant 100% death in the Nazi occupied territories”; however, this was not the case for ethnic Estonians under all three occupations (Krupnikov in: Cengel, 08.07.99; *Osteuropa* 1/2000: A 5- A 6); see section 1.3.

³⁸ Although there were three different occupations between 1940 - 91, the statement speaks of ‘the occupation regime’ in the singular.

³⁹ Nelli, interview, Tallinn, 05.10.03.

⁴⁰ Ibid; E.g. Arnold Rüütel, President of Estonia since 2001, had been secretary of agriculture to the CC of the ECP, then deputy Prime Minister of the ESSR between 1978 – 83, and from 1983 – 92 chairman of the Supreme Council (TBT, 27.09.01). All leading politicians had to take a so-called ‘oath of conscience’ stating that they never worked for a foreign secret service, namely the KGB. But since the operational files are missing it is impossible to corroborate or dismiss any allegations made against leading politicians. This is generally unsettling for the political life of post-Soviet Estonia and for academic research into the recent past, so that the KGB acquires an apocryphal character (Jürjo 23.10.98).

⁴¹ Nelli, interview, Tallinn, 05.10.03.

⁴² Oskar, interview, Tallinn, 01.10.03.

⁴³ These legal procedures of lustration took place earlier in neighboring Latvia and Lithuania. On January 22, 1999, a court in Haapsalu (Estonia) set a precedent when an ex-Soviet Security Officer, who had ordered the deportation of 23 families to Siberia in 1949, was convicted. Johannes Klaassepp, then 78, was given an eight-years suspended sentence with two years of probation (Albrighton 28.01.99, 11.02.99). In October 2002 the Tallinn city court found Juri Karpov, a former Soviet security service officer, guilty of deporting 41 Estonian residents to Siberia in March 1949. Due to his advanced age his sentence was turned into a three-year probationary period (Stepanov 07.11.02).

⁴⁴ Oskar, interview, Tallinn, 01.10.03.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Kalev, interview, Tartu, 03.06.02.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ In the so-called ‘Summer War’ in the *interim*, before the Germans fully occupied the country, up to 6000 ethnic Estonians who were accused of membership in the destruction battalions or alleged communist sympathisers were executed (often together with their families) at the hands of the OK in acts of revenge for the preceding Soviet year.

⁵⁰ Vilhelm, Tallinn, 12.06.02.

⁵¹ Nelli, interview, Tallinn, 05.10.03.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ When communicating to me (in English) Estonians used the term ‘deporters’ when referring to Estonians who deported their fellow citizens: Therefore I adopted the term although it does not exist in English.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Oskar, interview, Tallinn, 01.10.03.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ See the reprographic depicting the entrance hall of the Estonian Occupation Museum.

⁵⁸ Cf. Arendt 1986; Nolte, in Diner 1988; Beyrau 2000; Creuzberger & Mannteufel: 2000.

⁵⁹ In response to the Latvian President Vaira Vike-Freiberga’s speech at the International Forum on Preventing Genocide in Stockholm 2004, Zuroff admonishes that some political leaders utilise the destruction of the European Jewry as background to speak about other tragedies, such as communist crimes. He opines that the mass-deportations of Latvians were not a case of genocide, and warns of a false symmetry that upgrades communist crimes by placing them on equal footing with the Holocaust. He also criticises that Vike-Freiberga omitted the Latvian participation in Nazi crimes and the failure of Baltic leaders to punish those Nazi war criminals who are still alive (Zuroff 19.02.04, 04.03.04). In the interview Vilhelm refers to the “great Baltic deportations” as the “Baltic Holocaust” (Vilhelm, interview, Tallinn, 12.06.02).

⁶⁰ Sarv: “the common understanding was that the Germans were our enemy number two” (Sarv 2000: 36), whereas the Soviets are seen as the oppressor number one. This is due to the fact that the Soviet occupation lasted much longer, to the chronology of historical events, and lastly due to the fact that during the German occupation ethnic Estonians were not under threat, but only Jews, Roma, mentally retarded, so-called antisocial elements, and alleged Communists (this position corresponds with the interview conducted with ethnic Estonians especially with those of the older generation).

⁶¹ The clear focus on an international public is also reflected by the international membership of the commission’s board with politicians and scholars from Germany, the UK, Finland, Denmark and Arsenij Rosinsky (head of *Memorial*) for Russia. Meri’s initiative was supported by leading Jewish organisations in the US, which is reflected in the person of Nicholas Lane, Chairman of the IR commission of the American-Jewish Committee, also member of the commission’s board. Similar commissions were set up in Latvia and Lithuania, also in 1998.

⁶² See www.historycommission.ee (the report on the first Soviet occupation has also been publ.).

⁶³ These actions are specified as rounding up, escorting, guarding, deportations and shootings of local and European Jews, of Roma, and of ethnic Estonians accused of membership in destruction battalions or alleged communist sympathisers, as well as Soviet POWs; see Chapter Three.

⁶⁴ Such as supporting the general mobilisations of Estonian men into the German army.

⁶⁵ The reports stress that 1200 of the 40,000 members of OK were involved in killings.

⁶⁶ See the Commission’s homepage, www.historycommission.ee

⁶⁷ This links back to the pertinent question of the relation between history and morality and the role of historians as judges discussed in Chapter Four.

⁶⁸ Among other things, Mikson had been head of the local OK of the Vonnu district and later vice chief of the political police in the Tallinn-Harju district. He had been an interrogator at the Tartu concentration camp.

⁶⁹ Henri Mannil (member of the Estonian Security Police, 1941 – 43) and Mikhail Groshkow, whom the US Justice Department accuses of assisting in the murder of Jews in the Slutsk ghetto (in Belarus) while serving as an interpreter and interrogator for the Gestapo (Toth 25.07.02, 05.09.02; Gunter 30.08.01).

⁷⁰ The ad had urged anyone with information to call the Estonia Police Board. It was the Security Police that had asked not to print its name and phone number, for they did not offer the reward in the first place. Things got somewhat bizarre when an Estonian man, in response to Zuroff's announcement, sent a letter to the Estonian weekly *Kesknaid*, offering 20,000 USD to anyone with information on Jewish officers of the KGB in the 1940s who were involved in repressions against Estonians (Toth 25.07.02).

⁷¹ In April 2001 Estonia belonged to 'category D' (*Postimees*, 20.04.01: 4); in 2003 Estonia remains in this category, joined by Austria, Finland, France and the UK (*TBT*, 01.05.03; *BNS*, 31.08.03).

⁷² By 'emblematic' I mean an artificial use of history more imposed from above; see section 2.

⁷³ Kangeris at the conference on 'Fremdherrschaft und Kollaboration: Erscheinungsformen in Nordosteuropa 1900 - 50', 13. – 16.11.03, convened by the Nord Ost Institut, Lüneburg, Germany; Anatol Lieven comments on the international pressure exerted on the newly independent Baltic States as early as 1992 (Lieven 1994).

⁷⁴ Meelis Maripuu's paper reads: "the present article is only concerned with the fate of the local Jewish community during the Second World War; while the destiny of those European Jews deported to Estonia in 1942 – 44 is not addressed." Maripuu, "Kollaboration und Widerstand in Estland 1940-44", presented at the conference on "Reichskommissariat Ostland. Collaboration and Resistance during the Holocaust", 18. – 21.04.02, Stockholm & Uppsala, Sweden (publ. in Gaunt & Levine 2004).

⁷⁵ In his article De Thoma states: "the fact that the Soviet occupation did more direct harm in Estonia, however, does not negate the fact that the Holocaust happened here too" (De Thoma 28.05.02). For reasons of sheer numbers the memory of the Holocaust (and indigenous collaboration in the killing of Jews and Gypsies during the Nazi occupation) figures more predominantly in neighboring Lithuania (cf. Bartusevicius & Tauber & Wette 2003). The Lithuanian case is interesting, as the country saw the strongest anti-Soviet armed resistance in the forests; also, the Lithuanians resisted mobilisation into the German army, with the consequence that Lithuanians never had a SS division of their own; largely because Germans did not trust them and they ranked them lower than Estonians and Latvians in racial terms (Myllyniemi 1973, 1979).

⁷⁶ The 25th of March and the 14th of June are National Days of mourning in remembrance of the mass-deportations during the Soviet periods.

⁷⁷ Cf. ZK KPE 1963; Vardys & Misiunas 1978.

⁷⁸ Nicolaij, interview, Tallinn, 08.10.03.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Conversely, the memory of those Estonians who fought in the Estonian Corps (Red Army) was publicly commemorated during the Soviet period, but was pushed to the margins of the Estonian national narrative after 1991. To this day Estonians who fought on the Soviet side are only remembered in the context of the 'Great Patriotic War'.

⁸¹ Nelli, interview, Tallinn, 05.10.03.

⁸² Simon, interview, Tallinn, 07.06.02.

⁸³ Oskar, interview, Tallinn, 01.10.03.

⁸⁴ Illar, interview, Uppsala, 09.07.02, transl. from German. By the summer 1942 many Estonian men fled to Finland to escape mobilisation. About 3,500 of them were conscripted into the Finnish army, and they formed the 200th Infantry Regiment (the so-called 'Finnish Boys'); see Chapter Three.

⁸⁵ Ideas of the so-called 'Judeo-Bolshevik myth', see Chapter Three; Urmas, interview, Tartu, 07.10.03, transl. from German.

⁸⁶ Urmas, interview, Tartu, 07.10.03.

⁸⁷ Ibid; according to the official language at the time, they were "evacuated" by the Soviets.

⁸⁸ Vilma, interview, Tallinn, 11.06.02.

⁸⁹ Illar, interview, Uppsala, 09.07.02.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Inscription in Est: "Kõigile Eesti sõjameestele, kes II vabadussõjas langesid kodumaa ja vaba Euroopa eest 1940 – 1945."

⁹² Tammiksaar said in an interview that the Estonian government removed the memorial because they are all former Communists (O'Connell 31.08.03).

⁹³ The removal unleashed a wave of vandalism against Soviet-built memorials all over the country (Gunter 09.09.04). The World War II memorial commemorating the Victory of the Red Army over Nazi Germany and the Victims of World War II (the so-called 'bronze soldier' in front of the National Library in Tallinn) was vandalised with red paint on the morning of May 9, 2005, the 60th anniversary of 'Victory Day'. Many Estonians had asked that this monument be torn down, as it served as a reminder of five decades of Soviet rule in Estonia (Tanner 09.05.05; From wire reports 15.09.04).

⁹⁴ The 16th of March has been commemorated by the so-called 'Duna Hawks', veterans of the Latvian SS Legion in exile since 1952. This is the date when the two Latvian SS divisions first joined at the Eastern Front (about 115,000 men). Since Latvia's independence in 1991, the 'National Soldiers Association' has organised the annual public march to the Freedom Monument in the centre of Riga. In 1998 fistcuffs occurred between Russians and Latvians during the commemoration; also the commander of the Latvian Defense Force took part in the march and was kicked out from office as a consequence. The march received international criticism, in response to which the Latvian parliament declared the 16th of March a day on which to commemorate *all* Latvian soldiers (i.e. also those who fought on the Soviet side). This however found little approval by veterans or Latvian historians (Birzulis 18.03.99; *Osteuropa* 1/2000: A 1 – A 8). Critics note that members of the notorious 'Arājs Commando' and of the Latvian Police Battalions later became members of the Latvian Legion and were thus spared

from prosecution after the War; which to them permits the commemoration of the veterans. In the heated debates, the Latvian historians' commission recommended adapting November 11, so-called '*Lāčplēsis Day*', to honour *all* Latvian soldiers who fought for Latvia's freedom. This day commemorates the Latvian victory over German and Russian forces during the War of Independence in 1919 (Birzulis 16.03.00). In February 2000 the parliament removed the status of national commemoration from March 16 and Latvian MPs only attended the march as private persons. As in the Estonian case, the question lingers as to how the veterans can publicly commemorate their fallen comrades. Also, the position of the Latvian political elite remains opaque with regard to their interpretation of the events of the Second World War (Lejins 25.02.99; Medearis 18.03.99; Eglitis 18.03.04).

⁹⁵ They pressed the government to assign this category to the Forest Brethren, to those who fought in the battles of 1941 and in the so-called "defensive battles" of 1944, as well as in the post-war resistance (BNS 08.07.04). The veterans' demands are connected to questions of rehabilitation of their status and pride.

⁹⁶ After the German troops withdrew from the city of Narva in April 26, 1944, soldiers of the 20th Division of the Waffen SS (the Estonian Legion) tried to bring the advancing Red Army to a halt at Sinimäe (20 km from Narva). It is to the graves in Sinimäe that Estonian Waffen SS veterans, or Legionaries, come to commemorate their battle on May 8, a day before Victory Day (Stepanov 16.05.02). The Estonian Legion *per se* cannot be termed a criminal organisation, since in 1949 – 50 a UN commission investigated the Estonian and Latvian SS (the so-called Baltic Legions) and found these military units to be neither criminal nor Nazi collaborators. However, among the 16 Estonian units is the 36th Estonian Division of the Waffen SS that the commission had identified as having committed crimes against humanity.

⁹⁷ E.g. on the uniqueness of the Holocaust, see section 1.3. Evidence for a different perception of European history could be found during the 60th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, when the Estonian and Lithuanian leaders did not travel to Moscow for the celebration on the 9th of May. The Latvian president attended the ceremony, using the publicity to demonstrate the Baltic view on the events of the Second World War. Whereas in Western European countries Victory day is celebrated on May 8, Russia still celebrates it on the 9th of May. On May 8, representatives of the Western Allies, Marshall Schukow and General Keitel met in the Soviet headquarters in Berlin. The capitulation was only signed at 12:16 am on May 9, which is why this date is celebrated as the conclusion to the Great Patriotic War; cf. *Financial Times Deutschland*, 07.05.05; Voswinkel, 04.05.05.

⁹⁸ For this purpose I synthesise the theoretical ideas of Rüsen (Rüsen & Jäger 2001: 406), Karlsson, and Gallerano on the different dimensions of history and its 'public uses'. Rüsen however dislikes the term 'uses of history' and prefers to speak of 'modes of recalling or realising the past' instead (*Vergegenwärtigung*) (personal communication, Wolfenbüttel 19.02.05); cf. footnote 44 of Chapter Two.

⁹⁹ See Karlsson 1998: 10 – 28; Karlsson 1999: 57, 218 – 232; Karlsson. & Gerner 2001: 7 f; Karlsson 2002: 145 – 162.

¹⁰⁰ The 'public use' is to a large extent based on the means of mass-communication, and encompasses the use of history in schools, museums, cultural associations, political parties and the like.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Chapter Six.

¹⁰² The 'non-use' dimension is connected to controversial events (taboo issues) defined in Chapter Six. The 'non-use' dimension of history becomes discernible only by contrasting various conflicting accounts of the past with the official history.

¹⁰³ It corresponds with the idea that ethnic nationalism was simply 'frozen' during the time of the Cold War and that it gradually (re-)emerged in the late '80s. Here 'thaw' has been another temperature-related metaphor.

¹⁰⁴ See Chapter Four.

¹⁰⁵ Ilves 04.05.1999; cf. Chapter Six.

¹⁰⁶ E.g. the Estonian people's life history project (Est., *Eesti rahva elulood*) during the '90s in post-Soviet Estonia, see Chapter Six.

¹⁰⁷ I thank Dr. Olav Schroer for this thought.

¹⁰⁸ See section 1.3.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Karlsson 1998; Tismaneanu 1998; on the nationalising policies of the early 1990s in Estonia, see Chapter Four.

¹¹⁰ Ultimately, this is seeing history as a 'metaphysical entity'. But can history be wrong or right? This over-moralisation can also be found in the public discourse on Germany's recent past (I thank Dr. Augusta Dimou for this thought).

¹¹¹ See sections 1.2, 1.3.

¹¹² The concept of '*Geschichtspolitik*' views history as fundamentally political, and focuses on the formation and imposition of historical interpretations and models of identification in the official domain and on the role which political agents and social structures play in these processes (Wolfrum 1999: 13 – 38).

¹¹³ Asked how he learned about history during the 1960s, Ervin replies: "... [it was] everywhere. I have two eyes, two ears, one mouth, one nose. (...) I was interested to understand what was around me; where I come from (...) why I am here? These kind of existential questions and I found people who were interested in findings answers." (Ervin, interview, Tallinn, 02.10.03).

¹¹⁴ Cf. Vilma, interview, Tallinn, 11.06.02; Simon, interview, Tallinn, 07.06.02; Nelli, interview, Tallinn, 05.10.03. Another example of the 'existential' dimension of history in post-Soviet Estonia can be found with the annual Victory Day celebrations by parts of the Russian-speaking community; although greatly pushed to the margins nowadays, it is still a public use of history; cf. Merridale 2001; Kolstø 1996; Stepanov 2002; Chernevych, 2000; Tumarkin 1994; see: section 1.4.

Epilogue:

The Telling of life Stories: Reconstruction of post-Soviet Identities in Estonia

Main findings

In this thesis I have attempted to understand how long-term foreign rule and drastic socio-political changes affected Estonian society. This led me first to a theoretical discussion of the interrelated concepts of collective memory, history, and national identity, as I considered it important to carefully define these terms, which were then used throughout the thesis. My main findings were eight-fold:

First, I ascertained (along the lines of Nietzsche and Halbwachs) that memory is double-sided, i.e. there is a duty to remember as well as to forget in order for a society to function properly; and that collective memory consists of many overlapping and competing group memories which are in conflict over the codification of *what* is the official memory. Furthermore, I discussed that collective memory can enforce identity as much as it restricts it, and that it bears a potential for conflict and change (here, I found Jan Assman's dual concept of collective memory insightful).

Secondly, I realised that it was necessary to go beyond the artificial distinction of myth and history or history and memory, and that Rüsen's inclusive concept of 'historical culture' proved useful in doing so. I established that it is the memory of formative historical events that links national identity with collective memory. Here I came to single out three categories of foundational histories - events of collective suffering and of collective resistance, as well as collective *amnesia* of taboo issues - that constitute the building blocks of Estonian national identity.

Thirdly, from the study of Estonian history it emerged how the role of the 'other', that is, the (Baltic) German and the (Soviet) Russian, figured strongly in the formation of Estonian identity, and that, while the cultural or ethnic aspects of the identity are stressed and well developed, being based on language, shared cultural outlook, and historical experience, the civic or state-bound identity is rather weak.

Fourth, during my fieldwork I understood how collective memory is not only split along ethnic lines in post-Soviet Estonia, but that there are many conflict lines within the Estonian memory as well.

Fifth, I came to look at the different ‘social times’, more specifically at four different ‘generational contexts’ existing among intellectuals in Estonia. From the evidence provided by their self-descriptions it emerged that these different generational contexts are constituted by shared historical experience (memories of formative events), and that ethnicity is one defining factor among others (such as social milieu and political affiliation, etc.). Another important insight was that, based on the specific historical experience, a third generational context exists in Estonia.

Sixth, my research revealed the restrictions historians and history writing were under in Soviet-Estonia, and how liberalisation, the ‘transition’, affected history teaching. I found that historians as teachers or university professors had little leeway to teach a counter-history, and that sites of counter-memory were to be found elsewhere, such as in family memories, fiction, banned literature, dissidents, underground publications, foreign radio stations, Estonian émigré communities, pre-war monuments, the Church, Song festivals, the Estonian language, the memory of armed resistance, and the Estonian countryside. I showed that after 1941 it was up to the initiative of individual history teachers to convey a more critical view of the past; this was often done in small student circles, where the older generation of historians conveyed their views to the young.

Seventh, I discovered that in periods of foreign rule history played an ‘existential’ role for many Estonians; and history experienced a ‘rebirth’ in Estonia when revelations about the past, such as the publication of the secret protocols of the MRP, were made. Such revelations were vital in fuelling political change. I further discerned that it was those historians born in the late 1950s and early ‘60s (G 3) who took a more active political stance from the mid-‘80s onwards, in organisations such as the Estonian Heritage Society.

Eighth, I highlighted how the socio-political ‘transition’ and the logic of the ‘nationalising state’ imposed new constraints on national history writing. Here, I turned to examples of the battle associated with the codification of collective memories in the public sphere of post-Soviet Estonia, introducing a typology of the different dimensions of history in this process.

Rather than provide an easy answer to my research question, I outlined the complexity of collective memories and identities in post-Soviet Estonia. In this conclusion I would like to review the main concepts employed in this thesis.

By and large, theoretical concepts of ‘collective memory’ and ‘national identity’ have been developed in the West European discourse and have not been systematically reassessed (or validated) in the context of societies that underwent long-term foreign rule, or the socialist or communist experience. There are of course exceptions, most notably perhaps the inspiring work of Iwona Irwin-Zarecka on dynamics of collective memory in contemporary Poland (Irwin-Zarecka 1989; Irwin-Zarecka 1994).¹ I argue that several idiosyncrasies (or peculiarities) of Estonian society (and Eastern European societies in general) need to be accounted for, such as the polarisation into the private and the public spheres of remembrance and strategies of cultural hybridisation. Subsequently, these two themes are elaborated further; other traits, such as a long-standing oral tradition (with a trust in oral testimony), an ethnic conception of Estonian nationhood, young democratic state traditions, the psychology of a small nation, complex inter-ethnic relations, the politicisation of historiography, and the distinctive role of intellectuals, have been discussed earlier.

Re-appraisal of the theoretical concept of collective memory

What does the private-public divide of collective memory imply for the interwoven levels of cultural and communicative memory?

I found that communicative memory, which is more flexible (even ephemeral) and adaptable to change, is split just like the private and public spheres of life under foreign rule, into an official and unofficial communicative memory. The communicative memory transmitted (or rather, preserved) within the family realm did not undergo much critical revision (and re-interpretation); consequently it remained largely unchanged, as ‘frozen memory crystals’. A similar preservation of memories occurred among Estonian families in exile. It can be argued that only from the 1980s onwards did the communicative memories begin to emerge from the private sphere and influence the public debate in Estonia (and thus underwent some critical reconsideration).

By contrast, cultural memory, which denotes much slower processes of the collective memory, was less affected by the Soviet regime. However, as new monuments, a new architecture, new festive commemorations, new curricula, and media propaganda (as forms of institutionalised amnesia) were introduced during the Soviet period, these left a mark on the cultural memory as well; particularly on respondents of the second generational context, as they no longer had vivid personal memories of pre-war Estonia as a prominent counter world.

For instance, the fact that the old town of Narva was not rebuilt after 1944 also meant the destruction of the cultural memory of old Narva, which now only continues to exist in the private (communicative and cultural) memories of individuals, the majority of whom no longer inhabit in Narva.²

A graphic example of how private counter-memories can rise into the public sphere after the interpretive frame of the society in question has changed (i.e. after independence had been regained) was presented in the discussion of the disputed monument for the Estonian legionnaires. The example is significant in that it also demonstrates how memories that no longer fit into the official codification of the past are pushed back into the private realm.

Re-assessment of previous definitions of collective identity

Subsequently, I re-examined the concept of collective identity. As has been outlined, life in oppressed societies undergoes a strong polarisation into a public realm (with a censored history disseminated through the education apparatus and political propaganda), and a private realm (with its family memories and clandestine, dissident circles). Sztompka's post-1989 reflections on the 'intangible and imponderable of the socialist mindset' provide useful insight into the effects 'real-existing' socialism had on the deeper levels of society. He states that in societies under Soviet communism the dissociation of the public and the private sphere is the basic founding principle from which all other dichotomies, such as the division of the public and the private sphere of remembrance or hybrid identities, derive (Sztompka 1991: 300). In these societies the public sphere was intensely expanded and ideologically standardised, whereas the private sphere was profoundly curbed. Individuals who wanted to participate in the public sphere (e.g. workplace, *Komsomol*, etc.), had to accept the prescribed 'double talk', although they were fully aware of its *Potemkian* nature (by this I mean the bogus nature of 'real existing' socialism).³ The question that needs to be re-addressed at this point is whether individuals at the time of Soviet occupation experienced this split in their identity, or whether this has only been conceptualised after the interpretive frame has changed. Coping with these "incongruous public and private scripts" (Skultans 1998: 142; cf. Scott 1990) left a profound effect on people's identity not only with regard to the adaptive mechanisms which they appropriated to function in the public sphere, but also because the conflict lines of ruler and ruled, victim and *accomplice*, had been internalised to the extent that they went through each individual (Sztompka 1991).⁴

Ülle-Mai explained to me that the older generational context (G 1) was able to switch consciously between public and private ways of talking; she used the example of a “switchboard” to illustrate her point.⁵ Contrastingly, the second generational context (G 2) had already internalised a double consciousness, so that Ülle-Mai describes them as “fundamentally doubled”; for them both ways of acting co-existed simultaneously, and they were less consciously aware of the divide between the two worlds (i.e. the private family life and work place).⁶ Ülle-Mai says of her own generational context: “We were fundamentally doubled by birth”; she uses the image of a radio broadcasting all stations in chorus.⁷ This metaphor is interesting in that it fits into the historical context of Soviet Estonia, where foreign radio stations played a vital role in the transmission of alternative information. One respondent related how the Soviet authorities attempted to jam the transmission of foreign radio stations after 1979, but that they managed to listen to them despite the jamming. Ervin recalled: “It was painful, but it was possible”;⁸ the last quote may also be applied to characterise the experience of those who adopted a ‘double coconsciousness’.

We can thus speak of different degrees of cultural hybridity as a consequence of the Soviet system. One corollary of the ‘double consciousness’ for people’s (re-) orientation after 1991 was a lack of trust in official institutions and a persisting negative view of the state (Szacki 1994: 106 f). A further effect was the painful reassessment of moral values and re-signification of cultural norms, of what is right and what is wrong, to which many intellectuals (particularly of the second generational context) were submitted after 1991. Ülle-Mai states: “It is now that I began to ask myself what was right and what was wrong. How can I explain, or can I even explain, that certain things were wrong and others were right? Is it possible that both were wrong and right at the same time?”⁹

A third concept, that of cultural hybridity, had been introduced by Homi K. Bhabha in his discussion of post-colonial identities. ‘Hybridity’ signifies the “construction of cultural authority within conditions of political antagonism and inequity” (Bhabha 1996: 58). It describes the (post-) colonial subject, who has partly taken on habits, cultural traits, and the language of the (former) oppressor as interwoven into his own identity structure, resulting in uneasiness.¹⁰ This has been the case for the Estonian identity with regard to the integration or

assimilation of the (Baltic) German and (Soviet) Russian ruling ‘other’, who were often perceived as alien to the Estonian culture.

As has been discussed, the Soviet identity is based on a ‘double consciousness’, and the ‘hybridisation of identity’ is determined by the degree to which the individual was willing to accommodate to the Soviet system. These ‘adaptive mechanisms’ make the national ‘myth of authenticity’ redundant, as long-term occupation creates cultural hybridity, or what the Estonian exile historian Siim referred to as a ‘Soviet Estonian mindset’. This entailed language changes, the introduction of new political concepts, changes in societal values, etc.¹¹ In hindsight, many Estonian intellectuals claim that they maintained their ‘Estonianness’, but there are also those who admit they took on ‘Soviet traits’.¹² It is important to note that according to Bhabha cultural hybridity is not based on adaptation, mimicry, assimilation or collaboration with the (colonial) authority (Bhabha 1994: 38 f, 112 ff, 177f, 185). Instead it is at the ‘ennunciative boundary’ of fixed and therefore limited identifications (such as national identity or ethnicity) where something new begins its presencing. He speaks of the in-between space or the interstitial which can turn into a ‘hybrid site’ of cultural translation and negotiation of that which is incommensurable.

Liminality

At the outset, it was mentioned that what makes the analysis of societies that underwent cataclysmic socio-political change so interesting is that interpretations of the past and of identity compete. In today’s Estonia the reconfiguration of identities and the codification of official memory are far from being consolidated: ‘memory work’, coping with loss, and the regaining of meaning are ongoing processes. Here the concept of ‘liminality’ appears useful and closely connected to the idea of cultural hybridity and the Mannheimian concept of “newly emerging identities.”¹³ The liminal state is characterised by ambiguity, indeterminacy, and a distorted or disoriented self-understanding. Like a ‘hybrid’, a liminary is situated “between and betwixt” the margin and the centre (or the past and the future). He is displaced and in an ambiguous state of limbo, as he no longer belongs to the society of which he was previously a part, but is *not yet* incorporated into another society (Turner 1986: 96 in King 2001); I could find ample examples of this in the life stories in Estonia (and to capture this phenomenon, Bhabha’s thoughts proved to be helpful).¹⁴ King succinctly points out that liminality should not be confused with the marginals, alienated or the disenfranchised of a society (King 2001); likewise my respondents were all part of the society in that they were contributing to the discourse on Estonian history.

A further dimension of ‘cultural hybridity’ in Estonia is the contrast of collectivism and individualism. In social psychology an entire discourse exists on collectivist and individualist aspects in societies. As we have seen for the case of Estonia, there are ‘collectivist traces’ in the Estonian identity as an outcome of the Soviet system as well as of the collective, nationalist values (as promoted in inter-war Estonia) (Lauristin 1997: 40).¹⁵ Realo maintains that the Estonian national myth holds the belief in extreme individualism, and that this is in fact the auto-stereotype (Realo 1998: 21 f).¹⁶ She further suggests that the stress on an Estonian individualism may be exacerbated by the overall attempt to draw a clear line between the Estonians and Russians (e.g. Estonian farmstead, Lutheranism, Western cultural sphere, modernity vs. *kolkhoz*, Orthodoxy, state, Soviet Union, communism); furthermore she concludes that the Estonian identity on the collectivism-individualism scale remains somewhat ambiguous, in that the Estonian culture includes both individualist and collectivist tendencies (Realo 2003: 69). Her study demonstrates that collectivism also carries positive meanings, such as thinking of the common good and teamwork. When mentioned, collectivism was often connected to ‘patriotic efforts’ (such as the peasant uprisings and the War of Independence) (Ibid.: 62). We may be able to draw from this that the old communal values, predominant during the inter-war period, may still be a part of the collective memories in post-Soviet Estonia - although on the question of whether “Estonians are individualists or collectivists”, a majority of 70 % chose the first (Ibid.: 61).

It must be highlighted that the inter-ethnic make-up of Estonian society and the effects of the communist regime produced forms of cultural hybridity unique at least to a post-Soviet setting. We can thus conclude that cultural hybridity has ethno-cultural, socio-political, and ideological roots. It needs to be asserted at this point that hybrid identities exist in all societies as a consequence of colonialism or globalisation and it is not my intention to create a dualism between post-Soviet hybrid identities and homogenous identities in Western Europe.

Moreover, there are some additional findings on life story telling, which I accentuate in the subsequent paragraphs.

A typology of transmission in the life story telling

I turn now to specific findings from the in-depth life story interviews. Confronting respondents with taboo issues and blank spots in their personal stories can be moralising at times, hence I underlined my non-judgmental and impartial position *prior* to conducting an interview. As a matter of fact, we can hardly imagine the choices people living in Estonia faced during the war and post-war years.

There is an entire spectrum of ways to behave under military occupation and/or a totalitarian system. In order to point to the various possible shades of reaction in this situation, it is helpful to think of a scale, with a conformist-pragmatic stance at one end and political or military collaboration at the other (Röhr 1994). A convergence of interests, ideological proximity, identical foes and economic gain may be the underlying reasons for active co-operation with the foreign regime. At times compliance and cooperation were a matter of sheer survival. As mentioned before, we cannot speak of (outright) collaboration after Stalin's death; hence it is only the older generational context that may have collaborated with the occupying powers.

With regard to forms of resistance the scale may begin with covert forms of dissent, civil disobedience, and end with fully-fledged armed resistance. Then there is a passive position adopted by the great majority, i.e. that of *inertia*, a 'wait-and-see' attitude, of resignation, 'inner emigration' or withdrawal. The list demonstrates that a whole range of responses and adaptive mechanisms existed during those times.¹⁷ The different social strategies and practices which the respondents acquired to cope in Soviet Estonia became apparent in the stories, metaphors and comparisons conveyed in the interviews.

Ethics of memory

In terms of Ricoeur's 'ethic of memory' (Ricoeur 1999), there are always two intertwined levels at play in the process of remembering: first, the adaptive mechanisms appropriated by the narrator in the past; and secondly, the way in which he interprets and tells his story in the interview. When using the term 'ethic of memory', I refer to the mode in which the respondent recalls the past in the interview (i.e. *how* the individual remembers and *how* it interprets these memories, what constrains him / or her in remembering certain facts, and what leads him /or her to forget other facts). My main focus has therefore been on *how* the past is narrated in the interviews (i.e. making sense of loss, regaining meaning, explanatory systems, self-descriptions, etc.).

In what follows, I single out six ‘modes of talking’ about the past, which I term apologetics, distancing, mystification, resignation, denial, and destiny, and which became apparent in the interviews. This may merely be a selection, as there are arguably many more types.

Apologetics: the radish

Many respondents both of the first and second generational context used the expression “people have to live”.¹⁸ A respondent from the second generational context explains:

“(...) from my point of view there were thousands of other options to demonstrate that you are against Soviet power, than to do it so very openly. To say that Soviet power is bad was no more than self-destructive. You knew what would await you at the end! The end is Siberia! And why choose this way, when you have all the other ways at hand? You may write poetry or make theatre performances and articulate just the same. This was our idea.”¹⁹

Here we can identify a personal strategy of self-justification and self-victimisation, because in the 1970s voicing open dissent no longer was a life and death issue. Many Estonian historians of all three generational contexts (even if members of ECP) stated they were conducting semi-dissident work, which again is a form of ‘white-washing’. Ülle-Mai makes a remarkable distinction, between those who were red on the outside *and* the inside (i.e. “real Communist” and “guys from the War”), and those who were red *only* on the outside but, like a ‘radish’, had remained white inside. An attempt at ‘whitewashing’ can be found in her conclusion that the image of the radish is applicable for the majority of Estonians who had been in the ECP or other official positions.²⁰

Distancing: “he used to say communism is all a big lie.”

In the interviews, distancing was accomplished through jokes (e.g. irony, parody, etc.) or through intellectual abstraction (e.g. rationalisation, generalisation, and relativism, etc.). An example of the strategy of distancing oneself from one’s past actions (in order to regain self-esteem) may be found in the way Paula changes her voice when she relates that she had taught these ‘red subjects’.²¹ Many respondents from the second generational context display a degree of allure when describing the “games” they played with the KGB, i.e. their successful attempts to outsmart this oppressive institution and testing the boundaries of the system. To me, calling oppression a game is a form of distancing, which allowed the respondent to maintain the illusion of the ‘power of the powerless.’²²

The strategy of distancing through jokes can be a form of resistance, depending on the setting in which these jokes are voiced. Hariton recalls that behind the scenes the head of the Department of Scientific Communism “used to say communism is all a big lie. It is all rubbish and that he doesn’t believe in the discipline. These paradoxes were quite common.”²³ Uttered in a private setting, these demonstrations of detachment from the despised system through jokes assume a quality of whitewashing, whereas expressed in public, jokes can be considered open dissent.

Vilhelm explained how he was always wary of disclosing his true aspirations (e.g. the wish to travel abroad) when dealing with the authorities in Soviet Estonia. Also, he claimed that as a boy he was already “immune” to any ideology.²⁴ With some respondents I encountered an arrogant demeanor, which I interpreted as a defense mechanism.

Mystification: “Estonians as resistance fighters”²⁵

A glorification of the Estonians as survivors against all odds, as exemplified by the Freedom Fighters of the War of Independence and the anti-Soviet partisans, could be found in many interviews with Estonian historians. Also, at times an idealisation of the clean and well-behaved German soldiers as opposed to the dirty and ill-mannered Red Army soldiers was voiced. Additionally, the older generation in particular expressed a nostalgic view of the high moral standards, communal values, and peaceful peasant life still existing during the inter-war period (which constituted their counter-world for half a century).

Resignation: “I don’t understand it myself”

An air of resignation was notable among the older generation; I labelled them the “lost generation”, because they viewed themselves as victims of circumstances (expressing regret, grief, and depression). Vilhelm, G1, mentions that he was already grey when he was finally allowed to travel to Sweden.²⁶ Illar, of the same generational context, never felt quite at home in Sweden and seemed melancholic about the fact that he and his wife were not able to remain in Finland after 1944.²⁷ However, members of the second generational context also conveyed a sense of resignation. Arguably, this was more connected to the loss of meaning (i.e. shattered socialist ideals and a painful deconstruction of their previous world view) they had experienced. Intellectuals from the second generational context talked about killing time during the Soviet period (expressing fatalism and defeatism) or becoming alcoholics out of frustration.²⁸ The sense of resignation was at times coupled with the expression that the

situation during the War (or the terror of the post-war years and life during the Soviet occupation) simply could not be communicated, as these things were unintelligible and could not quite be comprehended.

Denial: "I don't know!"

A prevalent phrase among respondents of the second generational context was: "I knew it all the time, but I did not actualise it;" signifying a form of ignorance or 'double mental standards' and making it appear as if they were not permitted to put one and one together and draw a conclusion.²⁹ Denial is often a defensive reaction caused by irritation and shame. Niils, born 1969, related that during the Soviet period Estonians were "pushed" into membership of the Communist Party;³⁰ Juhan Kahk, who authored the history of ESSR, explained that it was due to his lack of knowledge that he interpreted the events of 1940 as a 'revolution' (Kahk in Kerner & Stopinski 1990: 29).

Destiny: "It was my destiny to go to prison camp"

Ways of making sense of life experience can involve forms of self-theorising or the belief in a higher power beyond one's control. Hence, Ülle-Mai, stated that "far and foremost it is fate to live here [in Estonia]. And I don't like to change this fate."³¹ Likewise, the former dissident Ervin recalls: "when I was arrested, I knew there was no way out [*he laughs*]. It was my destiny to go to prison camp. And nobody even proposed to me: 'if you behave well, you can emigrate or you can be free.' My conscience was clean. I went to prison camp and survived it." A lesson learned from his life, says Ervin, is that life is unpredictable and that you cannot plan much ahead.³²

A religious explanation was employed by Zahkar, who told me "that no one mortal being is capable to draw the line [i.e. *between those who collaborated with the system and those who did not* – the author]. (...) this can only be done by a higher power - God, Marcion."³³ (...) a mortal human being can't do that, because he doesn't know all the details or the [overall] context of events."³⁴

Lastly, Eduard, a Russian-Armenian, employed Henri Poincaré, the forefather of modern chaos theory, to understand the Russian people: "I believe that a theory (...) which proposes there are some laws which govern chaotic systems can be applied to the Russian community. (...) Poincaré predicted that chaotic systems return to their initial state. (...) I hold the effect of the return of Ivan the Terrible as true."³⁵

A comparison of the generational memories in post-war Germany and post-Soviet Estonia

A useful comparison can be made between collective memories in post-war Germany and post-Soviet Estonia. In the case of Germany, models of generational succession have been advanced by Rüsen, Rosenthal and Welzer, scholars who are concerned with the inter-generational transmission of the memory of the Holocaust within post-war West-German families.³⁶ Rüsen developed a tripartite model of generational succession: the “generation of war and reconstruction” attempted the collective silencing of the past and the externalisation of the perpetrators as demonic, creating a rupture in the chain of inter-generational transmission. The “post-war generation” confronted the generation of perpetrators in an act of moral distancing. The “generation of children” acts as intermediaries and menders of the generational chain (i.e. to regain historical meaning), something that is only possible due to their historical distance from the generation of perpetrators (Rüsen 2001a: 279 – 300, Rüsen 2001b: 243 – 259).³⁷

Even though the historical experience of the German and the Estonian societies are very different, this makes an insightful matrix for comparison. In short, unlike in West Germany, memories were frozen in Soviet Estonia, and with them the potential for conflict and change; basically, an *open* discourse on the past was delayed by half a century. There was no outright student revolt or inter-generational conflict in the ‘60s (between G 1 and G 2).³⁸ There is no break in the generational chain as is so evident in the West German case. However, accommodation with the Soviet regime certainly set G 2 apart from the generation of their parents (G 1). Due to the socio-political changes of the ‘80s, Estonia sees a transitional generation (G 3) that is altogether lacking in West Germany (or in the UK).

Every society agrees to blank out certain historical facts from the national narrative; in the case of the ‘nationalising’ Estonian State it is the presence of the Russian-speaking minority that needs to be ‘omitted’, as it acts as a reminder of Estonia’s Soviet legacy as well as of Estonian accommodation with the system, and it is therefore an obstacle to processes of normalisation or national restoration.³⁹ Questions of reconciliation or mediation of generational conflicts as raised by Rüsen for the German context are long-term processes, and it would be too early to give a prognosis for the Estonian case (if at all).

This demonstrates the ways in which the predominant ideology and politics of the time determine the formation of a generational context and of generational styles as a reaction to and way of handling respective historical experiences. This goes back to what Gellner had once termed the “Europe of the different clocks”, in that there are different temporal phases and that an asynchronicity or non-simultaneity exists in Europe (Gellner 1994).⁴⁰

Research prospects

It would be an interesting follow up project to relate the various personal coping strategies back to the ‘public uses of history’ in the official narrative of post-Soviet Estonia (as outlined in Chapters Six and Seven). Moreover, it may be insightful to flesh out further the different generational styles among the historians in Estonia. Lastly, with well over 1500 single spaced pages of transcripts, I believe I have accumulated ample material for further scrutiny of the different self-descriptions that these life stories hold.

My vantage point as a “professional stranger”, which is neither that of an ethnic Estonian nor that of a Russian speaker living there, contributes to the research on collective memories and identities in Estonia.⁴¹ I mentioned earlier that the debate on Estonia’s recent past has a propensity to be a ‘protected’ one, a tendency that is certainly heightened by the language barrier and the fact that Estonia is such a small country. However, most publications on this particular research topic are written by Estonians (or Russians), which hopefully makes the research conducted with the perspective of an outsider an original input to the field.⁴²

Endnotes of the Epilogue:

¹ For other works on memory studies in Eastern Europe cf. Plewa-Toenquist 1992; Watson 1994; Wrobel 1997; 1998; Herf 1997; Skultans 1998; Michnic-Coren 1999; Jedlicki 1999; Niedermüller 1997; Smolar 1999/2000; Platz 1999; Reinprecht 2001; Koleva 2000; Jaago 2002.

² See Weiß-Wendt 1997; Zinovij, interview, Tallinn, 18.09.03; Rein, interview, Narva, 04.06.02. The former residents of Narva organise annual Old Narva Days, when they make their private cultural and communicative memories public.

³ By *Potemkian* nature I want to indicate the mirage-like nature of the public sphere during the Soviet period. The general-field marshal Grigori Alexandrovich Potemkin simulated fully-functioning village life for the occasion of Katherine the Great’s visit to the Crimea in 1787 using ‘façade villages’ for that purpose.

⁴ Z. Baumann even speaks of a ‘schizophrenic split’ (Baumann 2005).

⁵ Ülle-Mai, interview, Tallinn, 08.06.02.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ervin, interview, Tallinn, 02.10.03.

⁹ Ülle-Mai, interview, Tallinn, 08.06.02.

¹⁰ In this context William Labov coins the term ‘broken language’ (Labov 1980) of which the ‘gibberish’ German of Estonians in the 19th c. would be exemplary. See Chapter Four.

¹¹ Siim, interview, Berlin, 17.04.04; also Oskar, interview, Tallinn 01.10.03; both quotes can be found in Chapter Five; see Hint 1991.

¹² Cf. Oskar, interview, Tallinn 01.10.03; Ülle-Mai, interview, Tallinn, 08.06.02.

¹³ The concept goes back to Arnold van Gennep’s (1873 – 1957) ideas on the rite of passage, which generally involves a change in the participant’s social role. Van Gennep mapped out three different stages of this rite of passage: firstly, the preliminary stage, which involves the separation from the rest of the social group, or community; secondly, the transition, the liminal state (*liminaire*); and thirdly, the post-liminal state in which the new social status is confirmed and re-incorporation has taken place; obviously this applies to individuals and larger groups in society. However, in the case of post-Soviet Estonia it can be argued that the society the liminal has left, and to which he wants to return after completing his transformation, has changed so drastically that there is nothing to return to (the old structures and social fabric of the community life no longer exist).

¹⁴ This is not to say that I have adopted Bhabha’s ideas on national identity; see Chapter Two.

¹⁵ Both traits have been mentioned in the previous Chapters Five and Six.

¹⁶ The auto-stereotype is that of people who live in the forest or are individualistic in the sense that the houses in the villages are spread out, allowing for space.

¹⁷ According to Freud, ‘sublimation’ is one such coping mechanism, which entails the refocusing of psychic energy away from negative outlets to more positive outlets (see <http://www.en.wikipedia.org>).

¹⁸ Cf. Kalev, interview, Tartu, 03.06.02; Paula, interview, Tallinn, 09.10.03; and Hanneleen, interview, Tallinn, 13.06.02.

¹⁹ Ülle-Mai, interview, Tallinn, 08.06.02.

²⁰ Ibid.; cf. Siemer 2002: 188 – 203.

²¹ Paula, interview, Tallinn, 09.10.2003.

²² Making jokes about playing the ‘game’ and outsmarting the KGB, in the interviews with Pauls, Stockholm, 19.07.02; Oskar, interview, Tallinn 01.10.03; Ervin, interview, Tallinn, 02.10.03; Simon, interview, Tallinn, 07.06.02; and Ülle-Mai, interview, Tallinn, 08.06.02. The reference of power of the powerless is taken from V. Havel’s letters from the prison (Havel 1985).

²³ Hariton, interview, Tartu, 02.06.02.

²⁴ Vilhelm, interview, Tallinn, 12.06.02.

²⁵ Zahkar, interview, Tallinn, 12.06.02.

²⁶ Vilhelm, interview, Tallinn, 12.06.02; also Hanneleen, interview, Tallinn, 13.06.02; and Paula, interview, Tallinn, 09.10.03.

²⁷ Illar, interview, Uppsala 09.07.02.

²⁸ Zbigniev, interview, Tallinn, 03.10.03; Zahkar, interview, Tallinn, 12.06.02; both relevant quotes in Chapter Five.

²⁹ Cf. Paula, interview, Tallinn, 09.10.03; Nelli, interview, Tallinn, 05.10.03; Ülle-Mai, interview, Tallinn, 08.06.02.

³⁰ Niils, interview, Tallinn, 11.06.02.

³¹ Ülle-Mai, interview, Tallinn, 08.06.02; Vilhlem also employed the concept of destiny (interview, Tallinn, 12.06.02).

³² Ervin, interview, Tallinn, 02.10.03.

³³ Marcion of Sinope (ca. 110-160), was a major 2nd century Christian theologian, founder of what would later be called Marcionism, and one of the first to be strongly denounced by other Christians (who would later be called Catholic as opposed to Marcionite) as heretical see <http://www.en.wikipedia.org>.

³⁴ Zahkar, interview, Tallinn, 12.06.02.

³⁵ Eduard, interview, Tallinn, 11.10.96.

³⁶ Cf. Welzer et al 1997, 2002; Rüsen 2001a; Rüsen 2001b; Rosenthal 1992.

³⁷ See Rosenthal’s assessment of the different generational contexts (and their interaction) in post-war Germany (Rosenthal 1997; Rosenthal 2000). She developed a model of generational succession including those individuals born between 1890 and 1970. With 1) the ‘Wilhelmine youth generation’ (1890 – 1905/06); 2) the ‘youth generation of the Weimar Republic’ (1906 – 20); 3) the ‘Hitler youth generation’ (1922 – 30); 4) the ‘children of the Third Reich’ (1930 – 38/39); 5) the ‘generation of war children’ (1939 – 45); 6) the ‘generation of post-war children’ (1945 – 50); 7) the ‘generation of *Wirtschaftswunder* children’ (1950 – 62); and lastly 7) the ‘generation between consumption and crisis’ (1962 - 70).

³⁸ Ironically enough, the student movement in the former FRG used East Germany and the societies of the Eastern Bloc as a utopian counter-world (however, an unexamined one)!

³⁹ In the group discussion with Estonian students (Tallinn, 07.10.03), the respondents said that the Russian-speaking minority are not even referred to as ‘Russians’, but that the term ‘foreigners’ or ‘aliens’ was used in the ‘90s, while nowadays they are signified simply by the term ‘others’. This substantiates the hypothesis voiced earlier about attempts in post-Soviet Estonia to reduce any mention of the Russians’ presence in the public discourse to a minimum.

⁴⁰ On ‘multiple modernities’, see Eisenstadt 2000.

⁴¹ A term taken from Michael Agar’s book (1996).

⁴² Cf. Kirss & Kõresaar & Lauristin 2004.

APPENDIX I:

List of principal narrators quoted in the Chapters Five to Seven

- 1) **Birgit** (f.), b. 1965, Estonian, researcher in ethnography, living in Tartu (G 3).
- 2) **Class of Estonian students**, EHI, Tallinn Pedagogical University, 07.10.03.
- 3) **Eduard** (m.), b. 1950, Russian Armenian, linguist, intellectual, living in Tallinn (G 2).
- 4) **Elena** (f.), b. 1941, Russian, manual worker, municipal politician, living in Narva (G 2).
- 5) **Ervin** (m.), b. 1952, Estonian, architect, heater, former dissident, historian, works in the Estonian Immigration Office, living in Tallinn (G 2).
- 6) **Evgeny** (m.), b. 1957, Russian, historian, works at Narva Museum, living in Narva (G 2).
- 7) **Franka** (f.), b. 1965, Estonian, history teacher at the Estonian gymnasium, living in Narva (G 3).
- 8) **Hanneleen** (f.), b. 1936, Estonian, history teacher, teacher training, Professor at Tallinn Pedagogical University, living in Tallinn (G 1).
- 9) **Hariton** (m.), b. 1933, Russian, Professor emeritus of Linguistics, living in Tartu (G 1).
- 10) **Henrik** (m.), b. 1960, American Estonian, journalist (G 2)
- 11) **Iivo** (m.), b. 1925, Estonian exile, Professor emeritus of History, living in Uppsala (G 1).
- 12) **Ilmar** (m.), b. 1921, Estonian exile, PhD in Political Science, archivar, librarian, living in Uppsala (G 1).
- 13) **Indrek** (m.), b. 1965, Estonian, historian, journalist, living in Tallinn (G 3).
- 14) **Jaak** (m.), b. 1965, Estonian Canadian, Assist. Professor of History, living in Tartu (G 3).
- 15) **Juhan** (m.), b. 1953, Estonian Swede, Professor for Linguistics, living in Uppsala (G 2).
- 16) **Kalev** (m.), b. 1930, Estonian, Professor emeritus of History, living in Tartu (G 1).
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- 21) **Niils** (m.), b. 1969, Estonian, historian, MP, member of EMS, living in Tallinn (G 4).
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- 24) **Olavi** (m.), b. 1973, Estonian, PhD in History, publisher, living in Tallinn (G 4).
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32) **Simon** (m.), b. 1956, Estonian, chimney sweeper, former dissident, worked for Radio Free Europe (Munich), now Occupation Museum, living in Tallinn (G 2).

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APPENDIX II:

QUESTIONNAIRES

A) Questionnaire for historians in Estonia (Estonians, Russians, Estonian Russians)

Personal background

1. Your family background? Siblings? Profession of parents? Where and when were you born? Where did you grow up? Where did you go to school? Where, when, what did you study and why (professional research interest)?

The past

2. The role of memories, history, culture in Estonia during foreign rule, occupation, Soviet Estonia, the transition, and today?
3. Personal memories of the inter-war period, of the Second World War (or the stories told by grandparents, parents, relatives and friends).
4. How did you learn about history? In school, at university, at home, through relatives, neighbours, and friends? Can you give me examples?

National identity, national pride

5. How were Estonians able to preserve and transmit their cultural identity? Were they?
6. How did you learn about what it means to be Estonian?
7. What is at the base of Estonian national identity, what is it made of? What does it mean to be Estonian for you? How do you define your identity?
8. Could you single out events, places, figures connected to national pride?

Events of collective resistance

9. Can you think of events of collective resistance?
10. Who were the carriers of the true Estonian culture/identity during foreign rule, occupation, the Soviet period?
11. Did historians or intellectuals (teachers, professors, writers) in general play a special role in preserving or transmitting what it means to be Estonian (i.e. a counter-history and counter-memory)? The role of the Estonian Heritage Society in the transition?
12. Was dissent possible? What is dissent or resistance for you (e.g. partisans, dissidents)?
13. How did the political changes come about?
14. How do you view the role of Estonian exile historians for the social and political developments in Estonia?

Collective Suffering

15. Please name events of collective suffering?
16. Were there cases of lustration in post-Soviet Estonia? How do you define collaboration? Who are the collaborators? What should be done with them? How to do justice, how to reconcile?
17. What is occupation? Do you call it occupation all the way from 1939 to 1991/94?

Taboo, shame, conflict

18. What changed in the interpretation of history since the late 1980s, after 1991?
19. Who is writing the official history in Estonia today?
20. Which events, which facts needed to be uncovered/discussed after 1991?
21. Whose history was destroyed after 1991?
22. What was deliberately forgotten during the Soviet period, taboo issues?
23. What is deliberately forgotten today? Any taboo issues or controversies?
24. What are the sources of conflict in Estonian society today? Social, political, historical, ethnic?
25. The Russian speaking minority? How is reconciliation and integration possible?

Prospects for the future

26. What would you stress in children's history textbooks today?

B) Questionnaire for Estonian intellectuals in Sweden (and Germany)

Personal background

1. Your family background? Siblings? Profession of parents? Where and when were you born? Where did you grow up? Where did you go to school? Where, when, what did you study and why (professional research interest)?

Exile

2. How, when, why did you come to Sweden? Early memories?
3. Could your parents keep any ties with family members and friends or colleagues in Estonia during the Soviet period?
4. How did your parents explain their choice to live in the exile?
5. How did you learn about history? School, university, home, through family, relatives, friends?
6. How did you learn about what it means to be Estonian?
7. Describe your integration into the Swedish society. How was your education and professional life in Sweden?
8. How did the Estonians in Sweden preserve and maintain their memory of Estonia, their national identity since the mid 1940s (role of organisation, schools, Church other institutional networks)?
9. Where there conflicts within the Estonian exile community in Estonia (of political nature)?
10. When did you first visit, or come back to Estonia? How are your memories about that?
First impressions, experience?
11. Did Estonian intellectuals in exile play a role for Estonians in the ESSR? And if so, how? Did they play a part to bring about the change?
12. Is the Estonian community in Sweden different from other Estonian exile communities (Canada, US, Germany)?
13. Can you point out differences in identity between homeland Estonians and those who lived abroad? Where there any conflicts? About what?

Changes

14. How did you experience the changes in 1990?
15. Did you think of returning (moving back) to Estonia after 1991? How often do you go back? How is your impression of the political changes?

Exile identity

16. How do you describe your own identity (e.g. hyphenated, émigré, exile, political refugee, expatriate)

17. How did you learn about what it means to be Estonian?

On homeland Estonians

18. How were Estonians able to preserve or transmit their cultural identity during foreign rule?

19. Who is / was the carrier of the true Estonian culture / history during the Soviet period?

20. Did intellectuals, historians, dissidents play a special role in preserving this counter-history?

Present and Future

21. Which events, which facts needed to be uncovered and officially discussed in post Soviet Estonia? Examples of controversial topics? How do you view those political changes, development in Estonia?

22. Future prospects for Estonia? Your vision?

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