

NEWS IN BRIEF

CONFERENCE *HISTORY AND MEMORY. LEGACY OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR*

Maarja Kaaristo

The conference *Ajalugu ja mälu. Teise maailmasõja pärandid* 'History and Memory. Legacy of the Second World War' was held on October 8, 2005 in the Estonian National Library. The conference was organised by the French Cultural Centre in Estonia and the Estonian Institute of Humanities at the Tallinn University.

The Second World War, a crucial event in the history of the entire western world, no doubt requires a thorough analysis in Estonia, even more so than has been done so far. While studying a period or events in history that many still remember from first-hand experience, a scholar faces the issue of memory and its representation, and its integration in research. Analysing events of recent past, memory and remembering are factors that cannot be overlooked, regardless of whether the scholar otherwise uses these sources in research or not.

Memory has been one of the source topics in the humanities since the 1970s; according to historian Jay Winter, memory has become a central category in research in history, and even surpasses the concepts of class, race and gender in significance. He calls this tendency a memory boom and even "the historical symbol of our generation" (Winter 2001: 66). The Estonian scholars of the humanities began to take a greater interest in the issue of memory in the late 1990s, after ethnologists and folklorists focused their attention on research in biographies (see e.g. Anepaio and Kõresaar 2001, 2003; Kõresaar 2004).

According to the British cultural historian Peter Burke, both history and memory have in recent years become increasingly problematical and hard to define concepts. Recollecting the past and writing about it are no longer the "innocent" activities that they were once thought to be. Memory and history are no longer objectively perceivable for us (Burke 2003: 44).

Marek Tamm, who chaired the discussion, said that the conference was inspired by the wish to "provide intellectual instruments for us to conceptualise our recent past and its idiosyncrasies and to improve and enhance the efficiency of our present contribution to social memory" (*Sirp*, Oct. 7, 2005). The interdisciplinary nature of the conference proved ex-

tremely appropriate; in addition to historians, representatives of various other disciplines (e.g. ethnology, semiotics, literary theory, etc.) were invited to speak at the conference.

The keynote speakers at the conference were François Dosse and Patrick Garcia from the Institute of Political Studies in Paris. Dosse discussed the historicisation of memory traces primarily on the example of the Vichy regime, also on different ways of representing the past in memory and official history, touching in more length on the views of the relationship of history and memory by the recently departed French philosopher Paul Ricoeur. Garcia dedicated his presentation on memory policies to the political representation of historical events on the example of France, analysing how single historical events (e.g. the capture of Bastille) transform into symbols by means of and for the purpose of recollection.

Jean-Paul Minaudier, professor at the Paris Institute of Oriental Languages and Civilisations discussed in his presentation the different approaches to and interpretation of the events of the Second World War in Estonia and France. While the end of the WW2 marked victory for France, in Estonia it stood for the Soviet occupation, which determines the slightly different treatment of history. According to Minaudier, the most remarkable difference in interpreting the period following the WW2 is the role and significance of holocaust in the collective memory of the two cultures.

In the 1970s when holocaust became the central theme in the history of the western world and the central category in collective memory, the Estonians saw the threat of genocide from an altogether different source; a fact often neglected by the western authors. This is a continuing source of misunderstanding and discontent, as the genocide of Jews is the central topic in Western European history. Minaudier also emphasised that while for the Estonians ethnicity is basically a cultural concept, for the French it is a political category: every citizen of France is a French. The Estonians, however, identify themselves as a *Kulturnation* on the basis of language. The tragedy of another nation has little importance for an Estonian, while such a view would be inconceivable and even shocking in France, Minaudier said (further on the issue see *Eesti Päevaleht*, October 10, 2005).

Such widely different and contradictory approaches to history are bound to call for widely different interpretations of certain historical events. Peeter Torop demonstrated this on the example of the sensation of the Lihula monument in Estonia, providing a semiotic analysis of the scandal through the concept of hierarchical memory, and by viewing the monument in the context of contemporary Estonian visual culture.

In August 2004, a monument to commemorate the Estonians fighting for the German army in the WW2 was erected on Lihula cemetery, near the monument dedicated to the Soviet soldiers who fell in WW2. The new monument represented a soldier wearing a German army helmet and the order of the Estonian Cross of Freedom on the collar, and carrying a rifle. The inscription read: “To the Estonian men who fought against Bolshevism and for the restoration of Estonian independence in 1940–1945”. In September the monument was pulled down, and the public mutiny attempting to prevent the removal of the monument was suppressed by the police with pepper spray and truncheons. According to a government press release concerning the matter, the Estonian government criticises monuments that may be interpreted as an attempt to commemorate totalitarian regimes that have occupied Estonia.

As the events surrounding the Lihula monument entered the attention of the Estonian public, Peeter Torop, professor of semiotics at the University of Tartu, was asked to perform a semiotic analysis of the monument. According to him, the monument displaced from Lihula, did not incite Nazism, but its artistic composition entailed elements of propaganda, which lays a favourable foundation for extremely conflicting interpretations (see *Postimees*, Sept. 14 and 30, 2004). The monument is presently stored in the Museum of Estonia’s Struggle for Independence at Lagedi, where it was officially opened in October 2005.

Peeter Torop emphasised in his presentation that the written history concerning the past half a century in Estonia is relatively incoherent, and therefore, any single event and artefact may be seen as the representation of history. Analogously to how historical paintings are understood through a narrative context, the latter was also required for the Lihula monument. The erection of the monument became a spatial performance, which was not linked to a narrative, and thus acquired a conflicting ambivalence, which, in turn, triggered a new chain of media performances. According to Torop, the events surrounding the monument revealed the weakness of discourse about our identity which is based on strings of memory, and also pointed to the need to construct a more active debate on the issue.

Karsten Brüggemann emphasised the source value of memories. In his presentation *War and Memory, or on a Historian’s Capitulation*, Brüggemann explained that it is impossible for historians to study certain topics relying only on the sc. traditional sources. A study of documents describing the relocation of troops does not reveal what the soldiers who were forced to fight in freezing Russia without winter clothes experienced. A historian faced with such a topic must inevitably capitulate to such a

task, as the topic can be studied only via recollections, the source created by memory.

While analysing the relationship of history and memory, and the applications of the latter, the central notion in the discourse became *collective memory*, for which both for and against arguments were presented. Olaf Mertelsmann stressed the importance of distinguishing between ‘social’ and ‘individual’ memory. According to him the former has no source value, while the latter has slightly more source value in certain circumstances. Mertelsmann says that memory sources are not reliable and they have to be used with great caution. He advises to complement the study of recollections with archive materials and historiography. It is still worth noting that even archive materials are usually subjective documents of their authors and do not contain the so-called objective truth, or “what actually happened”, any more than the subjective and individual memoir-narratives. Mertelsmann’s views were supported by Eerio Medijainen, who claimed that the widely varying interpretations of the same event render the existence of national historical awareness impossible.

Ene Kõresaar pointed out in her presentation that regardless of the different ways of perceiving a certain historical event, the remembering of the Soviet occupation represents a certain kind of a “memory filter” as a central cultural category in Estonia, which attributes significance to all the other “periods” in the twentieth century, such as the period before the WW2, the period of restored independence at the end of the century, and all the other periods that remain between them. Kõresaar’s presentation was furthered by Tiina Kirss, who analysed the life stories of the Estonians at the time of German occupation.

A considerable bulk of work on remembering and representing the period following the WW2 is still to be done. On one hand, the opportunity to collect source material from people of first-hand experience considerably facilitates the work of a historian studying the recent past, but on the other hand, it prompts the issue of working with newer sources. This might be a good opportunity and time for the Estonian historians to turn to the methods used by the neighbouring disciplines. Thus, it is truly positive that the conference offered a valuable forum for discussing the subject by scholars of different disciplines.

References

Anepaio, Terje & Kõresaar, Ene (eds.) 2001. Kultuur ja mälu [Culture and Memory]. *Studia Ethnologica Tartuensia* 4. Tartu: Tartu Ülikool.

Anepaio, Terje & Kõresaar, Ene (eds.) 2003. Mälu kui kultuuritegur: etnoloogilisi perspektiive [Memory as a Cultural Factor: Ethnological Perspectives]. *Studia Ethnologica Tartuensia* 6. Tartu: Tartu Ülikool.

Burke, Peter 2003. *Varieties of Cultural History*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Kõresaar, Ene 2004. Memory and history in Estonian post-soviet life stories: private and public, individual and collective from the perspective of biographical syncretism. *Dissertationes ethnologiae Universitatis Tartuensis* 1. Tartu: Tartu University Press.

Winter, Jay 2001. *The Memory Boom in Contemporary Historical Studies*. Raritan, Vol 21, Issue 1, pp. 52–66.

PILLE KIPPAR 70

Rein Saukas

Pille Kippar, the first Estonian woman to receive a PhD degree in folkloristics turned 70 on October 24, 2005.

Having graduated from the Tallinn Secondary School no. 7, Kippar received her BA degree in folkloristics at the University of Tartu, among her fellow students was Ingrid Rüütel, who also celebrated her 70th birthday this year. Unlike many other young folklorists, Pille Kippar continued her work in the field of folkloristics only after postgraduate studies in the Institute of Language and Literature (1961–1964, under the supervision of August Annist, PhD) on the research subject of Estonian animal folktales. Having settled in North Estonia, Pille Kippar remained in Tallinn, but this (perhaps forced) choice distanced her from the archives, so she could collect material only during brief duty assignments in Tartu.

Pille Kippar's professional career has passed in two institutions: the Institute of Language and Literature (now the Estonian Language Institute) during 1961–1993 and the former Pedagogical University of Tallinn, now the Tallinn University, where she simultaneously with her work at the institute lectured on folklore first on hourly wages and later as a docent and permanent professor. During 1993–1997 she was the head of the Estonian Language and Literature Department at the Tallinn Pedagogical University. Next to the general lecture course on folklore, she also held lectures for special courses (Estonian ethnology, contemporary folklore, Estonian folktales, comparative folkloristics of the Balto-Finnic peoples), and also at the University of Helsinki. Having retired in 1998 as professor emeritus, she has actively continued her professional work.

The topic of animal folktales that she started in her postgraduate years has remained her primary research topic until the present day. She has published various articles on this, discussing AT tale types 243 and 150, characters of Estonian animal folktales, the minor forms of folklore in animal folktales, and on the international context of Estonian animal folktales (*Varese naisevõtt* (AT 243*) (The Crow Takes a Wife), *Eesti loomamuinasjuttude vahekorra vanapagana-muinasjuttudega* (On the Relationship of Estonian Animal Fairy Tales with Ogre Fairy Tales), *Konna õpetused* (AT 150 A*). *Muinasjututüübi AT 150 lääne-meresoome-balti redaktsioon* (The Frog Gives Advice. The Balto-Finnic Redaction of the Fairy Tale Type AT 150), *Eesti loomamuinasjuttude tegelastest* (On the Characters of Estonian Animal Fairy Tales), *Rahvaluule lühivormidest loomamuinasjutus* (On Minor Forms of Folklore in Animal Fairy Tales), *Über den internationalen Hintergrund der estnischen Tiermärchen*, and many others). In her studies she has not limited herself to the study of solely the Estonian material, but has searched for parallels and associations from the narrative tradition of other Balto-Finnic, etc. countries.

Kippar's study of animal folktales is condensed in two major works. In 1986 her type register *Estnische Tiermärchen. Typen- und Variantenverzeichnis* (which includes 334 types, 3,000 manuscript and 1,000 printed texts) was published in the reputed FFC series in Helsinki, and this type register introduced all Estonian animal folktales for the international audience. Secondly, in October 1990, she defended her thesis *Estonian Animal Folktales. Distribution and International Background* after which the thesis opponents proposed attributing her a PhD degree for the same study. PhD degree defence took place a year later, on November 27, 1991. Finnish folklorist Pekka Hakamies, who reviewed the thesis, considers Pille Kippar's study different from the studies of the old Finnish school in that Kippar's aim has not been explicating single tale types or the genesis of folktale lore, but has aspired to determine the distribution of Estonian animal folktales and study cross-cultural contacts on the basis of the material (Elias 1992, 3: 45).

Pille Kippar has authored overviews of Estonian folktales and those of our kinsfolk to foreign reference books such as *Märchen und Märchenforschung in Europa. Ein Handbuch* (Haag&Herchen Verlag, 1993), *Enzyklopädie des Märchens* (Göttingen, 1996).

Estonian folkloristics also takes pride in Pille Kippar's involvement in various international scholarly organisations, such as Kalevalaseura (1993), the International Society for Folk Narrative Research (ISFNR 1984), and the International Society for Ethnology and Folklore (SIEF 1989).



Photo 1. Bronislava Kerbelitë ja Pille Kippar. October 2005. Photo by Alar Madisson.

Another aspect of Pille Kippar's work is her compilation of various folktale anthologies, which have introduced the magic world of folklore to the Estonian children – these include selections of Estonian animal folktales (*Tere, tere, tiipajalga! Eesti loomamuinasjutte*, 1976), tales about the Stupid Ogre (*Antsu torupill. Lugusid rumalast Vanapaganast (Eesti)*, 1987), Setu folktales for children (*Kümme setu muinasjuttu lastele*, 1990), the folktales of smaller Balto-Finnic peoples (*Muinasjutuvestja. Läänemere-soome väikerahvaste muinasjutte*, 1993), Finno-Ugric folktales (*Sugulaste muinasjutud. Valimik soome-ugri rahvaste jutte*, 2002), and a bulky edited anthology on tales about birds, animals and insects (*Linnud, loomad, putukad*, 1997).

During 1990-1995 Pille Kippar headed the folklore section of the Estonian Language Society, later she has been active in the board of the revived Academic Folklore Society.

Pille Kippar has been a keen promoter of folklore for the general public through various events and Estonian youth magazines.

Unlike other folklore researchers in Tallinn, Pille Kippar, who is always cheerful, active, and inquisitive about the world, can be often met in Tartu. In summer this year she delivered a presentation *Wie Ounsere Familie nach Estland geraten ist* at the 14th ISFNR Congress in Tartu.

I conclude the overview with Pille Kippar's own words:

This is what folklore is about: searching and discovering, creation and joining in. A folklorist's work entails all this, and also a fair

amount of the joy of giving: once you have succeeded in showing the beauty of folklore to people, in making them sing, narrate, observe their language use; once you have succeeded in making people of today's hasty world look back at the values of the past, then you have led them to the joy of discovery, the joy of joining in. (Pioneer 1973, 2: 3)