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Remembering the Ingrian Finns and Soviet Terror in the Novels by Anita and Juhani Konkka

Abstract: The Ingrian-Finnish Konkka family was a victim of the Soviet Terror. The dramatic past of the family has been chronicled by two authors of the family, Anita and Juhani Konkka. This chapter focuses on memories of the Terror as they are represented in their literary works. It also tackles the topics of the political activism and transnational identities of the Ingrian Finns. The material consists of three (auto)biographical novels: *Kahden maailman rajalla* (“On the Border of Two Worlds,” 1939) and *Pietarin valot* (“The Lights of St. Petersburg,” 1938) by Juhani Konkka, and *Musta passi* (“The Black Passport,” 2001) by Anita Konkka. The novels are studied from the viewpoint of cultural memory and family memories. The chapter focuses on what the family remembers about the Terror and its consequences. Attention is paid to the ways in which the family members transmit their memories but also to the obstacles that hinder passing them on. The novels discussed in this chapter offer a micro-perspective of one family regarding large-scale historical, social, and political turbulences by describing what the Soviet Terror meant for individuals and families.

Keywords: Soviet Terror, family memories, Ingrian Finns, transnationality, (auto)biographical novels

Introduction

Today, many people with connections to the group called Ingrian Finns know very little about their families' past, because family ties have been broken and memories have been silenced or forgotten. Fortunately, the dramatic past of the Konkka family has been chronicled by Juhani Konkka (1904–1970) and Anita Konkka (1941–), both esteemed Finnish authors with Ingrian roots. Their novels form unique material for studying the past of the Ingrians through one family. Like many other Ingrian families in the Soviet Union, the Konkka family suffered heavily due to the Soviet Terror. The family lost its property, it was deported to Siberia, and the father ultimately died in exile.

From the viewpoint of this chapter, the central figures of the Konkka family are Juhani, his daughter Anita, and his brother Eero (Anita's uncle). Juhani fled in 1919 from Soviet Russia to Finland, where he lived most of his life. As a novelist and right-wing politician, he was a public figure. In contrast, Eero was a communist who continued to live in the Soviet Union. Anita was born in Finland, where she has lived her whole life.

The Konkka family used to live in the Ingrian village of Toksovo about 30 kilometers north of St. Petersburg. Juhani was born in 1904 and Eero five years later, and they had several brothers and sisters. The peasant home was quite prosperous before the revolution. The father, Simo Konkka, was a village elder and justice of the peace. He was a well-read man who published political statements in the newspaper *Neva*, a supporter of social revolutionary ideas. (MP, 36–37; KMR, 35.) As Ingrian Finns and independent farmers supporting nationalism and living near the border between Finland and Russia, the family was considered a threat by the Soviet regime.

This chapter focuses on the memories concerning the Soviet Terror and its consequences for the Konkka family, which are represented in the novels by Anita and Juhani Konkka. They have both published several novels in which they deal with their family, its past, and its Ingrian roots. The three novels scrutinized in this chapter have been chosen on the grounds of their openly (auto)biographical nature; they tell about family members and other people by using their real names. Two of the novels, *Kahden maailman rajalla* (= KMR, 1939, “On the Border of Two Worlds”) and *Pietarin valot* (= PV, 1958, “The Lights of St. Petersburg”), were written by Juhani Konkka, and the third one, *Musta passi* (=MP, 2001, “The Black Passport”) was penned by Anita Konkka (see also Savolainen 2018).

I study the three novels within the frame of cultural memory and family memories.¹ I ask what the family members remember about the Terror and its consequences, according to the novels, and I pay attention to the ways in which the family members transmit their memories but also to the obstacles that hinder passing them on. Family memories are situated in the middle ground between individual remembering and collective remembering (Švaříčková Slabáková 2021, 2). In the three novels discussed in this chapter, the private memories of individual family members and collective memories within the family are converted into publicly shared cultural memory.

The concept of cultural memory is sometimes used as a synonym for collective memory. As such, it encompasses a wide range of structures, practices, and media, such as myths, monuments, rituals, artworks, and reminiscence through conversations (Erlil 2010, 1–2).

¹ On family memories of the traumatic past being represented in literature, see, for example, Fisher 2015; Vandermal Taylor 1997; Schaumann 2008.

According to a narrower definition, cultural memory refers to representations of the past (e.g., novels, movies, and statues) (Assman 2010, 110–11). Understood in this way, cultural memory is a form of collective memory. In this chapter, cultural memory is understood primarily in the latter sense.

Kahden maailman rajalla and *Pietarin valot* are autobiographical novels. In fact, *Pietarin valot* is a new and extended version of *Kahden maailman rajalla*; the novels tell the same story in slightly different ways. In the novels, Juhani writes about his own youth, which coincided with the October Revolution and the events and developments before and after it. He looks at the past from a Finnish viewpoint. The Konkka family fled to Finland in autumn 1919, when Juhani was fifteen years old. The rest of the family returned home to Ingria, but Juhani stayed in Finland. The protagonist of both novels is young Juhani “Jussi” Konkka. He is also the narrator of the novels, and the stories are told retrospectively from his viewpoint. Konkka writes about his family and the events as a participant and eyewitness.

Kahden maailman rajalla was published in 1939 in Finland, just before the Winter War (1939–1940) between the Soviet Union and Finland, and it was banned after the Continuation War (1941–1944) as an anti-Soviet novel. Finland had lost the war against the Soviet Union, which is why, after the war, the Allied (Soviet) Control Commission stated that Finland would comply with the Moscow Armistice (1944). For example, Finland had to force the remaining German troops out of the country and then demobilize. The Commission consisted mainly of Soviet members, and due to their control, many Finnish texts concerning the Soviet Union were banned or censored (see also Savolainen 2021).

Juhani Konkka felt, however, an urgent need to tell the Finns about the silenced history of the Ingrian-Finns in the Soviet Union. He therefore republished the novel as a revised version and under the new title *Pietarin valot* in 1958. At the time of the publication, Stalin had already passed away, and Soviet Union had shifted to the era of the Thaw. This made it possible to talk more freely about the Soviet past in Finland, too, but according to *Musta passi*, there was an indifferent reception of the novel (MP, 34).

Anita Konkka's *Musta passi* was published in 2001, ten years after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Combining features of biographical and autobiographical novels, this work is based on cassette tapes recorded in the 1990s, in which Juhani's brother Eero talks about his life. Eero lived his whole life in the Soviet Union, and thus he looks at the past from the angle of the Russian side of the border. The first-person narrator of *Musta passi* is Anita, to whom Eero has sent the tapes, hoping that Anita would write a novel based on the material. At first, Anita is reluctant to focus on her family's past, because she feels that she has already written enough about it. She claims: "I had written three novels about my Ingrian roots and I didn't want to get back to the topic. But there are issues you can't escape, not by writing or forgetting, nor by putting them in a closet" (MP, 13).² Therefore, she eventually complies. In addition to the tapes, *Musta passi* utilizes other materials, such as Juhani's novels and memories and Anita's own memories.

While *Kahden maailman rajalla* and *Pietarin valot* are quite traditional novels that tell their stories chronologically, *Musta passi* is more modern. Its narration is fragmented into short chapters, and it intertwines different periods of time from the czarist era to the end of the 1990s. As the narrator, Anita reflects on the memories she is transmitting as well as her own

² The author has translated the excerpts from the novels from Finnish into English.

thoughts and feelings at the time of writing the novel. Hence, even though *Musta passi* deals first and foremost with Eero's memories, it also tells about Anita and other family members.

Bringing out Memories of Ingrians

Ingrians (or Ingrian Finns) are a Finnish-speaking minority group that used to live in the area formerly known as Ingria, located around St. Petersburg. They moved there during the period of Swedish rule in Finland in the seventeenth century, when both Finland and Ingria were eastern parts of the Swedish Empire. This period lasted until the beginning of the eighteenth century, when Ingria became part of the Russian Empire. In the first decade of the nineteenth century, Finland also became an autonomous part of Russia, the Grand Duchy of Finland (1809–1917). When Finland gained its independence in 1917, Ingria became a part of Soviet Russia. The Ingrians were persecuted in the Soviet Union especially under the Stalinist era. Due to massive population transfers, most of the Ingrians were resettled to different parts of the Soviet Union. Since the beginning of the 1990s, more than 30,000 Ingrians have moved to Finland as returning migrants.

Until recent times, the history of the Ingrian Finns has not been very well known by the general public, even though it has been researched (Savolainen 2021; Zidan 2019). For example, Finnish history textbooks have said next to nothing about this group. The history of the Ingrian Finns has been a symbolically and politically charged topic in Finland, but it has not been totally silenced. For example, numerous memoirs and novels have been published on the topic over the years. According to Ulla Savolainen (2021, 910), the problem seems to be, at least partially, in the reception: the representations have not managed to circulate long in the popular consciousness because of various historical, political, and cultural reasons.

During the past years, however, a great deal of work has been done to make the memories and experiences of the Ingrian Finns heard. The “Ingria and Ingrians – recording histories, preserving memories” project (2018–2020), for instance, has collected memories and materials regarding Ingrians and improved the usability of the already existing archives concerning them. In 2020, the National Archives of Finland launched a five-year project to map the political persecution of Finns (many of them Ingrian Finns) in the Soviet Union. Moreover, the National Museum of Finland held the exhibition “Ingrians – the Forgotten Finns” in 2020 on the history of the Ingrians in the Soviet Union.³ The same year, Lea and Santeri Pakkanen published the non-fiction book *Se tapahtui meille* (“It Happened to Us”), in which they tell about the history of the Ingrians in the Soviet Union through the past of their own family.

This chapter contributes to the growing body of research on the history and memory of the Ingrians by examining *Kahden maailman rajalla*, *Pietarin valot*, and *Musta passi*. By chronicling the past of the Konkka family, the novels offer interpretations of who the Ingrians were and what happened to them. In this way, they participate in creating and shaping the cultural memory related to the Ingrians’ history. Through cultural memory, communities aim to pass down the memories and values that they deem important. What is remembered and how are always negotiated in cultural memory, and it is justified to say that the experiences of the Ingrians have not yet really been accepted as a part of the national narrative in Finland. (See Assmann 1995; Bouma 2019, 53.)

³ The same exhibition was supposed to have been held in the State Russian Museum and Exhibition Centre in St. Petersburg in 2021, but it was canceled at the last minute (Riihinen 2021).

The family memories represented in the chosen novels are transnational because they deal with Ingrian Finns living in the Soviet Union and Finland. The novels offer a micro-perspective of one family on large-scale historical, social, and political turbulences by describing what the Soviet Terror meant for individuals and families. Moreover, while the novels open a view onto the intergenerational memories of the Konkka family, the memories of the two brothers are also at the forefront of this chapter. (See Švaříčková Slabáková 2021, 2.)

There are certain differences between the three family members regarding memories and remembering. Eero and Juhani share their own memories, but Anita deals mainly with the memories of the previous generations. Juhani and Eero do not question the truthfulness of their memories, but at times Anita has doubts concerning the memories of both brothers and the trustworthiness of memory in general.

In addition, there is the difference based on gender. In *Musta passi*, Anita sometimes emphasizes the different viewpoints of men and women. For example, she brings up her disappointment with men who claim to tell the truth but inevitably let her down by telling lies. She is also irritated by what she calls Eero's "manly smugness" (MP, 12, 249). On the other hand, Eero's attitudes toward women are at times dismissive (MP, 248–49). This kind of juxtaposition between men and women affects Anita's attitudes toward the memories of Juhani and Eero. Sometimes the juxtaposition makes apparent some of the gender roles inside the family, but it also hinders the transmission of the family memories.

Recollecting the Terror in the Russian Revolution and Civil War

In what follows, I will recount what the novels tell about the terror experienced and remembered by different family members. The novels bring forth two major phases of the Soviet Terror: the years of the Russian Revolution and civil war (1917–1923) and the Stalinist era (1927–1953). I connect the memories to their historical contexts, and whenever possible I compare the family members' memories and viewpoints represented in the different novels.

The early years of Soviet Russia are present in all three novels. The two novels by Juhani Konkka imply that the revolution did not surprise the Ingrians, as it was something that had been anticipated already for some time. According to the novels, the Ingrians supporting social reforms and nationalism felt enthusiastic and hopeful after the February Revolution of 1917. Then, the October Revolution caused neither rejoice nor despair in Toksovo. (PV, 36, 67.) At first, it seems to have had a vague impact on the life of the Ingrians. *Pietarin valot* tells that many Ingrians assumed that the newly independent Finland would occupy Karelia and also free the Ingrians. They therefore wait the whole summer of 1918 for the Finns to come.⁴ On the other hand, according to *Pietarin valot*, many Ingrians seemed to think that the Bolsheviks would not be able to keep power for very long. (PV, 72.) Neither of these wishes come true.

On the contrary, things started to develop in the opposite direction. The novels tell that in spring of 1919, Juhani and his father find the first signs of executions and a mass grave nearby their home village. The sounds of shooting can be heard in the nearby villages once or twice a week at night. (PV, 72, 111–112; KMR, 15–16.) The novels explain the context of the

⁴ After the October Revolution, Finland probably had moral pressure to help the Ingrians but officially was not willing to act.

shootings quite imprecisely, probably because the focus is on the teenager protagonist Juhani and his experiences. From a historical perspective, the shootings were related to the ongoing Russian civil war, in which the Red Army of the Bolsheviks fought against the monarchic White Army and other political groups. The novels tell that dead bodies were buried so carelessly in mass graves that different body parts remained visible. In addition, the wind brought the unbearable stench of rotting bodies from the mass grave to the villages, and it frightened both humans and animals (PV, 111–12, 178). The narrator of *Kahden maailman rajalla* states: “Horror took over the whole area” (KMR, 15, 16).

The novels describe how, at the same time, there is a rumor that the fathers of those sons who have gone to Finland will be arrested and kept as hostages until the sons come back and join the Red Army (KMR, 35). The Konkka family has good reason to be afraid. In the novels, the two grown sons, Mikko and Tauno, have gone to Finland in order to fight in the White Finnish voluntary forces (KMR, 8). *Pietarin valot* tells that Mikko deserts from the Red Army, travels to Finland, fights in the Estonian War of Independence against the Soviet Russia, and gets killed there (PV, 101–4; KMR, 8–9, 11). Moreover, the father Simo is known to hold anti-Soviet opinions.

One of the central veins of the Konkka family memories is visible here: the political activism of the men in the family. This is how Anita comments on it in *Musta passi*: “The men of the family were all fanatics; the fathers and sons resembled each other like lingonberries growing in the same tussock” (MP, 19). At the same time, the political views of the women are seldom referred to. Juhani writes that her sister Hilma supported communism (PV, 331–37), and Anita mentions that her grandmother was strongly against speaking Russian and did not

accept marriages between Ingrians and Russians (MP, 251). It seems that the women also had strict political opinions, but they are not considered essential in the family memories.

Kahden maailman rajalla tells that soon after the rumors about arrests start to circulate, the father Simo is taken into custody. His imprisonment does not last long, because he manages to escape; indeed, escaping seems to have been quite common (KMR, 36–38, 74). Anita states in *Musta passi*: “At that time, escaping was easy; the camps were not as efficiently organized as in the 1930s, and the people were different, too. They helped others to escape; the fear had not yet crushed them” (MP, 30). For some time after escaping, the father hides in a barn, and then he travels to Finland to promote the cause of the Ingrians (KMR, 81–111). Consequently, the Red Army soldiers arrest the mother of the family instead and take her to a prison camp. The mother’s arrest and time in the prison camp are depicted quite thoroughly in *Pietarin valot* and *Kahden maailman rajalla* (PV, 181–220). For example, according to the novels, Juhani tries to free his mother by offering himself to be incarcerated in her place, but the authorities do not consent (KMR, 148).

In *Musta passi*, Anita tells about the imprisonment in a slightly ironic way:

My Ingrian grandmother was sent to a camp in 1919. Concentration camp no. 2 was a lovely little institution in Leningrad, in the middle of a fresh and green park. During the summer evenings, the small birds sang in its old lime and oak trees so beautifully that it could break one’s heart. ... The park area was surrounded by a wall made of wrought iron and topped by a barbed-wire fence, and the militiamen were guarding the area with guns on their shoulders. It was almost impossible to escape over the wall, but my grandmother fled from the cabbage field where the prisoners were working. (MP, 30)

Moreover, Anita relates that her father had told about her grandmother's imprisonment and escape many times: "Jussi, my father, did not forget. He described his mother's escape so vividly that it became a part of the world of my nightmares" (MP, 33–34). The memories are transmitted to Anita through her father's novels and reminiscence in conversations. She is haunted by her father's memories, which reminds us of Marianne Hirsch's notion of postmemory. The concept refers to memories that have not been experienced by individuals themselves but "inherited" from the previous generation, who has suffered from traumas such as the Holocaust. While Hirsch uses the word "trauma," Alexander Etkind has suggested that it would be more accurate to talk about mourning. According to him, trauma is something that has been experienced by the self, while mourning responds to the condition of someone else. He also states that it is very difficult to verbalize traumas, while mourning can be put into words. (Hirsch 2012, 3–6; Etkind 2013, 14.) Anita belongs to the so-called postgeneration, and in many cases she deals with postmemories.

Juhani and Anita cannot forget what happened to the (grand)mother, but according to *Musta passi*, Eero does not remember his mother's experiences at all. Anita wonders:

Eero doesn't remember his mother's imprisonment. How can someone forget something like that? Maybe memory is practical; it adjusts to the social reality. ... A mother that has escaped from a prison camp is certainly not a merit for a member of a political youth organization and communist party. Remembering might have caused an internal conflict and problems in a country where the citizens were supposed to be glad and happy about living in the world's most equitable state. (MP, 33)

From the viewpoint of this chapter, forgetting is as interesting as remembering. In the Soviet Union, it was not appropriate to cherish memories of the sufferings of minority groups. What is more, as Etkind (2013, 9–11) has stated, the unpredictable and omnipresent nature of the Soviet Terror—which often turned against its executors and therefore blurred the border between offenders and victims—made it difficult to understand and remember its details. Etkind’s view is interesting in Eero’s case, because he lived his whole life in the Soviet Union and suffered from the Terror not only in his childhood but also in the Stalinist era. All this may have affected Eero’s individual memories, but also the collective forgetting of what had happened to the Ingrians. From the viewpoint of the family memories, it seems that Juhani and Anita, who lived in Finland, remembered what happened to the (grand)mother, while Eero, who lived in the Soviet Union, forgot that.

The novels tell that while the father of the family is in Finland and the mother in the prison camp, the family house is taken over by new masters, two Finnish communists. The Soviet authorities have decided that the family no longer owns its house, land, or property. (KMR, 176.) In one fell swoop, the family loses all its possessions. At this point it is getting clear that the family cannot stay in Ingria, and they must all flee to Finland. The mother manages to escape, and after a dangerous journey by foot, the family finally crosses the border between Soviet Russia and Finland, like many other Ingrian families at the time (MP, 30–31; KMR, 230–55; PV, 233–46).

The Family Disintegrates

According to Juhani Konkka’s novels, the family’s time as refugees in Finland is easy and difficult at the same time. The family does not have to fear for its safety, but like many other

Ingrians they feel homesick. In October 1920, Finland and Soviet Russia sign the Treaty of Tartu, which means peace between the two countries. Soviet Russia promises to give the Ingrians cultural autonomy and, more importantly, amnesty to those who decide to return to the Soviet Union (KMR, 316; Matley 1979, 5), although the latter is not mentioned in the final peace treaty.

Like many others, the Konkka family decides to go back home, even though they are unsure if it is safe. According to Matley (1979, 5), approximately 8,000 Ingrians fled to Finland in 1919, and about 5,000 of them returned to the Soviet Russia. In *Kahden maailman rajalla*, the older sons, Tauno and Juhani, stay in Finland. The novels do not clearly explain Juhani's decision regarding this. In *Musta passi*, however, Anita mentions in passing that her father "belonged to the White Guard; he was a child soldier that served as a messenger in the regiment of Northern Ingria" (MP, 34–35). The novels by Juhani Konkka also tell about his experiences as a messenger (KMR, 257–310; PV, 250–81). Due to his prior political activity against the Bolsheviks, he cannot go back home.

This is where the story of *Kahden maailman rajalla* ends. *Pietarin valot*, however, continues by chronicling what happens to the family after it is split across opposite sides of the border. Three years after deciding to stay in Finland, Juhani travels to Ingria to see his family. This is illegal, and he must do it secretly. When back home in Ingria, he learns that things are not going well. The father tells his son:

The whole time after returning home, it has been difficult. We didn't get back all the land we used to own. And we can't fertilize the small piece of land we got because we no longer own a horse to carry fertilizer from the city. ... They arrested me

immediately when we arrived, and they kept me in jail for the whole summer; we couldn't do the sowing, but the family had to live somehow. And even last winter, I was jailed for two months. They suspected me and imagined that as the former justice of the peace and village elder, I would agitate the people against the Soviet regime. The biggest sorrow, however, is that the children no longer respect their parents but see them as their mortal enemies. (PV, 340)

It turns out that the Soviet Russia did not keep the promise of amnesty, and the Ingrians are still persecuted for political reasons. Moreover, the children start to turn against their parents. Especially Hilma and Eero embrace the Bolshevist way of thinking. They are members of Komsomol, the political youth organization, and they want to become members of the Communist Party. (PV, 331–37.) In addition, Eero wants to go to the Party's school for minority people, which trains future political educators. According to *Musta passi*, the father does not accept this decision. The father and the son have a fight that leads to a permanent break between the two. (MP, 18, 44.)

This split between the parents and the children is noteworthy in the context of the early Soviet Union. When the Bolsheviks came to power in 1917, they believed that under socialism the idea of family would “wither away” (Goldman 1993, 1). They wanted to destroy the old bourgeois patriarchy, a family type that was prevalent in rural areas. (As context, it has been estimated that about 84% of Russians were peasants at the time.) The new ideology promoted, for example, personal freedom, gender equality, and independence but it also implied that the children belonged to the state. These new principles were quite incompatible with the traditional economy and customs of village life. (Goldman 1993, 1, 145; Khlinovskaja Rockhill 2010, 51–52.) The novels do not explicitly address or reflect on

this topic, but it can be argued that the new Soviet rule aimed to break the traditional family bonds—and in the case of the Konkka family, it succeeded. The family was now shattered for political reasons, as well as being divided across the border between Finland and the Soviet Union.

Memories of Stalinist Terror

While *Kahden maailman rajalla* and *Pietarin valot* tell about Juhani's youth, *Musta passi* ("Black Passport") focuses on Eero's life. The title of the novel refers to the serious problems that Eero gets into due to his Finnish background. Even though he is an eager supporter of the Soviet ideology, he faces many obstacles. *Musta passi* tells that in 1932, Eero is expelled from the political youth organization due to his Finnish roots in a peasant family (MP, 98).

At the same time, according to the novel, the whole Konkka family is a victim of the liquidation of *kulaks*, or independent wealthy farmers. Eero gets a letter from his cousin that says: "Your father that has been the most ardent opposer of the kolkhozes has now been declared a *kulak*, and your family has been banished to Siberia" (MP, 98.) The deportations of the Ingrians started with the banishing of peasants labelled as *kulaks* and continued with the minority groups living near the border between Finland and Soviet Union. One of the reasons for this population transfer was to break the resistance of the Ingrians. It has been estimated that 18,000 Ingrians were deported in 1929–1930. (Reuter 2020, 6–7.)

Musta passi tells how Eero starts to seek justice for his family and himself. He writes an appeal to the president Mikhail Kalinin, who declares that the treatment of the Konkka family has been carried out incorrectly. The family is freed, except for the father, and Eero gets back

his membership in the party (MP, 103–4.) According to Anita, the narrator of *Musta passi*, Eero never talked about what happened to his father. She says:

– He most likely felt guilty about it. My father once said that Eero guaranteed the mother and the younger siblings to get them out of Siberia, but not the father. When my father [Juhani] met his oldest sister Hilma decades later in Finland, he ranted about how Eero had left their father to die alone in Siberia like an abandoned dog. Hilma defended Eero. She said that the father could not be freed because he was so strongly against the Soviet Union. (MP, 103)

Here one can see how different kinds of memories and viewpoints are mixed in *Musta passi*. The excerpt begins with Anita's assumptions of how Eero may have experienced a sense of complicity in his own father's death. Then Anita reminisces on what her father [Juhani] had said about it. Next, Anita either tells about a situation that she has witnessed herself or, alternatively, transmits something she has heard someone tell about. Everything is filtered through Anita's narration, and it is sometimes difficult to know whose memories and opinions are in question.

More importantly, it is striking that while the imprisonment of the (grand)mother in 1919 is dealt with in detail in the novels, the memories of the father's banishment to Siberia are scarce, and almost non-existent. Either the family did not know what he had experienced in Siberia or the memories were forgotten, even though his death is often mentioned. The following passage from *Musta passi*, in which Anita laconically reviews what the family members recollect about the father's exile, is a rare example:

– Besides, father had a lover there, Hilma added.

Whether my grandfather had female company or not, he died anyway in Siberia in 1933, in a small village called Rybnoye by the river Angara, in the middle of the taiga... . The official cause of death was typhoid fever, but maybe he died of disappointment and loneliness, like my father assumed. (MP, 103)

A simple explanation for the scarcity of the (grand)father's memories about the exile is that, since he was separated from his family, no one was witnessing his life and the family therefore had no memories about it. He himself did not survive to tell anything. What is more, as noted above, the topic of the father's exile and death was volatile due to the disagreement within the family about Eero's role in his father's fate. This may have affected how the family remembered the events. In *Musta passi*, Anita regrets that she never asked Eero what the price was for getting his party card back. She writes:

Fifteen years ago, I was so naïve that I believed everything men said to me. But now I no longer believe that the negotiations with Moscow were as easy as Eero had said. I don't believe they invited him there to chat about family relations. At the time, his brother in Finland wasn't really a good recommendation for giving the party card back—especially because the brother publicly promoted ideas of the Academic Karelia Society and supported the efforts for Greater Finland. ... He also wrote newspaper articles in which he opposed Stalin. Did they really believe that Eero was not in contact with his dangerous brother? ... It is much more likely that he was recruited as an informer. (MP, 105)

In the 1930s, Juhani was politically active in Finland. He became a dangerous liability to the siblings and parents living in the Soviet Union. He was one of the founding members of the National Socialist Union of Finland (later the Finnish-Socialist Party). Despite their common name, the national socialism supported by Konkka was not similar to the national socialism of Germany. (Kangaspuro 1999; Linna 2014; Silvennoinen, Tikka, and Roselius 2016, 254–55.) The supporters of the movement were indeed attracted to fascism—and they used uniforms and swastikas, as influences were taken from the Germans—but when Hitler came to power, the Union started to distance itself from the Nazis. (Soikkanen 2002.) Nonetheless, Konkka was a fascist (Silvennoinen, Tikka, and Roselius 2016, 254–58).

Moreover, the Academic Karelia Society (1922–1944), mentioned in the above excerpt, was a Finnish nationalist right-wing association. Though powerful in the 1920s–1930s, after the Second World War it was considered fascist and therefore disbanded. The concept of Greater Finland, also mentioned above, refers to an ideology according to which peoples living in Karelia and beyond who spoke Finnic languages belonged to the Finnish nation and should be integrated into Finland, along with their homelands. Because of his political opinions, Juhani must have been seen as an enemy of the Soviet Union.

Musta passi also recounts from Eero's perspective how the Stalinist purges began around the mid-1930s, when Eero was working as a teacher in a Finnish school in Petrozavodsk, in Soviet Karelia. One day he is invited to the Ministry of Education, where he receives an order stating that he is no longer a qualified teacher and must therefore be released. The order refers to a new addition to the statutes, Section 34a, and only later does Eero learn that it means he is an enemy of the people. (MP, 121–22.) Eero no longer dares to sleep at home, because he has heard about the black cars that take men away from their homes at night.

This is where Eero's life as an outlaw begins. He spends years traveling back and forth across the vast Soviet Union, trying to find a place to settle down. It turns out to be impossible because of the "34a" stamp in his passport. *Musta passi* tells that at the same time, the Ingrian villages are devastated (MP, 144). That time was indeed hard for the Ingrians: approximately 26,000–27,000 Ingrians were taken from their home villages in 1935–1936 for ethnic and political reasons (Reuter 2020, 7). Finally, after a long and winding flight, Eero manages to return to Karelia. He marries a Russian woman and, to save his children from discrimination, does not teach them Finnish. (MP, 251.) The "black passport" that stated Eero's nationality has made his life very difficult, and he therefore tries to get rid of any markers of Finnishness in his own family.

Although the focus of *Musta passi* is on Eero's tragic life, the novel tells about the other family members, too. They are all persecuted in the Stalinist era, except for Juhani, who is safe in Finland. The family memories insinuate that Juhani's political activism in Finland put in danger the other family members in the Soviet Union. Anita, however, thinks that her father must have been ignorant about those risks (MP, 111–12). In addition, the family memories imply that Eero may have been partially guilty for his father's tragic end.

The Multivoiced Cultural Memory of the Konkka Family

The three protagonists of the three novels—Juhani, Eero, and Anita—look at the history of their family from different viewpoints. Juhani shares his personal memories of the Terror that took place at the time of the revolution, and he remembers how the revolution scattered the family. As an eyewitness of exceptional events and as a nationalist who had managed to

escape to Finland, Juhani Konkka testified about the tragic destiny of his people. He even published the same story twice but felt it did not provoke a sufficiently sympathetic response (MP, 34). As Konkka's novels are viewed as media of cultural memory of the Ingrians' past, one could talk about collective ignoring instead of collective remembering.

Eero's memories about the Soviet Terror are mainly from the times of the Stalinist purges, and he has a problematic relation with what happened to his family members during that period. Eero was one of the few Ingrians who had managed to survive the persecution in the Soviet Union. While Juhani had written about the past from the perspective of the Bolsheviks' enemies, Eero shed light on the events from the viewpoint of a communist. In a letter to Anita, he writes: "You could write about my life, about the two brothers that lived in different societies and circumstances" (MP, 249). He also wanted to explain what kind of person he was and what his life had been like. This was probably linked to the rumors that he must have sold himself to the KGB because he had survived the persecution (MP, 7).

Anita does not have any personal memories of the Soviet Terror because she never lived in the Soviet Union. According to *Musta passi*, she still feels haunted by the traumatic memories and mourning of the previous generations, and she must therefore write about them. She has learned about the past through her father's novels and Eero's tapes but also in discussions with different family members. For Anita, the Ingrian identity is problematic. She writes: "Being Ingrian bothers me like a stone in a shoe. I haven't been able to be proud of belonging to a persecuted people... . Being Ingrian feels like having a disability" (MP, 24). In my interpretation, the Ingrian roots make Anita feel uncomfortable, as if she too has a kind of "black passport." It keeps her from forgetting her family's suffering and moving on. Due to their transnational Ingrian-Finnish identity, Anita, Juhani, and Eero each live in their own

ways on the border of two worlds without completely belonging to either. In the Soviet Union, the Finnish roots make Eero an enemy of the state, while in Finland the Ingrian identity is not fully recognized as Finnish.

One might wonder if it would be easier for Anita to identify with Ingrians if she worked with the memories of her mother and aunt instead of those of Juhani and Eero. Anita's suspicion about men may make it more difficult for her to relate to the past of her family. From this viewpoint, it is noteworthy that she feels very strongly for two female characters in the family history: the grandmother in the prison camp and Lyyli, Juhani's little sister, who dies as a child during the period that the family lives as refugees in Finland (MP, 34). Even though the family memories primarily focus on Juhani and Eero, Anita also brings forth memories about the girls and women in her family. All things considered, *Musta passi* can be seen as an act of mourning; it is full of fragmented stories about the tragic past of the family and the Ingrians more generally (see Etkind 2013). Moreover, Anita's problematic relationship with ambiguous and grinding family memories increases the burden of grief.

The novels draw a picture of the members of the Konkka family as distinct individuals with their own hopes, ambitions, fears, flaws, and sorrows. The men of the family make different choices in their lives: Juhani flees, the father stays but sticks to his political convictions, and Eero becomes a communist. The situations are often complicated. Eero's steadfast communism does not save him from persecution, but it may have saved his life. Juhani, in turn, tries to promote the cause of the Ingrians from Finland, but in doing so he puts his family in the Soviet Union at risk of death. Even though the ideologies and ways of acting supported by Juhani and Eero may be incompatible with modern democratic values, it is important to remember even the controversial issues (Andersen and Törnqvist-Plewa 2016,

6). At best, remembering the downsides of certain political ideas or ways of implementing them may help to prevent the same kinds of problems today and in the future. Furthermore, it is easier to understand the past if it is taken as it truly was—being sometimes problematic. Literature, as a medium of cultural memory, is well suited for displaying and juxtaposing divergent and contested memories and creating mnemonic multiperspectivity (Erlil 2011, 150–51). The novels discussed in this chapter challenge over-simplified ideas of national identities and participate in the molding of multifarious cultural memory concerning Ingrian Finns.

The novels do not represent the characters only as innocent and passive victims of the Terror, but rather as people acting, resisting, and taking risks in rapidly changing situations. They make choices, stand up for what they believe in, and sometimes even betray other people if they must. The Soviet Union had political reasons for tormenting the men of the Konkka family, but at certain points, almost anyone with Finnish roots became a potential threat for the Soviet system, as highlighted by the large-scale population transfers and the liquidation of the Ingrian villages represented in *Musta passi*. The three novels examined in this chapter form a unique and profound material for studying the cultural memory of the Ingrians through the lens of one family. Written by authors of different generations, they bring forth the life stories of several members of the family. Together, the three novels tell a layered and multivoiced story of what happened to the family in the Soviet Union. Moreover, taken together, they cover the whole period of the Soviet state, due to which it is possible to perceive different kinds of periods in the history of the Ingrians. Even though the novels focus on one family, they are valuable for anyone interested in the history of the Ingrians, the Soviet Union, and Finland. While it has been stated that the main purpose of family memories is to foster family identity (Švaříčková Slabáková 2021, 12), in the case of the

literature by Juhani and Anita Konkka, the most important aims have been to recall the Soviet Terror, to reflect the transnational identities of the Ingrian Finns, and, especially in Anita's novel, to reveal the problems and contradictions related to these issues.

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