

## Radio Ahlqvist

### *the life we left behind*

Once we were listening to radio – there was a radio drama on – and we thought: “Radio dramas are similar in every language, you can always distinguish one even though you don’t know anything about the language.” It’s like the clichés of emotional expression would be the same in every country.

Our friend told us a story about a song called Eldankajärven jää, or The Ice of the Lake Eldanka. According to him the song is the most played song of all times in a certain country – because during a war it was played in the radio so many times. Nobody heard the music though, because it was played for bombs not for people – it was played to scramble another signal that was supposed to detonate the radio-controlled land mines that were placed in a city.

The song our friend was talking about was made during the war, but actually he had mixed up two songs with each other. It was not The Ice of the Lake Eldanka that was played for the bombs, instead it was another one about a different lake, called Säkkijärven Polkka.

The mines that were installed around the city were waiting to explode when a three-note chord was played on the frequency the radio was tuned to, causing three tuning forks (of which each mine had a unique combination) to vibrate at once. When the army realized what was causing the random explosions in the city and how the radio mines functioned, they drove a radio car in to the city and started to play the polka. Säkkijärven Polkka was excellent radio signal scrambler, because it contains a huge variety of different notes in rapid succession. Also it was the only record they had at hand. According to some sources it was played 1500 times in a row, others say that it was played constantly for three months until the batteries of the mines were drained.

We translated the lyrics of the both songs. With Eldankajärven jää it was difficult because it’s hard to understand the words even in the original language. It is about a specific location and time, and has personal names known only in the original context. The lyrics were written by a soldier to entertain other soldiers. The melody was taken from a foxtrot called Ali Baba.

The polka was a combination of three different folk melodies gathered from the municipality of Säkkijärvi. The original Säkkijärven Polkka had no lyrics. After the war nostalgic lyrics were made for the song.

### *Congregatio de Propaganda Fide*

The first song appears to be a propaganda song, but was actually banned during the war because it revealed the horses didn’t have enough to eat and the soldiers used alcohol. The second song doesn’t seem to be propagandistic, but the story behind it, the legend of saving the city appears to be.

...and at last even the bourgeoisie stood in fear of the common people. For the masses promised to become king.

In 1928 Edgar Bernays wrote a book where he states that propaganda is necessary for our modern society. Without propaganda the society would descent in to chaos. He believed that in theory everybody can form their own opinions about politics and vote for whoever they like, or everybody can decide what commodities to buy. But in such situation people wouldn’t be able to make decisions at all. The political and economical life would become completely stagnant or chaotic if we would not have already accepted ‘the standardized mode of conduct’. According to Bernays we have voluntarily agreed to let an invisible government to decide for ourselves:

*THE conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society. Those who manipulate this unseen mechanism of society constitute an invisible government which is the true ruling power of our country.*

War is grim, and the tobacco so light that we can’t feel a thing.

*WE are governed, our minds are molded, our tastes formed, our ideas suggested, largely by men we have never heard of. This is a logical result of the way in which our democratic society is organized. Vast numbers of human beings must cooperate in this manner if they are to live together as a smoothly functioning society. [...] They govern us by their qualities of natural leadership, their ability to supply needed ideas and by their key position in the social structure.*

Boom-boom-boom, batteries boom and mortars bark, yes.

*WHO are the men who, without our realizing it, give us our ideas, tell us whom to admire and whom to despise, what to believe about the ownership of public utilities, about the tariff, about the price of rubber, about the Dawes Plan, about immigration; who tell us how our houses should be designed, what furniture we should put into them, what menus we should serve on our table, what kind of shirts we must wear, what sports we should indulge in, what plays we should see, what charities we should support, what pictures we should admire, what slang we should affect, what jokes we should laugh at?*

We have build poles to be able to shit in the holes in the ground, yes.

### ORGANIZING CHAOS

*Power, like love, is easier to experience than to measure.*

We arrived to the remote place and spent some time there. It was very peaceful. There was a radio transmitter, near the border between two neighbour states.

Two nations can’t occupy the same territory – if they want the same territory, or if both of the nations think that a particular territory is theirs, they must go to war and fight over it. The nation that has more resources (population, territory, natural resources, military forces, political stability) usually wins.

When a nation has power, it is able to secure its borders and perhaps acquire more resources to become more powerful. The ultimate goal of a nation is to gain hegemony over other nations.

*In addition, there is the consideration of that is sometimes called “the second face of power.” Getting other states to change might be called the directive or commanding method of exercising power. Command power can rest on inducements (“carrots”) or threats (“sticks”). But there is also an indirect way to exercise power. [...] This aspect of power –that is, getting others to want what you want– might be called indirect or co-optive power behavior. In assessing international power today, factors such as technology, education, and economic growth are becoming more important, whereas geography, population, and raw materials are becoming less important.*

The land of Karelia exists as a beautiful memory

*Co-optive power can rest on the attraction of one’s ideas or on the ability to set political agenda in a way that shapes the preferences the others express. [...] The ability to establish preferences tends to be associated with intangible power resources such as culture, ideology, and institutions.*

but still our hearts resonate,

*Soft co-optive power has is just as important as hard command power. If a state can make its power legitimate in the eyes of others, it will encounter less resistance to its wishes. If its culture and ideology are attractive, others will more willingly follow.*

We don’t have Säkkijärvi anymore, but at least we have the polka!

### *We Refugees*

*Nation-state means a state that makes nativity or birth [nascita] (that is, naked human life) the foundation of its own sovereignty.*

We have trampled the earth and conquered the ground.

*We could conceive of Europe not as an impossible ‘Europe of the nations’, whose catastrophe one can already foresee in the short run, but rather as an aterritorial or extraterritorial space in which all the (citizen and non-citizen) residents of the European states would be in a position of exodus or refuge; the status of European would then mean the being-in-exodus of the citizen.*

Since the shores most loved ones have been left behind,

*It is also the case that, given the by now unstoppable decline of the nation-state and the general corrosion of traditional political-juridical categories, the refugee is perhaps the only thinkable figure for the people of our time and the only category in which one may see today – at least until the process of dissolution of the nation-state and of its sovereignty has achieved full completion – the forms and limits of a coming political community.*

shall the wanderer in unfamiliar places have consolation,

*It is even possible that, if we want to be equal to the absolutely new tasks ahead, we will have to abandon decidedly, without reservation, the fundamental concepts through which we have so far represented the subjects of the political (Man, the Citizen and its rights, but also the sovereign people, the worker, and so forth) and build our political philosophy a new starting from the one and only figure of the refugee.*

There never was a place called Lake Eldanka – the name is a translation error. Somebody had misread the name from a foreign map. The territory of Lake Joldanka is complete wilderness, devoid of any inhabitants. Säkkijärvi did exist in a municipality with the same name, but it has dried a long time ago. We realized it a short time ago when we decided to make a drawing of the lake according to a map of the area.

Société Anonyme Ahlqvist

Quotes from  
Edgar Bernays: Propaganda (1928)  
Joseph S.Nye, JR.: Bound to Lead, The Changing Nature of American Power (1990)

Giorgio Agamben: Beoynd Human Rights (1993)

*The Ice of the Lake Eldanka*

The ice of the Eldanka Lake  
Is part of the life we left behind  
Now there are the Foss and the Sass and the booms and the guards, yes.  
In the dugout we have the stove,  
Here we play rummy and poker.  
We have the Fritz and the Max and the Petropamax, yes.  
We have trampled the earth and conquered the ground.  
We have dug holes and picked for louses.  
War, is grim, and the tobacco is so light that we can't feel a thing.  
Boom-boom-boom, batteries boom and mortars bark, yes.

Speck and watery soup we have  
And the lovely rear of a dear  
that we have been frying and burning in the kit and then stuffed in our  
bellies, yes.  
The horses have no weeds,  
They eat the wood from the stable walls.  
Some of them have sand in the bowels and they can't poo, yes.  
We have been cutting and snapping  
Triggered land mines and alcohol rations.  
We miss the missus,  
when we eat those vitamin pills,  
but we can't get home leave, while shooting at the Russians, yes.

Kis-Kis Hills,  
There is the Egg and Sausagehill,  
But when we lost the Egg we were left only with the Sausage, yes.  
In Röhö there is the road of Tiltu,  
muddy and dirty it leads to Uhtua.

Here is the Bieloje, Tschirni and Tshornoje Ozero, yes.  
In the midst of the pines is the Women's Auxiliary canteen,  
Mrs. Lunkreen boils the coffee in there.  
Oh boys – god forsake –  
Now bring my gas mask.  
We have build poles to be able to shit in the holes in the ground, yes.



N 55 17 25  
E 20 58 06

N 55 17 41  
E 20 59 26

N 55 14 57  
E 20 56 31

X Location of the radios

● The colony

--- The path to the  
radios in the border

*Säkkijärven polkka*

The land of Karelia exists as a beautiful memory,  
but still our hearts resonate,  
when we get to hear from the accordion players fingers,  
the Polka of Säkkijärvi!  
that Polka again brings past to mind  
and creates strange yearning in the chest.  
Hey, player, let the accordion play  
the Polka of Säkkijärvi!

It makes the young and the old dance,  
there is no polka like it!  
With it even the life of a beggar will be like  
the Polka of Säkkijärvi!  
There is splashing of the waves  
there is the swaying of the pines.  
The sound of Karelia is - everybody knows it -  
the Polka of Säkkijärvi!

Come, come girl, now to dance with me, as the polka so gently rings.  
Hoy! A horse shall be sad and bite it's teeth, because it has a miraculously  
huge head!

Come, come girl, now to dance with me because we have joy and the sum-  
mery weather!  
We don't have Säkkijärvi anymore, but at least we have the polka!

Since the shores most loved ones have been left behind  
shall the wanderer in unfamiliar places have consolation, while listening to  
the music full of yearning:  
the Polka of Säkkijärvi!

It's just a polka, but such a polka  
that it leads to the road of remembrance.  
It is the sound of beautiful Karelia:  
the Polka of Säkkijärvi!

Come, come girl, now to dance with me, as the polka so gently rings.  
Hoy! A horse shall be sad and bite it's teeth, because it has a miraculously  
huge head!

Come, come girl, now to dance with me because we have joy and the sum-  
mery weather!  
We don't have Säkkijärvi anymore, but at least we have the polka!