

Thanksgiving from Võrumaa

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Võru County Central Library

The process of development of the Estonian exile literature in the Võru County Central Library

The first books of Estonian exile literature – “Birds in a Cage” (“Linnud puuris”), “Mark’s Mutability” (“Markuse muutumised”) by V. Uibopuu, “The Musician of a Small Town” (“Väikelinna moosekant”) and “A Travel Book” (“Reisiraamat”) by A. Adson – reached the library in January 1988.

The call of the County Representation made in spring 1989 in Canada to donate the Estonian literature published in exile for Estonia was answered by the county organizations, incl the Toronto Corporation of the Inhabitants of Võru (*Võrulaste Koondis Torontos*, chairman Leo Puurits), with the decision to support the libraries of their birthplaces. As a result of this praiseworthy initiative on June 16 the library inventory was supplemented with 133 titles, including books by S. Ekbaum, A. Kalmus, B. Kangro, R. Kolk, A. Mälk, and others. In October the avid readers of Võru got 96 new books, including also translation literature (by M. Waltari, K. Hamsun, et al). By the end of the year there were 351 books of exile literature, 242 of them by the Estonian authors. The periodicals were represented by “Mana”, “Triinu” and “Tulimuld”.

In June 1990, 320 books of exile literature reached Võrumaa. The readers got hold of translations of world literature: “Gone with the Wind”, “Madame Dorthea”, etc., but also the diaries of A. Kallas and “Beautiful Days” (“Ilusad päevad”) by Alma Teder that turned out to be extremely popular.

In December we received books from Australia, sent by V. Wilder. We were happy about “Australian Estonians ‘78” and “Australian Estonians in Word and Deed” (“Austraalia eestlased sõnas ja teos”). In the accompanying note of June 10, 1990 V. Wilder wrote: “The Võru County Central Library is meant to get 3 boxes of books, all in all 138 titles, 54 kg. The books have been donated by the local Sydney Estonians, including former inhabitants of Võru Mrs Ülle Slamer and Mrs Helju Kimmel. I, in my turn, have tried to include books by authors from Võrumaa because from my visit to your library last summer I remember the interest and care with which the Central Library of Võrumaa followed, appreciated and collected the works of especially those writers who have left abroad from the neighborhood”.

The Swedish Corporation of Estonian Culture (*Rootsi Eesti Kultuuri koondis*) presented us with Christmas books and the periodical “Tulimuld”. The readers of Võru got hold of the memoirs by Karl Eerme (“Päevata päevad ja ööta ööd”) who had been the editor of the “Võru Teataja” in 1925–1935.

By the end of 1990 the collection of the Estonian exile literature had 682 titles in 1,272 copies. A separate room was set up containing alongside with the exile literature also books published before 1940. These were often read by elderly people who had lived through the war and/or were in correspondence with their relatives abroad. The exile books were read by the men who had been in the Czech hell themselves, or fought in the Estonian Legion, in the battalion of A. Rebane; people came to look for information about the fate of their wartime comrades and friends. They also asked for the books by men from their home village.

In March 1992 we received the biggest delivery of books so far from Canada. The books were donated by Linda Merivee, Salme Vesi, Endel Talve and others. The Meremäe

Library got books from Helgi Rosen, and the Krabi Library from Salme and August Tuvikene. An extract from the letter of August Tuvikene who visited the library in August of the same year: "I cannot describe in words my feeling to be among those of my own. We never forgot Estonia in exile. We prayed for Estonia. I am happy that the books we've sent are in good hands. We did not believe that those memoirs written in exile, the nostalgic recollections could be of interest to readers. These have been important for us."

Luule Andersson writes in her letter accompanying the delivery of Boras Estonian Society sent in May: "This is a scout troop. This time all the books are from them. I have only packed these. The scouts have their own rooms, with years they've been donated books."

In 1993 we received books from the Estonian Archives in the United States, mostly from the collection of E. Ernits. A Christmas present came from the Swedish society "Estonian Help" ("Eesti Abi"), including the collection of poetry "Do You Remember?" ("Kas mäletad?") by Kalju Ahven from Võrumaa.

As a result of the second campaign of county organizations "Exile Books to Homeland" conducted in Toronto in May 1995 Estonian exile literature reached all the village libraries of Võrumaa. Endel Talve presented the library "Kalevipoeg" in leather binding.

On October 27, 2001 the Toronto Tartu Institute sent to Võru 26 boxes of books given mostly to the libraries of the county. On June 10, 2002 Endel Aruja informed us about a new delivery and his worry: "Although with years the Institute has sent to Estonia about 7,000 cube feet of material we still have about 200 more boxes. The problem is not in packing or in the postage but in what to send to whom. A better solution could be your positive answer to my present urgent request." The Võru County Central Library asked for a few special titles, exile poetry and the journal "Triinu" that we received on December 22.

The last bigger donations from the Tartu Institute came on August 8, 2003 (16 boxes), November 24 (6 boxes) and April 30, 2004 (10 boxes). As the first books had arrived more than ten years earlier, these were used mostly to replace the books tattered by reading.

In recent years the library has got books from Juta Mitt, Rein Neggo, Mall Weiderrpass who have supplemented our collection in the field of mathematics, music and medicine. The parcel sent by Evy Laamann-Kalbus has to be unpacked, and we have had a very pleasant correspondence with Enda-Mai Michelson-Holland.

Raimond Kolk and his library

The meeting with Raimond Kolk in the library on February 21, 1990 turned into a memorable event due to the agreeable ways of the writer and the zither-playing of Juhan Saar. R. Kolk read us his poem "A Poem" ("Luuletus") for he thought it would represent best a writer who has had to publish his books himself.

On November 3, 1992 R. Kolk died. On May 19, 1993 the library received a letter from Oskar Kruus. "I have been authorized to negotiate with five Estonian libraries about the delivery of the books of R. Kolk. I begin with Võru because a major part of his poetry is in the Võru dialect and so best understood by its speakers." From a letter of Jaan Kolk to O. Kruus: "Me and my brother are very grateful that you've agreed to help us take the library of Raimond to Estonia. We are also very pleased that the Võru County Central Library is willing to have them."

In August people from Võru travelled to Stockholm and packed to books (22 boxes). The library of R. Kolk was very rich containing naturally very many collections of poetry but also rarities like "Eduard Viiralt 1898–1954" (Lund, 1954), "Estonia in Sweden" („Eesti Rootsisis", Lund, 1976), "The Book of Life of Marie Under" („Marie Underi eluraamat" I-II, Lund, 1974). All the books got a tiny green stamp and a note saying „A book from the library

of Raimond Kolk“. In August 1995 when the library opened its doors in its new home at Jüri Street 54, the people of Võru could begin reading the inheritance of Raimond Kolk (2,437 books).

On February 17, 1999 the library celebrated the 75th anniversary of R. Kolk, inviting his sons Peeter and Jaan. “Thank you for the invitation. I hope to come to Võru but my brother Peeter unfortunately cannot. I would talk about Raimond under the title “Raimond and the Crawfish King” (“Raimond ja Vähikuningas”). The Crawfish King marked for the son of R. Kolk Võrumaa and his childhood memories about his father. Unfortunately a blizzard stopped J. Kolk in fulfilling his sure wish to come to Võru. The meeting with the sisters of R. Kolk, Ellen Aasmann and Malle Mändmets, was very cordial. The sisters talked about the fondness of their brother of books: when father sent his son to plough in the field, he secretly took a book with him.

Donators

Salme Vesi – a friend and donator of the Võru County Central Library. In September 2000 the library addressed the Estonians abroad to support the purchase of Part IV of “Impossible to Blanket” (“Võimatu vaikida”) by Hilda Sabbo with 3,000 kroons. From the annual report for the year 2000 of the Corporation of the Inhabitants of Võru: “Support for the Central Library of Võrumaa to buy the book by H. Sabbo. Considerable amount for the support got during the summer meeting of the board of the Corporation of the Inhabitants of Võru. The Võru County Central Library sent its letter of thanks and calendars in good taste for the Corporation and every donator” (from: “Vaba Eestlane” April 5, 2001).

The library has been repeatedly visited by Oswald W. Lepisk from the US. In June 1992 he left with a sincere wish to present his personal library to the people of Võrumaa. In August we got a boxful of books, including “The Dinging Zither” (“Kumisev kannel”) by E. Ilbak, “The History of the Estonian Music” by J. Aavik, and other books.

In early 1994, O.W. Lepisk sent us books again together with a list and a request: “In my last letter I mentioned that I’ve consulted the Minnesota Estonian library and we could send you about 200 books more in case you don’t have them. Enclosed is the list of the books; please cross out those you have already, and return me the list. I cannot guarantee when I will have been successful in obtaining all the needed books so that the Võru County Central Library had a complete collection of the Estonian literature in exile, but this is my aim.” At the end of 1999 he sent us the unique collection of 37 volumes with abundant photos on World War II published in the United States in 1977–1983.

In January 1995 a former inhabitant of Võru Arvo Johari sent us a manuscript from the year 1943: “The Activities of the Võrumaa Self-Defense Troop from the Liquidation of the Home Guard in Summer 1940 until January 1942” (“Omakaitse Võrumaa Maleva tegevus Kaitseliidu likvideerimisest 1940. a. suvel kuni jaanuarini 1942. a.”) and other copybooks with memoirs. On September 17, 1999 the library was visited by the prime minister Mart Laar who borrowed the manuscript for reading. We wrote about it to A. Johari but his son Enno Johari answered that his father had died 3 years earlier: “As to his memoirs, my father had a strong wish – after Estonia had become independent – to send this homeland hoping that these would be of interest and preserved there. It is good that Mart Laar found them and was interested.” Altogether the library has 10 manuscripts of A. Johari.

In October 1996 Heino Puhk sent us the book “Estonia 1940 – Historical Geography” (“Eesti 1940 - ajalooline geograafia”); on May 28, 1998 we received a letter: “In September 1996 I sent you as the author’s present the reference book “Estonia 1940 – Historical Geography”. I appreciate your direct answer on its receipt. Your nice letter enclosed two photos of your new

library; very beautiful – the book is a pledge of freedom of Estonia! Enclosed are seven more copies of the above-mentioned book, also meant as a present. Please distribute them among the libraries in your county as you like.”

We have received books from the Minnesota Estonian Society, and we are grateful to the Society for the paying for the subscription of the “National Geographic” magazine. Books have been sent by Elmar Saarniit, and “with always domestic greetings” by Valev Uibopuu.

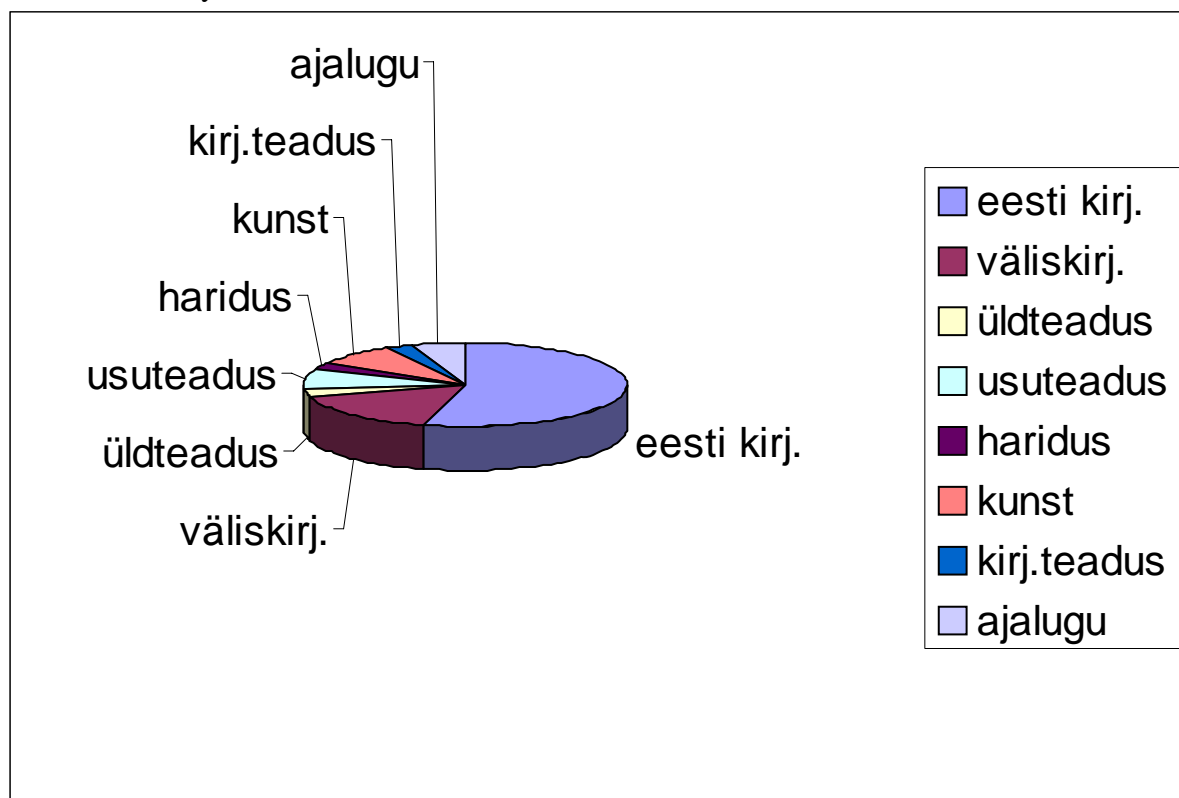
Bernard Kangro and his literary prize of the Võru County Government

Our correspondence with Bernard Kangro began in 1989 as we received from him books “An Island Sunk in the Sea” (“Merre vajunud saar”), “The School-Town Valga” (“Koolilinn Valga”), “Letters on the Novel” (“Kirjad romaanist”) and “The Estonian Students’ Society Veljesto” (“EÜS Veljesto”). In spring 1990 he sent us the newly-published “Estonian Literature in Exile” (“Eesti kirjakuulutaja eksiilis”) that was badly needed by librarians who knew at that time very little about exile authors and their work. We were always happy to get new issues of the journal “Tulimuld”.

On September 14, 1990 we marked the 80th birthday of B. Kangro in the culture house “Kannel” and Jaan Eilart read us out his greetings. The Võru County Government awarded B. Kangro a prize for his literary work. Later the prize got his name and it has been awarded 16 times. The list of the winners is enclosed.

The Collection and Its Users

Legend: Estonian literature, foreign literature, science, religion, education, art, literary criticism, history



Andmed aastate lõikes/ Annual statistics

2000 2660 (külastused)/ Visits 8959 (laenutused)/ Books borrowed 6063 (ilukirjandus)/ Fiction 2896 (teaduskirjandus)/ Science	2001 2278 (külastused)/ Visits 7588 (laenutused)/ Books borrowed 4515 (ilukirjandus)/ Fiction 3073 (teaduskirjandus)/ Science
2002 2139 (külastused)/ Visits 7083 (laenutused)/ Books borrowed 1130 (ilukirjandus)/ Fiction 659 (teaduskirjandus)/ Science	2003 1897 (külastused)/ Visits 6529 (laenutused)/ Books borrowed 3701 (ilukirjandus)/ Fiction 2828 (teaduskirjandus)/ Science

An inspection of the collection in spring 2006 listed 1,200 titles, more than a half of them Estonian literature followed by foreign literature and books on history. The latter is dominated by memoirs. The module of the electronic data base used since May 1998 has registered 227 borrowings of “Beautiful Days” (“Ilusad päevad”) by A. Teder. Considering that the book was received in 1990 we can double the figure. There are waiting lists for the books “Gone with the Wind”, “Desiree”, and the trilogy by T. Gulbrannsen.

The Gallery of the Authors of Võrumaa

In 2004–2005 the library compiled the Gallery of the Authors of Võrumaa. The godfather of the idea was Oskar Kruus. It contains writers born or related to Võrumaa. Showcases exhibit books, if possible signed by the author. The Võru County Central Library is very grateful to all those people who have sent their creation to Võru and made this way our library richer. We are grateful for the cordial and unforgettable meetings with Valeria Kimberg-Kotkas, Helle Martin, Helga and Enn Nõu and all the other good people.

Translated by Anne Lange