

THE DEPICTION OF RUSSIANS IN POST-WAR ESTONIAN LITERATURE

RUSŲ VAIZDAVIMAS POKARINĖJE ESTŲ LITERATŪROJE

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Summary

The Second World War had a major impact on Estonian society and culture. Estonia was one of the states that lost its independence and Estonian literature was split into two parts: Soviet Estonian literature and Estonian exile literature. These were absolutely different, notably in the second half of the 1940s and in the first half of the 1950s. Literature was an ideological weapon in Soviet Estonia, but exile literature concentrated on the question of nationality and the fate of Estonians.

The article analyses Estonian prose fiction depicting the events of the Second World War, concentrating on the depiction of Russians, using the branch of comparative literature called imagology, or image studies. The period under observation is the second half of the 1940s and the 1950s.

Estonian exile literature concentrates on the traumatic historical events and the sufferings of Estonians, while Soviet Estonian literature emphasized the ideological aspect; it was mandatory to praise everything Soviet and / or Russian. Neither in Soviet Estonian literature nor in Estonian exile literature is the psychological aspect present in the depiction of Russians. The role of Russians in the two literatures is diametrically opposed: in exile literature they

are seen as the enemy responsible for the loss of independence, but in Soviet Estonian literature they are seen as heroes who helped to liberate Estonia from the Nazis. The majority of the Russian characters depicted are soldiers. In Estonian exile literature they are depicted as extremely negative, while in Soviet Estonian literature the Russians are seen as extremely positive. Historical events and the socio-political background played crucial roles in the development of these images.

Key words: *Russians, image, Estonian literature, World War II.*

Santrauka

Antrasis pasaulinis karas padarė didelę įtaką Estijos visuomenei ir kultūrai. Estija buvo viena iš valstybių, praradusių nepriklausomybę, o Estijos literatūra buvo padalinta į dvi dalis: sovietinės Estijos literatūra ir Estijos egzilio literatūra. Šios dvi literatūros stipriai skyrėsi, šie skirtumai ypač ryškūs XX amžiaus penktojo dešimtmečio antrojoje pusėje ir šeštojo dešimtmečio pirmojoje pusėje. Literatūra Sovietinėje Estijoje tapo ideologiniu ginklu, o egzilio literatūra susitelkė į tautinius klausimus ir svarstymus apie Estijos likimą.

Straipsnyje analizuojami estų meninėje prozoje sukurti Antrojo pasaulinio karo vaizdiniai, yra telkiamasi į rusų vaizdavimą, naudojamosi komparatyvistikos metodu – imagologija, arba įvaizdžių studijomis. Analizuojama XX amžiaus penktojo dešimtmečio antrosios pusės ir šeštojo dešimtmečio literatūra.

Estų išeivijos literatūra susitelkė į trauminį istorinių įvykių vaizdavimą ir estų patirtas kančias, o sovietinė Estijos literatūra akcentavo ideologinį aspektą; buvo privaloma aukštinti visa kas sovietiška ir / ar rusiška. Sovietinėje Estijos literatūroje taip pat ir Estijos išeivijos literatūroje vaizduojami rusai nėra psichologizuojami. Rusų vaidmuo dvejose literatūrose yra diametriškai priešingas: išeivijos literatūroje jie vaizduojami kaip priešai, atsakingi už nepriklausomybės praradimą, o sovietinėje literatūroje jie rodomi kaip herojai, padėję išvaduoti Estiją nuo nacių. Dauguma vaizduojamų rusų yra kareiviai. Išeivijos literatūroje jie rodomi išskirtinai neigiamai, tuo tarpu sovietinėje estų literatūroje jie kuriami išskirtinai teigiamai. Istoriniai įvykiai ir socio-politinis kontekstas turėjo lemiamą vaidmenį kuriant šiuos vaizdinius.

Esminiai žodžiai: *rusai, įvaizdis, Estijos literatūra, Antrasis Pasaulinis karas.*

Introduction

The Second World War significantly changed the world: several states ceased to exist, cities were destroyed and thousands of people either died or were forced to leave their homes. Estonia was one of the states that lost its independence in the turmoil of the Second World War. Estonia was occupied three times: from 1940 to 1941 by the Soviet Union, from 1941 to 1944 by Nazi Germany and from 1944 to 1991 by the Soviet Union again. The changes brought about by the war were not only material but also mental, and these changes are clearly visible in Estonian literature. The second Soviet occupation, beginning in 1944, disrupted the natural development of Estonian literature and split it into two parts for almost half a century, as a number of prominent writers who had spent the war years in their homeland fled, primarily to Sweden. It has been estimated that about 70 000-75 000 Estonians escaped to the West in the autumn of 1944 (Olesk, 2001, 352).

Soviet Estonian literature and Estonian exile literature were totally different and the differences were especially prominent in the second half of the 1940s and in the first half of the 1950s. In Soviet Estonia, literature was considered to be primarily an ideological weapon, whose purpose was to educate people according to the Soviet ideology, but exile literature concentrated on the question of nationality and the fate of Estonians. The Second World War was a dominant topic in both Soviet Estonian and Estonian exile literature. Using the branch of comparative literature called imagology, or image studies, this article analyses the Estonian war prose depicting the Second World War events, concentrating on the depiction of Russians. The period under observation is the second half of the 1940s and the 1950s. How did the socio-political context influence the depiction of war and the depiction of Russians? What characterises the depiction of Russians? Who is seen as the “other” and who is seen as “our own”?

The Depiction of Russians in Estonian Exile Literature

The war theme is dominant in Estonian exile literature in the second half of the 1940s and in the 1950s. The dramatic events of the war are discussed in fiction and in memoirs, and Russians are always portrayed negatively. They are depicted as intruders who invade the homes of Estonians; they are also seen as looters, torturers and destroyers. For example:

The window was smashed with the rifle butt and someone entered laughing; books and chairs were thrown towards him, making a lot of noise. [...] The door of the storehouse was bashed in and the cloth on the garden table was scattered under their feet as they sneered. [...] The whole farm was turned upside down. While laughing hideously, the hands of the foreign soldiers grabbed the wrists and the skirt of the maiden. (Viirlaid, 1949, 77-78)

Russians as strangers enter the space of Estonians in two ways: they enter the homeland and the homes of the Estonians.

The Russian characters are seen as alien, hard to understand and strange, which is expressed in connection with the habits of Russians. There are short statements, such as “Where the Russian begins, culture ends” (Talve, 1994, 59) in the novel *Juhansonid* (*Juhanson's Travels*, 1959), by Ilmar Talve (1914-2007). The novel depicts the adventures of a young Estonian man who joins the Finnish army in WWII. The events are reminiscent in some ways of the adventures of the good soldier Švejk. In addition to short statements about Russians, there are also more detailed descriptions, for example, in the novel *Tormiaasta* (*The Year of the Storm*, 1949), by Arved Viirlaid (1922-2015):

Strange people these bearers of the culture of the grand homeland: they use toilets for washing and baths for swill. They nail up old doors and cut walls to create new passages. They use ceilings for target practice, while throwing dirt around, and using paintings as waste-paper baskets. (Viirlaid, 1949, 264)

The thrashings of Russians are also present in the novel *Õõ tuli liiga vara* (*The Night Fell Too Soon*, 1945), by Ain Kalmus (1906-2001):

It seemed like the whole regiment had revelled in the house. The stuffing of the furniture was sticking out. The wallpaper was covered with caricatures drawn by inky fingers. There was a thick layer of dirt on the parquet, as if these were not human beings but some other kind of creatures. (Kalmus, 1945, 148)

In addition to depicting the specific behaviour of Russians in the rooms, the awkward table manners of Russians are also discussed. Usually it is mentioned that they have difficulties handling cutlery, e. g. in *Uus evangeelium* (*The New Gospel*, 1953) by Voldemar Õun (1893-1986) (Õun, 2009, 145). They do not know exactly how to behave, e. g. in *Kui venelased tulid* (*When the Russians Came*, 1954), by Robert Raid (1915-1978):

[...] he cuts the steak into small pieces, puts the knife aside and, leaning forward, shovels the chopped meat into his mouth. Then he throws some pieces of bread on the plate, dips them into the sauce and then munches on them. He chews slowly and peacefully. He is also on the warpath with the fork [...]. (Raid, 1954b, 495)

Russians are, from the Estonians' viewpoint, strange and uncivil; they do not behave according to the norms. The Russian characters are often placed in comic situations in discussions of their cultural habits; this is a way to deal with the dangerous stranger (see: Loorits, 1950, 6-7). For example, there is an episode where a Russian man first encounters a water closet:

One doctor told us that recently a Russian lieutenant whose face was covered with pimples visited him. The doctor recommended washing his face with eau de Cologne¹. A week later, the Russian came back and said that the com-

¹ In Estonian the word for eau de Cologne is tualettvesi, which may also be understood as the water in the toilet bowl.

rade doctor should suggest some other remedy. The one recommended did not help at all, and the wooden lid of the toilet always fell down on his head. (Raid, 1954a, 76)

The majority of the Russians in exile literature (and in Soviet Estonian literature) are soldiers or at least associated with the army. Most of them are men but there are also female soldiers, which surprises the Estonian (male) characters, for whom women do not belong on the battle field, and a system that uses women and children to conquer the world is thus even more cruel and evil (see: Viirlaid, 1949, 69). The fact that the Soviet system turns everybody, women included, into beasts is shown in an episode where Russian women strip a male prisoner, admire his athletic body and then tear him apart by tying him to two cars driving in opposite directions (Idem, 228-229).

There are several expressive short portraits of servicemen, for example Captain Marinov in the novel *The Year of the Storm*. He is described as an unintelligent man for whom writing is an ordeal (Idem, 86). He has a robust, pockmarked face, which (after hearing that vodka is going to be served) widens into a smirk so that “his teeth, made from a whitish metal, flashed and the tin-plated coins on his chest clinked with delight. [...] Muddy boots crossed, [...] he drinks, moving his fat lips with delight” (Idem, 84-85). One of the characteristics used to describe Russians is their fondness for vodka, which is stereotypically related to the image of Russians. While vodka makes the Estonian characters more talkative, the Russians become more robust and wild².

The behaviour of Russians is related to their appearance, which is dominated by filth, sloppiness and stink. They have dirty

² The distinctive effect of alcohol on positive and negative characters in socialist realist literature has been discussed by the Estonian researcher Veiko Märka (Märka, 1998, 100). He has also discussed how various alcoholic beverages (e. g. vodka, beer, whiskey and champagne) have been used to describe characters (Märka, 2004, 62-63). In the books analysed in this article, mainly vodka is drunk, although in Soviet Estonian prose soldiers often drink tea. In the novel *The Year of the Storm*, Russians also drink methylated spirits (Viirlaid, 1949, 341), which emphasizes their lust for alcohol.

hands and “a pungent stench, which incapacitated, intoxicated and robbed the voice” (Viirlaid, 1949, 78). The Estonian characters are often contrasted with Russians, who wear rags and are not familiar with the clothes worn in the civilized world. This is the reason why Russian women admire the clothes of Estonian women (see: Õun, 2009, 164-166). In this aspect, bitter humour can be found:

[...] every time the trains come from Russia with Russian women, their carriages are steered aside. In the town, comrade officers buy coats, hats, dresses and shoes for their wives and bring them to the carriages. The women change their clothes and only then come out. I would like to see what these Russian women from ‘the workers’ paradise’ really look like! (Raid, 1954a, 72)

The clear contrast between the official Soviet propaganda and real life becomes apparent. In the novel *The New Gospel*, a Russian character cogitates about the situation:

She had walked on the streets and she had not seen one person dressed in the way that was common on the streets of Leningrad. They were all dressed very differently. Still, it was not possible that they were all bourgeoisie because there were not that many bourgeoisie left. So there must have been far more goods earlier. This must have been true. Otherwise, it could not have been this way. The natural logic of Nastasja Pavlovna had started to work. Maybe the whisperings in Leningrad had not been false, rumours that there were fabulous amounts of goods in these new states of the Soviet Union. (Õun, 2009, 167-168)

This case is one of the few exceptions, as usually the authors do not depict the inner thoughts of Russian characters.

It has been noted that

‘Russian’ does not mark only a period in Estonian political history [i. e. the Russian era, German era and Estonian era] but also marks a cultural specificity, as ‘Russian’ equals Soviet, bad, absurd, poor quality and unreasonable things or actions. (Kõresaar, 2006, 153-154)

The researcher has also discussed the category of purity: “The principal distinction between ‘own’ and ‘foreign’ is hygiene, in addition to culture in the sense of mentality, education, intelligence and cultivated behaviour” (Idem, 154). These statements are made in connection with Estonian biographical writing, but are also valid in fiction as similar motives are present both in biographical writing and in fiction (e. g. Russian women wearing nightgowns, which they think are evening dresses). Russians are depicted as coming from an uncivilised world and their encounters with the civilized world may be humorous. By creating this kind of image, the Estonian authors confirm their identity and belonging to the cultural West.

The opposition civilized *vs* uncivilized is also present in the depictions of the actions of Russians. They are depicted as being overly enthusiastic about things that are common for Estonians, for example the shiny parts of beds, alarm clocks (Viirlaid, 1949, 161) and wristwatches, which are very desirable objects for Russians. They either buy or steal wristwatches and wear many at the same time (Õun, 2009, 33), so that they are described as “ticking from top to bottom” (Viirlaid, 1991, 73). In most cases, the writing concentrates on the horrific acts of Russians, for example their cruelty towards animals (e. g. a cat is killed just for fun (Raid, 1954b, 363)) and children (e. g. a Russian soldier takes a water bottle away from a thirsty child (Kalmus, 1945, 112)). The Russians are also depicted as looters and rapists, with children and elderly also being the victims (Raid, 1954b, 605-606). The horrific acts of Russians at times culminate in apocalyptic scenes:

When killing and destroying, they choose the most barbaric methods known to mankind. [...] When they left in the summer of 1941, they killed the horses stolen from farmers by stabbing out their eyes, cutting their throats and then letting them run until they died. They poured kerosene on sheep and ignited them. They laughed when the burning animals ran into buildings; [...] the cries of death of animals and humans faded in the crackling of fire. That’s what the Red soldiers did. They used barbed wire to tie up the tortured; they cut off

the breasts of defiled women. They did these things with insane cruelty, these liberators of the workers. The torture methods of the NKVD³ form a discipline of its own. (Viirlaid, 1949, 299-300)

Diabolic slyness and methodical cruelty are associated with the interrogation and torture methods of the NKVD; one of the clearest examples is in the novel *Ristideta hauad* (*Graves without Crosses*, 1952), by Viirlaid. The novel, which depicts the actions of the Forest Brothers fighting against the Soviets in the 1940s, was one of the most popular books in Estonian exile literature. It has been translated into several languages, including English (*Graves without Crosses*, 1972), French (*Tombeaux sans croix*, 1962), Lithuanian (*Kapai be kryžiu*, 1996), Latvian (*Kapi bez krustiem*, 1956) and Russian (*Могилы без крестов*, 2005). In Estonian exile literature, the depiction of Russians ranges from stupidity to methodical cruelty. The Estonian researcher Jaan Undusk has noted a paradox:

While Russians are usually considered lazy and not very intelligent, the principal portrayal of the Russian mentality of that time, the Soviet security agency is seen as an institution with refined methods and memory, practising intentional cruelty. How this rough nation created such a refined organisation is a contradiction that literature does not answer. Political myths disregard logic. (Undusk, 2000, 113)

It may be concluded that, in the depiction of Russians in Estonian exile literature, the opposition civilized vs uncivilized is dominant⁴. The Russians are seen as barbaric, diabolic and brutal, and the image of the other is opposed to the image of one's own, seen as civilized and Christian. In Estonian exile literature, the image of Russians as barbarians and brutes emerges (about images

³ NKVD: *Народный комиссариат внутренних дел* (The People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs).

⁴ See: Leerssen, 2006, 26.

of Russians (see: Naarden, Leerssen, 2007)). The historical context emphasised the negative image of Russians.

The Depiction of Russians in Soviet Estonian Literature

While in Estonian exile literature Russians are depicted as barbaric, cruel and heartless, in Soviet Estonian literature these are the characteristics of Germans. For example, in the story *Kuues pealetung* (*The Sixth Attack*) by Eduard Männik (1906–1966), one German character is described as a monster with a steel heart and a human brain, a killer of children and a rapist (Männik, 1946, 87). In exile literature, Russians are depicted as cruel towards animals and children, but in Soviet Estonian literature this is a trait of Germans, e. g. “I saw a German commandant stomp on a two-month old baby, killing it. He walked on peacefully, as if there were no human blood on his boots” (*Tagasitulek* (*Comeback*) (Idem, 247)). In Estonian exile literature, Russians are shown as dangerous others, while in Soviet Estonian literature this is the role of Germans, who are all shown as fascists. During the post-war years, the fight against fascism was one of the most important aspects in Soviet ideology. The collaboration between Estonians and Russians against the German intruders was emphasized. The negative image of (Baltic) Germans, which had been prevalent in Estonian literature, was used by Soviet propaganda, which added an ideological nuance (Undusk, 2003, 45). In the 1940s, such collections as *Eesti rahva põline võitlus saksa sissetungijate vastu* (*The Eternal Fight of Estonians Against German Invaders*, 1942) and *Saksa fašistlik okupatsioon Eestis aastail 1941–1944* (*German Fascist Occupation in Estonia 1941–1944*, 1947) were published. *Tasuja teedel* (*On the Paths of the Avenger*, 1945) is a collection of Estonian anti-German literature, containing texts from folk songs and by Soviet authors. In 1943 the 600th anniversary of the St. George’s

Night Uprising was celebrated and parallels between 14th- and 20th-century events were drawn by Soviet propagandists, according to whom the historical fight against German invaders continued in the Great Patriotic War (Tamm, 2003, 65).

In Estonian exile literature, Russians intrude into the homes of vulnerable people, and their brutal acts against children, women and animals are depicted. However, in Soviet Estonian literature, the image of Russians is the opposite: Russians are depicted as heroes who protect the innocent and whose ideal is the heroic death. For example, in the story *Viisteist samm* (*Fifteen Steps*), by Männik, there is a Red Army officer who undertakes a mission, knowing he is certain to die. The noble fight against the enemy is the ideal of such characters. They fight to the last breath, as is the case in the story *Roodu poliitjuht* (*The Political Leader of the Company*), where the hero is badly hurt but refuses to leave the battlefield until victory is assured (Männik, 1950, 184-185).

It is important to note that heroes are not only those on the battlefield, but also those in the rear working for the Soviet Union. For example, the doctor Arkadi Petrovich in the story *Minu palat* (*My Ward*) is shown as a fighter, a front-line man, and he is as respected as other fighters (Männik, 1946, 210). The same applies to the nurse Anna, who saves patients from a burning hospital ward, sacrificing her own beauty and health (Idem, 213-214).

When I first saw this tall, bony girl, whose eyes were nearly covered by her headgear, I had to close my eyes. Even now, it is still hard to look at her face and hands, as these still make me tremble inside. But now I sincerely honour this hero nurse, one of the many giants from those hard days of Leningrad. (Idem, 213)

Although she is disfigured, it is emphasized that she has heroic inner beauty. Being ugly outside does not mean being ugly inside, which is usually the case in Estonian exile literature; in Soviet Estonian literature, Russians are depicted as completely positive.

While in Estonian exile literature women soldiers cause bewilderment, in Soviet Estonian literature it is normal that women are soldiers and fight as hard as men do. Furthermore, they are not described as raucous and masculine, as they are in Estonian exile literature.

Russian characters are depicted as determined and tenacious, fuelling the resistance and the urge to fight even in the hardest and most hopeless situations, as is the case in the novel *Pruuni katku aastail* (*In the Years of the Brown Plague*, 1950), by Osvald Tooming (1914–1992), which depicts the Nazi Germany occupation in Estonia. In the novel, the Russian prisoners urge the Estonian prisoners to resist, to fight against the Nazis and not to give up. Russians die with the name of Stalin on their lips (Tooming, 1950, 269). Socialist realist literature was optimistic and heroic, where “the sun always shines even on the hardest days and no one is left behind or left alone [...]. Life is beautiful and it is good to live and when one has to die, one dies as a fighter at one’s post.” (Krigul, 1945, 551)

Men in Soviet Estonian literature are strong, brave, compassionate and reticent, for example Captain Rulin, who is a man of few words but great deeds (Männik, 1946, 162). His appearance is rough, his face “resembled modelled clay which has been dried too quickly and is hard and wrinkly” (Idem, 159), although there are handsome soldiers, e. g. in the novel *Punased nelgid* (*Red Dianthus*, 1959), by Johannes Semper (1892–1970) (Semper, 1959, 344). However, the rough appearance of Russian characters in Soviet Estonian literature does not have a negative connotation but rather indicates manliness, persistence and devotion. Excessive attention to appearance may have a negative connotation; for example, the rough worker’s hands of a Russian soldier are contrasted with the well-cared-for hands of a German soldier.

Toughness does not exclude tender feelings, for example in the story *Esimene armastus* (*First Love*), by one of the leading figures of Soviet Estonian literature, August Jakobson (1904–1963). In

the story, a soldier loses his beloved, who is a spy for the Russians and is hanged by the Germans. The young man brings the dead body to headquarters and the reaction of the men is described:

One young Russian, although he has already seen a lot, [...] cannot contain his sorrow and starts to weep. Strange, all those tough men who every day stand face to face with death seem to turn into innocent children. (Jakobson, 1949, 470)

Even in harsh situations in war, tender feelings and simple pleasures are still close to the Russians, e. g. in *Sõdurid lähevad koju* (*The Soldiers Are Going Home*, 1957), by Hans Leberecht (1910-1960) (Leberecht, 1957, 259). Personal life is never emphasised, as soldiers always place their duties in war over family (e. g. the story *Tervitus põhjast* (*Greetings from the North*), (Männik, 1947, 275)).

In the harsh reality of war soldiers are cleansed; destroyed personal happiness, the deaths of people who are close to them and barbaric acts against peaceful companions do not break soldiers but raise their consciousness and make them iron fighters. (Tae, 1947, 60)

In Soviet Estonian literature, the nationality of the characters is not usually emphasised, as ideology is most important. Propaganda and agitation play significant roles in war fiction: there is one Soviet nation, and Russians and Estonians are fighting together against the invading Nazi Germany. Because of the ideology and the rules of socialist realism, the works are basically variations on a particular topic⁵.

The consequence of the clear-cut black-and-white division between good and evil is [...] an obvious decrease of tension and an increase of didactic elements, which brings this literature into the vicinity of children's literature and fairy tales. [...] socialist realistic literature is highly predictable concerning possible

⁵ About the characters in post-war Soviet Estonian literature, see: Krusten-Lindström 1965 and Krusten 1979.

plots and happy-endings. [...] Negative feelings had no place in a literature which was constructed around a positive hero whose main characteristics were [...] 'resolve, partisanship, optimism and unblemished moral profile' (Hasselblatt, 2003, 230)

Conclusion

Although the topic of Russians was in the foreground in connection with the events taking place in the society in the 1940s and 1950s, there are not many Russian characters in war prose. The Estonian characters have the leading role, as Russians usually are supporting characters, appearing only occasionally. Russians are not first-person narrators and they are described and introduced by Estonians. Russians are predominantly presented by depicting their appearance and their actions; the emphasis is on the depiction of the external, as very little attention is paid to the inner thoughts of the characters.

The ideological background is especially apparent in Soviet Estonian literature, which was compelled to emphasize socialist ideals and the belief that Estonians and Russians fought together against the fascists. The fight against fascism was a central topic in the 1940s and the beginning of the 1950s. The fascists represented the forces of evil, while the Soviets represented goodness and, as a result, the nationality of the characters is not usually emphasized.

While in Soviet Estonian literature the central idea was that Russians liberated Estonia, in Estonian exile literature the central idea was that Russians invaded Estonia and demolished the lives of Estonian people. The majority of the Russian characters are soldiers and they are all, male and female, depicted as determined communists. Therefore, in Estonian exile literature the Russian characters are depicted as extremely negative, while in Soviet Estonian literature the Russians are seen as extremely positive. In Estonian exile literature, Russians are seen as dangerous foreigners, while in Soviet Estonian literature this role is reserved

for Germans. Historical events and socio-political background played crucial roles in the development of these images. It has been noted that

the foreign is not an objective quality of whatever is distant, strange, unknown, unfamiliar, or rare [...] but relative vis-à-vis the observer's subjective experience or knowledge. [...] It is part of a given social reality and, as such, subject to historical and cultural change. (Albrecht, 2007, 327)

It is also important to consider the purpose of these texts and for whom these texts were written. In Estonian exile literature, the traumatic historical events and the sufferings of Estonians are presented, but in Soviet Estonian literature the ideological aspect was emphasised, and it was mandatory to praise everything Soviet and / or Russian. Neither in Soviet Estonian literature nor in Estonian exile literature is the psychological aspect present in the depiction of Russians. They are depicted as stereotypes, with the propagandistic aspect being clear. The role of Russians in the two literatures is diametrically opposed: in exile literature they are seen as the enemy responsible for the loss of independence, but in Soviet Estonian literature they are seen as heroes who helped to liberate Estonia from the Nazis. This is the main factor shaping the image of Russians.

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