

## Questions

- Think about the territorial conception of 'society' in relation to state boundaries. In what ways does social research influence people's thinking about the world? What about the practical influences of social sciences?
- What current social problems cannot be adequately addressed through a state-centred conception of society?
- What alternative conceptions of contemporary society can you think of?
- Do you think that the information society and networking will present spatial configurations that challenge the state-centred definition of society?

## Suggestions for further reading

- Agnew, J. (1994). 'The Territorial Trap: The Geographical Assumptions of International Relations Theory.' *Review of International Political Economy* 1, 53-80.
- Facolar, M. (1997). 'Exploration, Cartography and the Modernization of State Power.' *International Social Science Journal* 45, 55-75.
- Ruggie, J. G. (1993). 'Territoriality and Beyond: Problematising Modernity in International Relations.' *International Organization* 47, 157-163.
- Taylor, P. J. (1996). 'Embedded Statism and the Social Sciences: Opening up to New Spaces.' *Environment and Planning A* 28, 1917-1929.
- Wallerstein, I. et al. (1996). *Open the Social Sciences: Report of the Galbraith Commission on the Restructuring of the Social Sciences*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

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## FROM SOVIET 'IRON CURTAIN' TO POST-SOVIET 'WINDOW TO EUROPE'

*Discursive reproduction of the Finnish-Russian border*

### Introduction

The national state frontier divides space into two parts. The actual frontier, serving as a conditional line, also has two sides: the south-eastern boundary of Finland is at the same time the north-western boundary of Russia. This chapter presents an outlook 'from the other side' and an attempt to analyse the peculiarities of 'building' the Finnish-Russian border from the Russian side. For those living in St. Petersburg acquaintance with Finland begins far from the existing barrage line and check points. The unusual and unfamiliar names of well-known suburban settlements excite the imagination. Their foreign melody plunges into the Finnish past or offers to make projects in subjunctive mood. *I wonder what would be if...*

My first 'rendezvous' with the Finnish border took place during a ski tour over the Leningrad region (*Leningradskaya oblast*) in 1982. Tourism, as an idle way of spending time, requires substantiation, it is a search for reason and purpose. Joseph Brodsky wrote that any movement in space that is not dictated by physical necessity is a spatial form of self-assertion, referring equally to the construction of empires and to tourism (Brodsky 1992, 312). We 'self-asserted' as we were affected by ideological slogans. Our pioneer tour was in honour of the 65th anniversary of the October Revolution and its route passed along the so-called Mannerheim Line (i.e. a defensive line built against the Russians during the World War II). For me, as well as for many of my friends, the ideological components were not so important and interesting. In our history lessons we had not yet touched upon the theme of the 1939/40 Winter War. We only knew with certainty that we were marching

time. In my opinion, this is quite reasonable, because as Medvedev puts it: "Russia is doomed to text, to the power of tokens. The orientation of the cultural tradition of the country towards the word transforms into fascination with word. ... Text is all. The USSR as a social, state, economic and cultural formation turns into a space of total textualness" (Medvedev 1995, 318). Analysis of texts gives an opportunity to delve into the Soviet epoch. Thematic analysis, logic and rhetoric of texts, analysis of the concepts and key categories used and the general conceptual frame of the texts partly give the possibility to reconstruct the situation of those years.

It is evident that so-called Soviet realism, as a genre, had little in common with the real life of the Soviet people. However, art texts not only reflect or deform Soviet reality, but also constitute it. Works of art certainly help the design of reality. This is especially true of texts about the Soviet border, as the majority of the Soviet people never in their lives met the border. "Foreign countries were seen in three ways: via a spy-glass, in the grave and on TV" (Veller 1997, 104). All information about the state frontier was security-restricted. Only a limited number of lucky members of the Soviet elite managed to travel abroad. Even the local population of the borderland could hardly imagine what was happening outside the prohibited area – in the closed space all along the borders of the USSR. Thus, notions about the border were basically formed through works of art which represented a certain 'reality', thus becoming the reality in themselves. It is worth noting that during the Soviet era border issues were rather popular. As early as 10 years back one could hardly find anyone who would not have known the song "Kathusha" or would not have watched the TV series "The State Frontier".

Soviet fiction devoted to the border, as a rule, exploits the genre of fairy tale, using folklore rhetoric and the methods of constructing fairy tale text. In these fairy tales improbable events happen, epic heroes who possess fabulous strength act etc. As any literature, fairy tales about borders do not simply transfer certain moral messages to the audience, but reflect the existing social relations.

For analysis of these texts I used the functional scheme of the personages of a fairy tale by V. Propp (Propp 1998a; 1998b). A plot, around which all narration about the border of the Soviet time is concentrated, is the following: the Land of Soviets/Communist Party (sender) cares for its people (receiver) and charges frontier guards (subject) to keep the Order (object), which is to safeguard the borders. The enemy (opponent, antagonist) tries to break the order/border, but frontier guards with the support of the conscientious Soviet people (assistant) defeat the enemy. Thus order is re-established.

In these fictions the sender is the Communist Party and the State, which, as a rule, are identical. The role of the Party and the State is emphasised only

along the former border with Finland, which by that time had moved 'somewhat north-west. However, as Braudel says, "the history tends toward 'fortification' of borders which as if turning into natural flexures of terrain, integrally belong to a landscape and are not easily subject to moving" (Braudel 1994, 274). In Karelian Isthmus (*KaarelMäy Peräseelä*) the border was not only marked by inherited Finnish names, but had also become grown into a landscape with hardly any noticeable trenches, scraps of prickly wire, rusty helmets, fired shells or other metal scraps. Meanwhile much of the territory of Russia, with her militarist past, has been covered with prickly wire, has overgrown with trenches and the bases of destroyed houses. But at that moment and in that situation we shared a common knowledge that those marks in the landscape were nothing but the line that in former times had separated and determined the territories of two states.

The shared 'common' knowledge (in our case – knowledge of the existence of the border) is constantly being reproduced and distributed through discourse. According to Michel Foucault, discourse represents "the practice that systematically forms the objects which they (i.e. discourses, note by O.B.) speak of" (Foucault 1996, 49). Discourse on border issues, as the determined way of thinking and the limited set of conceivable concepts and categories, reproduces an image of border (when the 'daily world' is regulated by the existence of the border) and thus reproduces the border as it is between the states.

This research is focused on a discursive situation that has developed around the Finnish-Russian border from the Soviet time to the present. As texts to be analysed, I used works of art (literature, feature films etc.) dealing with border issues, relevant newspaper publications, interviews with people who have experience dealing with the Finnish-Russian border, and St. Petersburg folklore (jokes, 'life stories' etc.).

### A fairy-tale about the dark forest and the world beyond the grave (Soviet discourse on sacred boundaries)

Today it is rather difficult to reconstruct situation of 50-years standing. In spite of the fact that this refers to the most recent history and for the participants in the events – the Soviet people – yesterday seems too close to the present, all impressions and estimations are given from the point of view of our current perception, which is affected by substantial social transformations. With respect to the above I have tried to reconstruct the situation of border-construction by analysing works of art from the Soviet

in early works; in later ones it is less empirical and is used as background. The receiver – the Soviet people – is shown through the connection of the frontier guard to his home. When the frontier guard writes a letter to his girlfriend, to his mother or to his native factory (Laptev 1937, 21), it should be clear to the reader why and for whom he safeguards the borders.

The real heroes of the border are "the famous family of heroic Soviet frontier guards" (Granitza 1937, 2) who possess all the qualities attributed to epic heroes: strength, wisdom, cunning, service on the border is not just work, it is heroism. "Every night the frontier grants the right to become famous" (Goryshin 1974, 22). In the second half of 1970s the slogan "the frontier gives rise to heroes" became the most popular title for feature stories (Granitza 1974) and collected poetry (Davydov 1978) or it was used as a slogan at youth conferences on border issues (Kaltina 1980). At the same time, it not only mythologises the profession of frontier guard (similar to that of cosmonaut), but also reduces his function to sentry. Heroic deeds are a necessity; there is no border without overcoming something or somebody. In the border exists in spite of rather than owing to something/somebody. In the 1950s and 1960s several films were made about border guards. The names of heroes and even their frontier dogs became famous. Children stopped playing war and started playing frontier-guards. The whole conscious population of the borderland became assistants to the frontier guards.

"This custom – to demand unfamiliar people show their documents – has come in blood and flesh of the collective farmers living in the border area, since everyone considers himself as border sentry." (Sadovsky 1937, 31).

An infringer of the border, as a rule, is faceless and anonymous. At the same time he is the representative not of a national state, but of another political system. Like it is said in "Granitza" "plenty of cunning, guile and hatred does the fascist agent, Trotskyist, komdit and wretcher bring to us" (Granitza 1937, 4). That is, the border infringer (both real and potential) possesses not national, but political characteristics. For example, from the beginning of 1920s to the end of military actions the representatives of Finland were mentioned only as White Finns (Byelofinns), calling by nationality is 'bouldened' or 'deciphered' through the political prefix 'byelo-' (white-). Thus the enemy encroaches not on the USSR as the state, but on the political system. This might also be the reason for lack of works of art covering the inner borders of the Socialist Coalition, since to form the plot of the composition, no conflict is necessary.

Borders separating 'our' political system are sacred. One of most widespread ideologies of the border of the Soviet time was the 'sacred boundaries

of the Motherland' (Guseinov 1999, 74). According to Propp, the forest in fairy tales plays the role of a detaining barrier; it catches and keeps newcomers, it is a road to another world. To cross it, one must undergo tests. (Propp 1998a, 146-202.) The fairy-tale narration about the border gives rise to analogies: border as a barrier zone is also like a magic forest which catches newcomers and does not allow them to pass. Moreover, in art texts about the border it is usually 'materialised' by a natural barrier – wood, river, mountains – because there is always a temptation to connect, to superimpose the state borders on the natural ones. It is not only the strengthening effect of the 'naturalness' of borders; the river and the forest are the real barriers that assist our frontier guards. Thus, nature becomes an acting personage.

The State frontier of the USSR is constituted by the secret surrounding it. 'Secret' and 'mystery' become the important categories in the border discourse. In the story "Palace School of Young Frontier Guards" the main advantage of the pioneers, children of the frontier guards, is that "they are not talkative, none of them will give away too much" (Ratgauz 1938, 59). The slogan "a talker is a treasure for the spy" decorated Soviet cities for a long time. Nobody knows the essence of this secret, what it defends or from whom. But everybody understands that all information connected with the border is sacred, like the border itself. The secret about the border is the border itself. In fact, in many respects information concerning borders has remained closed up to the present time. For example, a normal practice of the visa services is not to explain the reason for refusal to draw up an entrance visa.

Another important category constituting the border is 'silence'. A quantitative linguistic analysis of fictional texts dealing with the border would possibly select the word 'silence' as one of the most frequently used. The silence can be kind, when everything is peace and quiet at the border. But it can be ominous, ill-boding. No silence – no border. If the silence is broken, this means that someone infringed on the border, and a 'trace' has appeared on 'our' territory. It can be a cigarette, a button or a ski track that is not 'ours'. The most important marker of an enemy's trace is words in some other language, i.e. in a hostile one. There is a song about Alekhka, a young pioneer, who picked up a small button with unknown letters off the ground. He brought this button to the frontier post. Owing to this button, frontier guards caught the enemy who had infringed the border.

What does the border separate from? "If to look there – as if no border exists... But this identity is only external. The forest there, behind the line of frontier posts differs considerably from our wood" (Shapovalov 1937, 10). The narration about 'abroad', 'the other world' coincides with the description of a fantastic world beyond the grave. Nobody knows about it, actually nobody has seen it, but everyone has some knowledge of it. According to

Propp (1998a), in fairy tales the 'other world' is in most cases described as a place of abundance. Naturally, as in fairy tales, abundance in 'the other world' is inexhaustible. However, this abundance that comes from abroad is dangerous. Subjects from abroad are always fraught with danger. In the story "Khokhlov's Death" the foreign cigarettes presented by a wrecker to a collective farmer turn out to be poisoned (see Bychevsky 1937, 18). One can find the same theme in nursery folklore. I remember the delightful horror I felt listening to children's *Plasmatidae* in which it was forbidden to taste foreign chewing gums, as they were poisoned. At the same time bright wrappers and unknown letters (subjects from 'the other world') seemed to be extremely attractive. The adults popularised a more reasonable variant of interdiction: chewing gums are harmful, as they entail the secretion of gastric juice with lack of food – as a result, a man falls ill of gastritis. Thus a foreign subject implies a latent threat, in this case, a detriment to health.

The world abroad is unreal, 'artificial', therefore it does not exist. The contraposition of 'our territory/foreign countries' is similar to Lotman's dichotomy Home/Antihome. Abroad (Antihome) is "a strange, devilish space, a place of temporary death" (Lotman 1997, 748). The Frontier of the USSR was a boundary of the world. The world on the other side of the frontier barrier begins when the familiar, domesticated – and hence comprehensible and predictable – space comes to an end.

One can speak of the 'island mentality' of a Soviet citizen; there is nothing else outside the USSR. The citation from 12 Chairs by Ilf and Petrov – the most popular book among an overwhelming majority of the Soviet people – is very indicative: "foreign land is a myth about the life beyond the grave. The last world, as a matter of fact, is Shepetovka (a provincial Ukrainian city, note by O.B.) with the Atlantic Ocean's breakers" (Ilf & Petrov 1928).

In works of art from the Soviet period, borders act only as a barrier zone. In that zone gates to the foreign world just do not exist. In 1988 a jubilee photo album "The Borders of the Land of the Soviets" was issued (see Goland 1988). The structural logic of this edition is interesting. Many landscapes of our unbounded Motherland are placed on the first pages – apparently so that everybody could understand that the purpose of the borders is to guard and to defend. The landscapes form the images of our 'own' territory. The next big section of the album is devoted to frontier guards, to their everyday life and festive occasions. At the same time, the border as a crossing point to another country is not represented in any pictures. The album forms and reproduces the image of border as fortress, but in no way does it connect the border with meeting, collaboration, etc.

Thus, the boundary discourse of art texts from the Soviet period reproduces representations of the frontier of the USSR as the boundary of the

world. 'Sacred boundary of Motherland' is not a fence that implies the existence of 'bad' or 'good' neighbours. The border presents itself as a precipice or intermezzo strip, as it does not separate national states, but different worlds. The border is thus a dangerous place through which the enemies penetrate. Neighbourly states are not neighbours, they are potential enemies. For example, in these works of art Finland is encountered only in the emergence of a threat presented as the beginning of military actions. Illegal crossing subjects the border (and consequently the existing order) to danger, tests its strength and integrity. However, this infringement proves to be a strengthening of the border itself, affirmation of its stability and naturalness.

### Inexhaustible theme exiting with seditious gloating delight (see Veller 1997, 104):

#### Boundary discourse of the Glasnost period

The changes in boundary discourse occur in connection with substantial social transformations that have taken place as a result of Perestroika. Discursive strategies of the period of Glasnost shaped into disclosure – "the king is naked indeed!" Desacralisation of borders originated from the revelation that our frontiers are far from being 'locked' and can easily be crossed. The famous flight of the young German, Rust across the Finnish-Russian border and his successful landing in the 'heart' of the country – Red Square in Moscow – is an obvious case of this. Recognition of the openness, or more precisely, of the vulnerability of our borders, is also stated in artistic images of the border. At the same time the heroic image of the frontier guard becomes uncrowned; it loses magic strength and accepts quite human, very 'terrestrial' characteristics: "the soldier got fed up with staring at the radiolocator's screen for two years, took a fairly good portion of drinks and smoked in dreams of demobbing" (Veller 1997, 104). The heroic image of the frontier guard becomes transformed into the image of a bureaucrat or a representative of the state playing a role a part of the apparatus of coercion.

In the literature and in feature films concerning border issues the intrigue of a plot moves from the conflict 'infringer of the border/'border guard' to the opposition individual/state. The story "Suitcase" by Dovolatov begins with the following words: "In OVIR (i.e. Visa and Registration Department, note by O.B.) this hitch says to me..." (Dovolatov 1993, 245). The hero of the comedy "Passport" (produced by G. Danelia in 1987) has occasionally crossed the border on another's passport. He fails to come back the same way, therefore he returns home, illegally crossing the borders of different states. His

journey to home dragged out for several years, as the hero had to serve a sentence in each country where he had crossed the border illegally. The irony of the film is concentrated around the bureaucracy of borders as state institutions. The borders, however, are practically non-international, as the authors of the comedy represent the institutions of coercion as being the same, regardless of the 'nationality' of the borders.

Thus, in post-Soviet discourse the border 'occurs' as a result of problems connected with its crossing. Similar to order, which is discovered in the course of its disrupting, the border is displayed in the attempt to cross it.

### Fence of border (post-Perestroika discourse)

Assimilating borders' 'openness' to metaphors, one can assert that nowadays the border is a fence rather than a precipice. It does not separate, it divides. As a result of the 'decurtaining' of the Iron Curtain, the space across the border is actively explored. Crossing the border becomes desirable. Although the metaphor of Iron Curtain changes into that of 'golden' (i.e. economic) curtain, for more and more people travelling abroad becomes habitual and ceases to be a marker of special social status. This is shown, for instance, in that nowadays in Russia one can see a tendency towards changing practices of photographing and arranging family albums. The latter are filled in by themes according to trips abroad. Moreover, recently I started noticing that my acquaintances (not colleagues) answer the question "How are you getting on?" as follows: "we've been there and there". That is, foreign trips even structure biography.

A bright illustration of recent changes in boundary discourse is the story by M. Veller "The Legend of a Stray Patriot" ("Legenda o zabludshem patriote") and the film "Peculiarities of Nationality Fishing" ("Osobennosti natsional'noj rybal'ti") produced by Rogozhkin in 1998. Veller's (1997) story is based on a legend disseminated throughout Leningrad in the middle of the 1970s as 'real events'. The plot of both the story and the film is the same: occasional, unintentional crossing the border with Finland. In Veller's story the engineer Markychev, collecting mushrooms along the Karelian Isthmus, lost his way and accidentally got into Finnish territory. A month later, having experienced great difficulties and having overcome hunger and the temptations of 'western well-being', he got to the Soviet Embassy and reported: "Because of a monstrous absurdity I have infringed the border. Ready to bear any punishment according to the law. Asking for help in coming back to the Motherland!" (Veller 1997, 110). After careful examination by the KGB, Markychev was transported home. Afterwards, however, having found himself 'fallen

out' of daily life as a result of his absence, Markychev 'slipped away once and for all across this very border' (Veller 1997, 124).

The heroes of the comedy "Osobennosti natsional'noj rybal'ti" have also lost their way. Unlike engineer Markychev – the infringer of the Soviet period – they could not understand for a long time that they had infringed the border and had entered Finland. Later, when escaping from the Finnish border guards, the 'fishermen' forgot 'sancta sanctorum' and the sense of fishing – the whole stock of vodka – which was left in foreign territory. To rescue the vodka, the heroes of the comedy decided to infringe upon the border once again. According to the rules of the genre, everything ends well; Finnish border guards failed to detain the 'fishermen', the vodka was rescued, the fishing turned out well.

The infringer in Veller's story, illegally crossing the frontiers of two states, has broken, first of all, his 'own border', the Soviet order. That is why he tries to establish the status quo, to return home, to familiar limits and patterns of behaviour. Actually the foreign world and its sentries (Finnish border guards) are not presented in the story. In "Osobennosti natsional'noj rybal'ti" crossing the border, despite its illegality, is represented as adventure, rather than as infringement. The romanticism of adventure touches upon "sanctum" – boundaries of the Motherland. One can speak of encountering legitimising discourse in the sense of constructing new regulating discursive strategies concerning infringers of the border. [See, for example, the study of Gintler (1992) on the perception of smugglers as heroes.]

In the film, as a result of the 'expansion of horizons' and the recognition of the 'other', Finland appears. That is, the intrigue of the plot is based not just on recognition and contraposition of the neighbour states. The latter acquire 'nationality display', that is, are characterised not in categories of political systems, but in national ones. For example, in the film national stereotypes are actively exploited. Due to such stereotypes, the borders can be substantiated: the Finns also drink much, but all the same we drink more.

The discursive situation also changes with respect to safeguarding the borders and its priorities. In "Legenda o zabludshem patriote" the infringement of the border is an unfortunate failure of the Soviet frontier guards; at the same time, it is as if the border-fence is absent on the Finnish side. Similarly, in "Osobennosti..." there is no border on the Russian side. Moreover, Russian military men, whose task it is to defend their own borders, but not to infringe upon mother's, participate in rescuing 'national property'.

In daily discourse I have repeatedly heard a similar version – about 'our openness' and 'their closeness'. For instance, a farmer who lives at the border with Finland told me with pride that his cranberry land was located in Finland and that he regularly infringed on the border, visiting his Finnish friend.

The main problem of crossing the border is Finnish border guards, he claims. "ours had removed any cordons long ago, it is the Finnish who still try to detain" (male, 54 years old).

In contemporary folklore dealing with border issues new personages have appeared. Nowadays the customs officer has become the hero of jokes about the border. His duties are exclusively to pump out money at the check points. For example, of 17 jokes on border issues located at the St. Petersburg jokes web-site (<http://anekdot.sph.ru>) one joke is devoted to border guards, and the other 16 to customs officers. Here is one of them: "Announcement: a professional customs officer will rent out one linear meter of the border". Both personal control and the 'examination of things' – an announcement seen, for instance, at the customs house at the Russian-Estonian border in Ivangorod – are natural components of crossing the border ritual. I remember those feelings of bewilderment and incompleteness when I crossed the border through the 'green corridor' for the first time, avoiding customs examination. Does the shift of 'personages' (customs officers instead of frontier guards), as well as the displacement of accents in controlling procedures, mean a change in the social sense of the border?

Actually, the border theme is hardly represented in modern works of art. New genres have now become popular; the Soviet heroic epic has been replaced by another, also heroic, genre: 'boevik' (i.e. guerrilla, warrior). One can assume that the plots will be concentrated around, for instance, the conflict between the mafia (which is known to be boundless) engaged in smuggling and international agreements between customs services.

### Closed 'gates to Europe': Current media discourse

Despite the importance and significance of art semantics, the mass media take most part of the broadcast hours. The construction and reproduction of the state borders are exploited more actively and openly through the mass media than in the space of art texts.

The repertoire of the themes of today's newspaper publications dealing somewhat with the Finnish-Russian border is the following: official information on functioning of the border as a state institution, disputable territories, 'ours there' and 'they at ours', publicist and ethnographic essays about Finland. In the press the state border is represented and reproduced, first of all, through nationality discourse: national symbols are being restored, stereotypes are 'taking root', national history is being rewritten, etc.

Mutual relations between the Finnish and the Russian frontier services are assessed and quoted by politicians and scientists mainly as a classical exam-

ple of co-operation between the European Union and Russia. So far, however, representation of the Finnish-Russian border as a united subject does not exist. The quotations from newspaper publications, like "an effective barrier from both sides" (see Granitzky vsjo-taki nuzhny 1999), "frontier departments will strengthen...", "frontier guards of the two countries observe the growth of...", as well as joint statistics (see Morskajki granitza pod osobym kontrolja 1999) reflect only the uniting efforts of the above organisations, but do not form representations of the border as a single whole. According to newspaper sources, organisation of the border as a state structure is 'burdened' by national differences: "The Russian customs officer, while examining the luggage, laughed at the boot loaded with soup packets (i.e. filled with drugs, note by O.B.). The Finns eyed attentively from head to foot, but did not even glance into the car" (see Vasil'ev 1999). Thus the national stereotypes (in this case Russian stupidity and Finnish naivety) are also ascribed to the state structures. Any situation concerning the border is interpreted by the participants of social interaction in national categories. For example, as one can learn from conversations in queues to the Consulate of Finland, the long time required for visa registration is explained only as the calmness of our 'hot Finnish buddies', while at the Estonian Consulate the same wait is referred to as the fact that Estonians do not like Russians, that is why they do not want to let them in. The procrastination of the German Consulate is interpreted as 'German adherence to order'.

Contradictions are articulated more clearly, the border separating the two countries is being established in newspaper publications devoted to Finland: "we are not Finland, they have everything *vice versa*" (Anilin 1999) or "Finland is the nearest piece of Europe, the main supplier of tourists, second-hand rags and stolen equipment. We retaliate. Today... in almost every Helsinki night club one can find a Russian narcodealer" (Vasil'ev 1999).

On the other hand, the basic category determining the mutual relations between Russia and Finland in newspaper publications is 'good neighbourliness': "We have been friends with Finland for a long time". Olga Milovidova, the deputy director of a school, says: "we are supported by the Department of Secondary Education in Finland, the Centre of Secondary Education at Turku. We are neighbours" (Donskov 2000). The problem of so-called 'disputable territories' is solved through the same category (see e.g. Chernjakov 1998, Smirnov 1999). For instance, the author of the article "Seeds of Discord", Vladimir Jantchenkov believes that "Finnish revanchists openly provoke good neighbouring relations" and appeals "Let's stay good neighbours", which implies cancellation of discussions of this problem (Jantchenkov 1999).

One of the main producers of interstate 'distinctions' is the tourist. Like Zygmunt Bauman says: "The tourist searches for adventures consciously and systematically, ... he wants to get plunged into unfamiliar, exotic atmosphere" (Bauman 1995, 146-147). 'Tourist searches for anything that differs from home and finds this for sure. The whole industry of 'ethnic specificity' works for her/him. The contraposition in this case is presented and is perceived as the good, as a holiday. Apropos, according to my interviews, for tourists the border begins with duty-free shops, rather than with control and 'abroad' becomes a synonym for holiday. An active latent and obvious tourist advertisement overflowing our mass media concentratedly reproduces the 'distinctions' between the two states. In the advertising article "A city where the unemployed buy flowers", Finland is described as a country of a thousand lakes and Valio dairy products (Anfin 1999). The land flowing with milk and honey is one of the permanent attributes of a fairy tale. In connection with the fact that Finland is the 'closest bit of Europe' for St. Petersburg and an attractive object for tourism, the border between Finland and Russia is being actively accentuated by tourist advertising.

A holiday, however, cannot last forever, the borders remain borders, the mass media, as well as in art texts, the closeness of 'that side' is declared, in contrast to our 'openness'. A considerable number of newspaper articles are devoted to the problems of Russian immigrants to Finland. The information that Finland is going to cut off the number of entrances sounds like an insult (see, e.g. Smirnov 1998, Hiltunen 1998). Thus, the border in the discourse of the mass media is represented as 'closed gates to Europe'.

### Concluding remarks

Despite the large-scale discourse on globalisation, we can say like Anssi Paasi: "whether we like it or not, the state remains the basic 'sovereign' context, in which the people will organise their everyday life in the future as well" (Paasi 1999b, 18). Borders as the form of existence of the states will also remain. Now the sense of the border – one of basic categories that structures the social world – is not called into question. Like one of my interviewees said: "for sure borders are necessary how could one manage without them? There will be no order, all will be confused" (female, 63 years old). And for everyone crossing the border, it is a legitimate barrier regardless of the reason for crossing. The border is legitimate, since it is perceived as a line that fixes distinctions, these distinctions being made by boundary discourse.

In this chapter I have attempted to analyse the changes encountered in boundary discourse. Instead of a full stop at the end I would like to put Göts,

adducing the words of one of the informants: "The border is changing indeed! About three years ago the problems really occurred, but nowadays all the Finnish border started speaking Russian" (male, 34 years old).

### Questions

- How important was the narrative construction of boundaries in the fictional stories of Soviet times?
- What was the border like that was constructed through these stories?
- How did the times of Glasnost and Perestroika change the boundary discourses?
- Is the contemporary Finnish-Russian border considered by the Russians to be open or closed? Why?

### Suggestions for further reading

Berliah, D., Bunzl, M. & Lampland, M. (2000, eds.). *Altering States: Ethnography of Transition in Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union*. Michigan: Ann Arbor.

Brednikova, O. & Voronkov, V. (1999, eds.). *Nomadic Border St. Petersburg, CISR*.

Medvedev, S. (1998). *Russia as the Subconsciousness of Finland*. UPI Working papers, no. 7. Helsinki: Finnish Institute of International Affairs.

Neumann, I.B. (1996). *Russia and the Idea of Europe: A Study in Identity and International Relations*. London: Routledge.

### Note

<sup>1</sup> For the analysis I used the press-cuttings collection of the archive at the Center for Independent Social Research, namely the publications of the most part of central and local newspapers covering border issues for the last three years. I did not examine the publications concerning interstate official relations.

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TEARING DOWN THE CURTAIN,  
OPENING THE GATES

*Northern Boundaries in Change*

**Sophi**

University of Jyväskylä 2000