Six Images of Karelia

Jukka Oksa
University of Joensuu
Karelian Institute
Finland

Joensuu 2007

*

Where have you seen "Karjala" recently?

Karelia Beer, Finland

Karjala beer had been produced in Sortava in the 1930s. In 1966 Hartwall company bought the label.

Using of the Karelian coat of arms (with two sabres) on a beer bottle was protested by the Soviet Embassador in 1968.

This brought additional publicity to the label.

1966

ILTA-SANOMAT

Kovalevin "oluthyökkäys" herätti hämmästystä

Tehdas ei vaihda Karjala-etikettiä

KARJALA

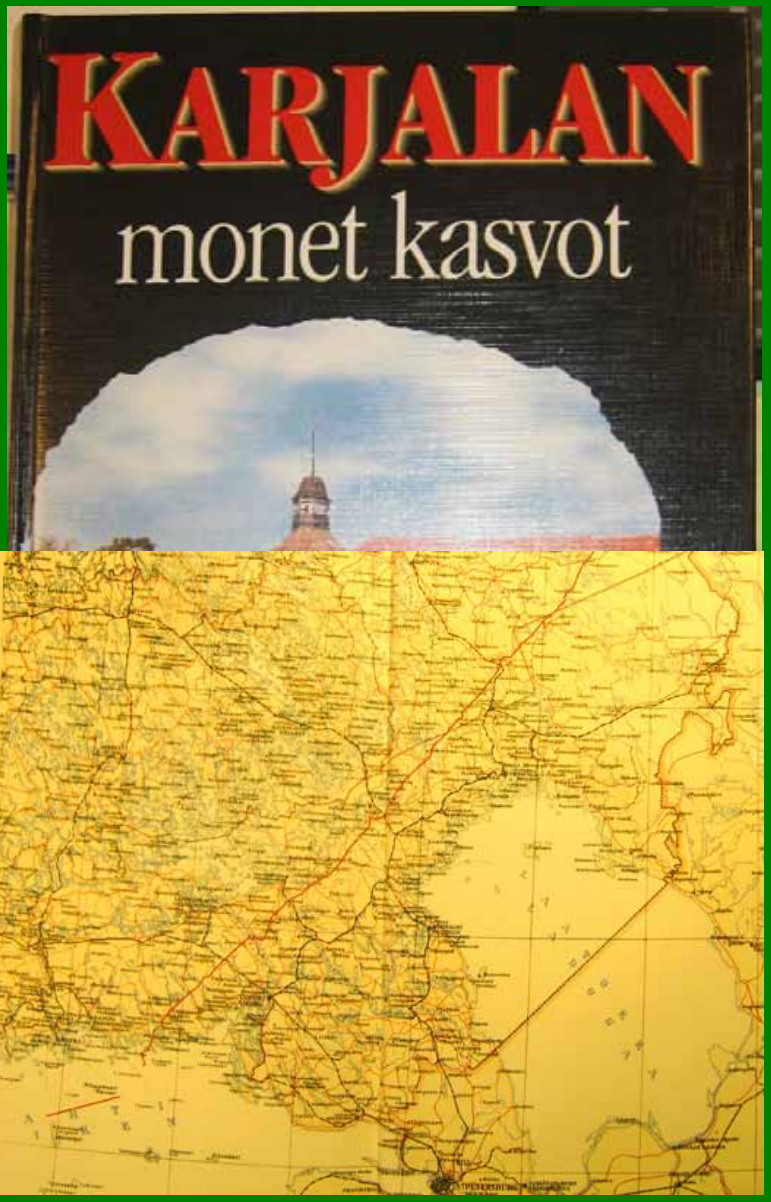
1966
Hartwall siirtyi panimoalalle ostamalla ensimmäiseksi oluttavaramerkiksi Karjalan. "Karjalasta kajahtaa" –iskulauseella olut valloitti markkinat. Menestystä avitti myös Neuvostoliiton Suomen suurlähettilään Kovalevin hyökkäys Karjala-pullon etiketin miekkaa ja sapelia vastaan.

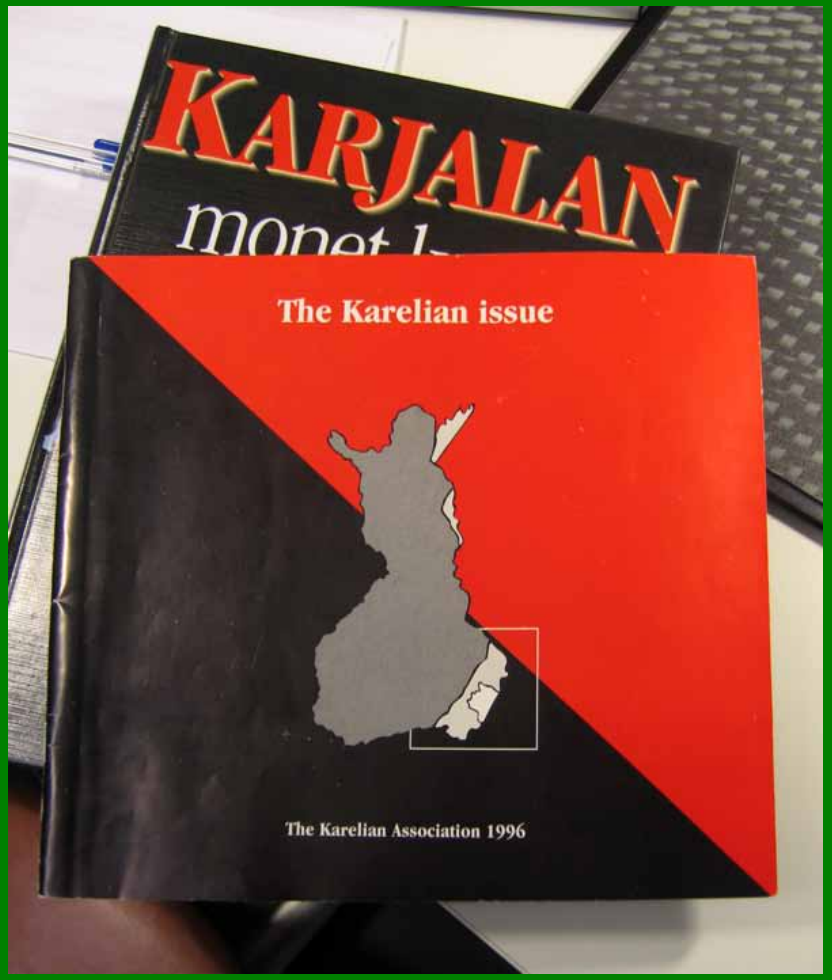
1969

Karelia Believes in Future.

Getting Married in Petrozavodsk.

The Backward Republic is Struggling out of Distress.


KARJALAN
monet kasvot
KARJALA 1925


KARJALAN
The Karelian issue
The Karelian Association 1996

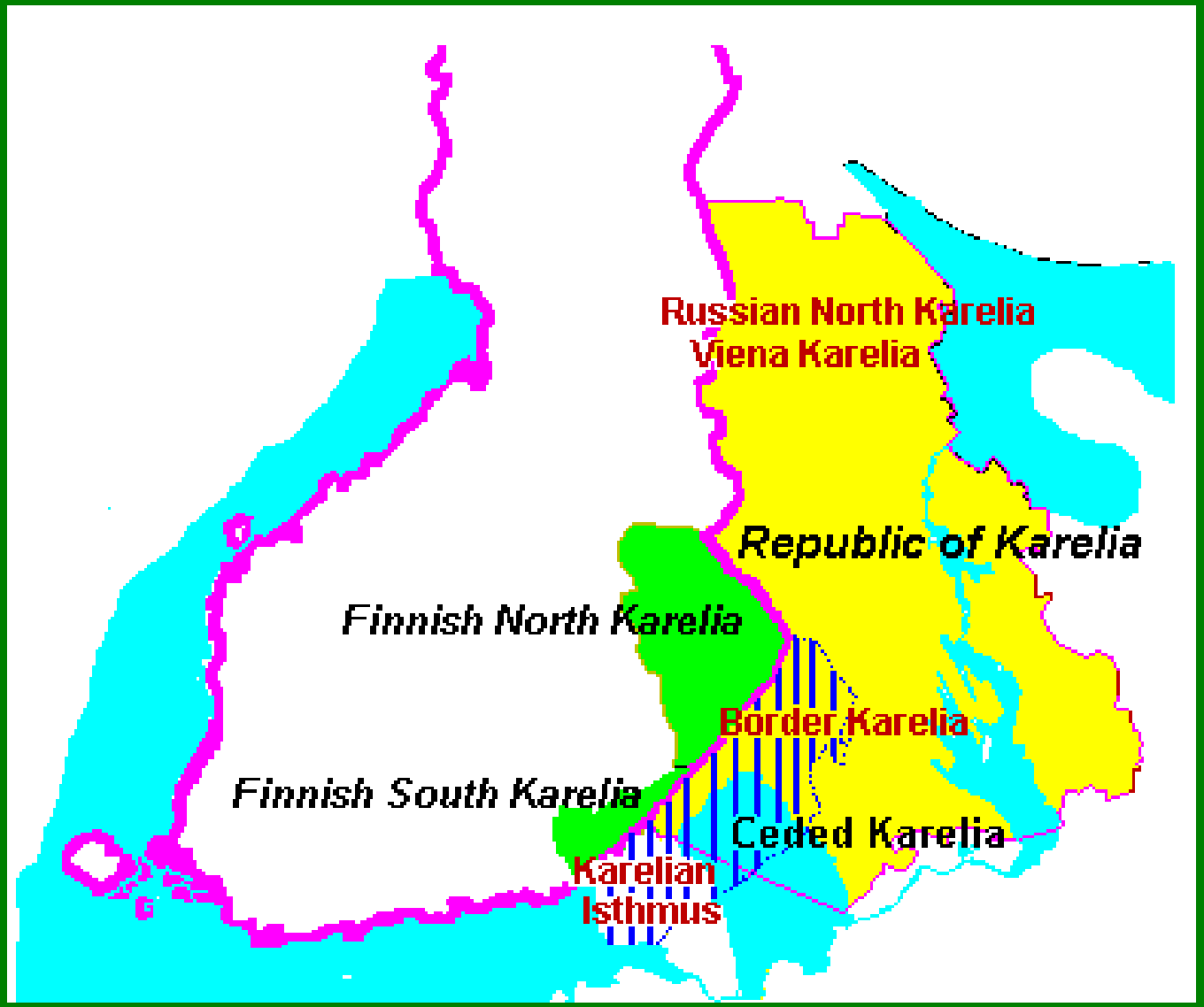
Introduction

Karelia has many definitions. It has never been an institutional entity (country, province or county) with universally recognised outer borders. The nature of Karelia is determined more by the border dividing it that borders around it.

Regions called Karelia, are located partly in eastern Finland and partly in north-western Russia.

Even the contemporary geographic names of Karelias are confusing, if one does not know which Karelia he or she is talking about, what is the framework of the author for the term Karelia.

Geographical definitions of Karelia



The border dividing and defining Karelia has also many meanings. It has been historically changing, and each change has influenced the movements of population.

Especially the southern part of the Karelian Border has moved during centuries according to changing balance of power.

Borders in Karelia

[1323]
[1595]
[1617]
[1721]
[1743]
[1809]
[1920]
[1940]
[1944]

Borders in Karelia

[1323]
[1595]
[1617]
[1721]
[1743]
[1809]
[1920]
[1940]
[1944]

Borders in Karelia

[1323]
[1595]
[1617]
[1721]
[1743]
[1809]
[1920]
[1940]
[1944]

Borders in Karelia

[1323]
[1595]
[1617]
[1721]
[1743]
[1809]
[1920]
[1940]
[1944]

Borders in Karelia

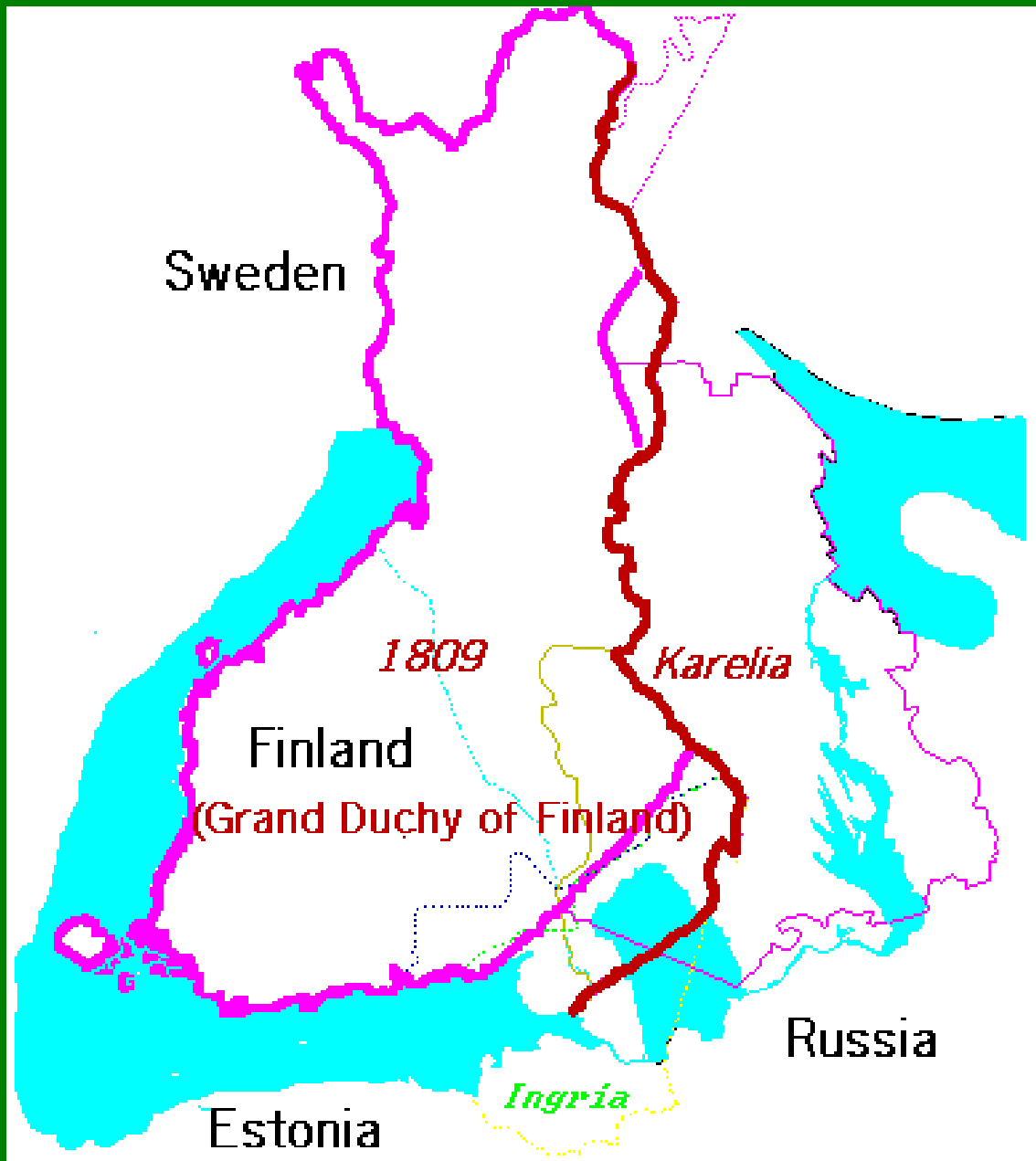
[1323]
[1595]
[1617]
[1721]
[1743]
[1809]
[1920]
[1940]
[1944]

Borders in Karelia

[1323]
[1595]
[1617]
[1721]
[**1743**]
[1809]
[1920]
[1940]
[1944]

Borders in Karelia

[1323]
[1595]
[1617]
[1721]
[1743]
[1809]
[1920]
[1940]
[1944]

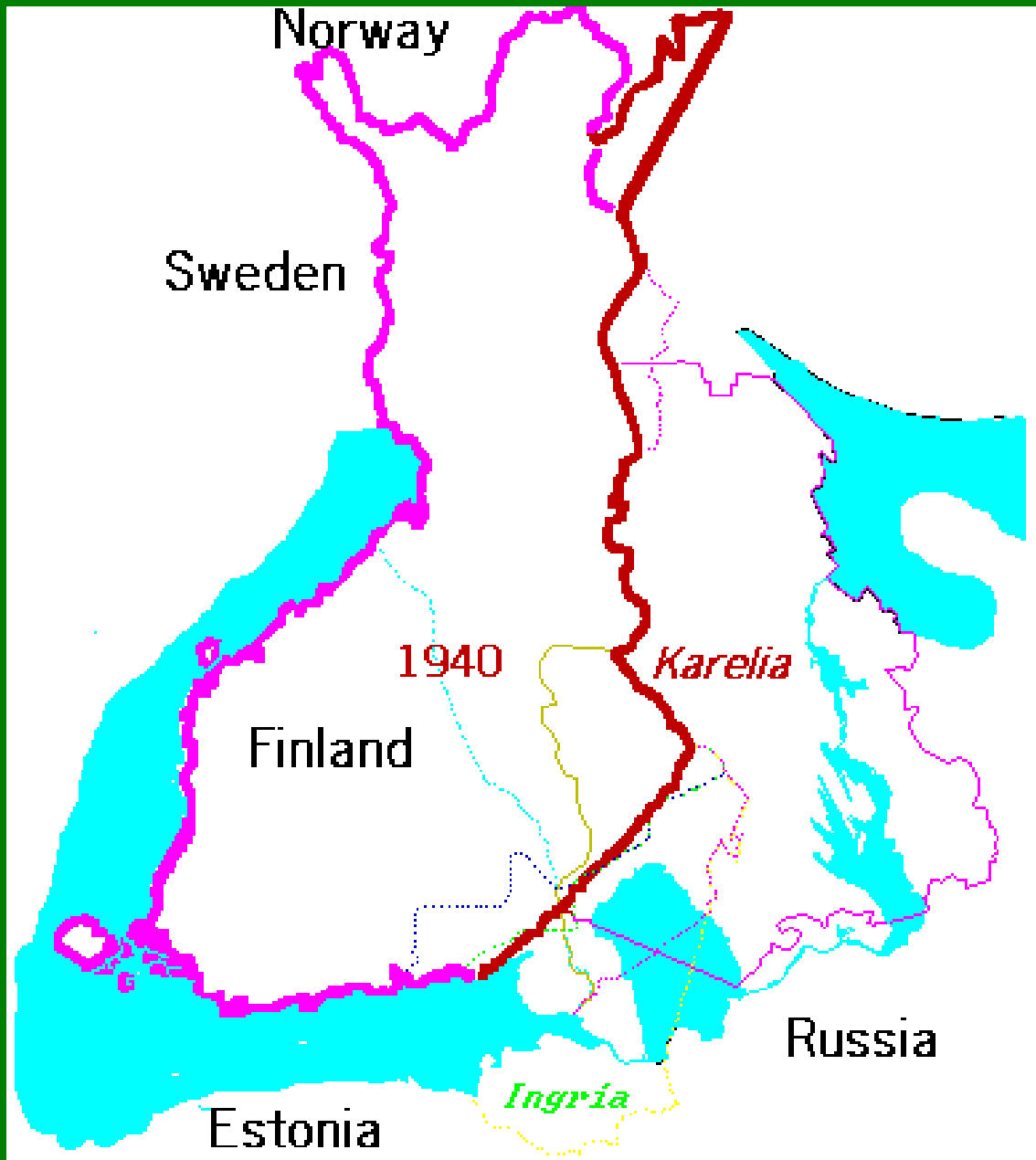


Borders in Karelia

[1323]
[1595]
[1617]
[1721]
[1743]
[1809]
[1920]
[1940]
[1944]

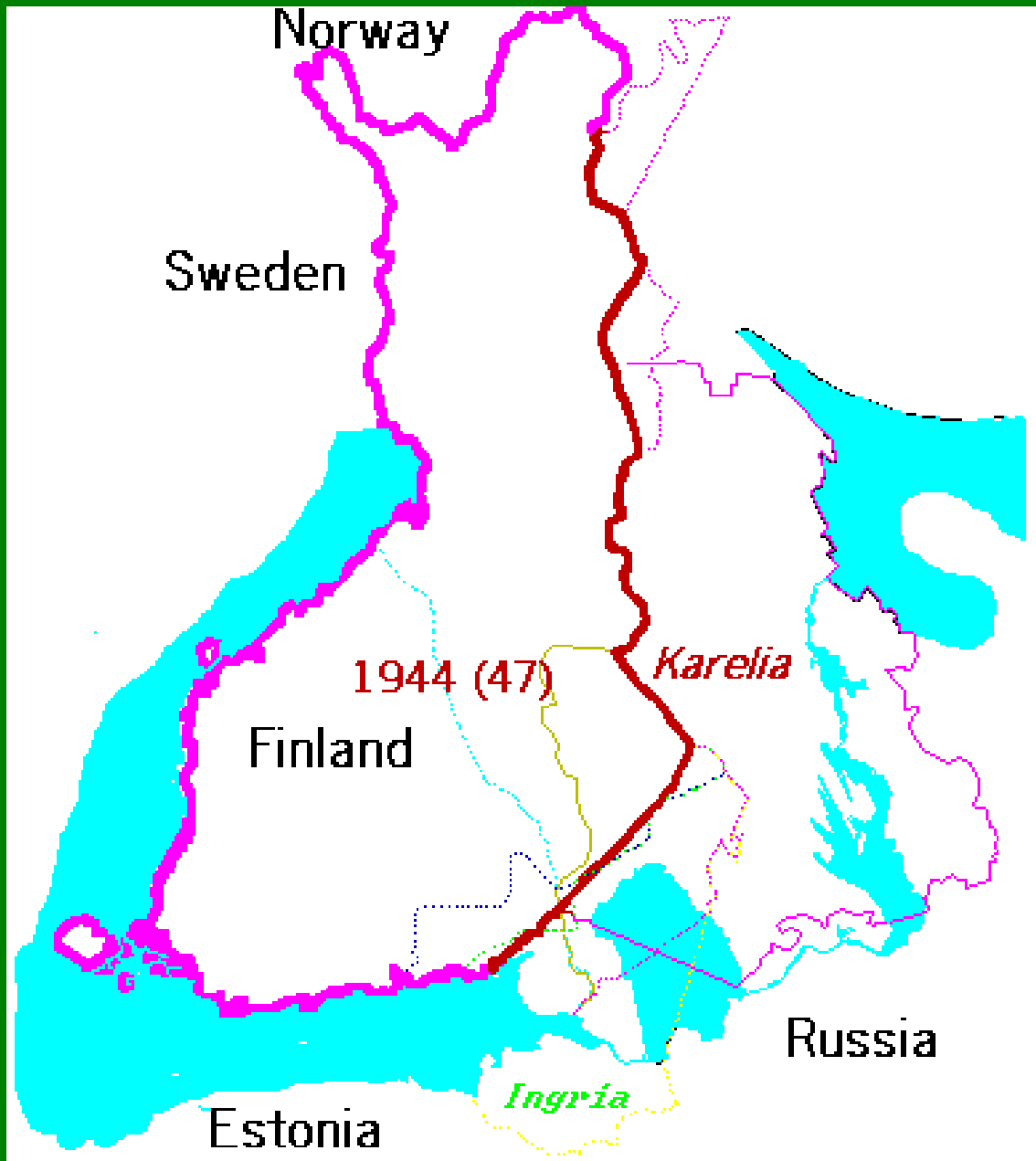
Borders in Karelia

[1323]
[1595]
[1617]
[1721]
[1743]
[1809]
[1920]
[1940]
[1944]



Borders in Karelia

[1323]
[1595]
[1617]
[1721]
[1743]
[1809]
[1920]
[1940]
[1944]



Images:
social constructions and social forces

Images are here understood as socially created and shared definitions that mix facts and emotions. They are narratives of the common past and desired future.
They mobilise solidarity, call for action, and propose, sometimes seduce, to become part of a cultural or a political identity.

Here the focus is on the social and historical background of these images and also on the social forces or institutions sustaining them.

The border, either past or present, is an important element in the life-cycle of these images.

The discussions about Karelia is organised into six images, originating on both sides of the border, presented in chronological order

- Two archetypal nationalistic images
- Two images of the dramatic events of the 20th century history
- Two images of economic future

Archetypes of nationalist ideas

1. Origin of Finnish culture and landscape

2. Karelia as Russian North

Socio-political drama in the 20th Century

3. Karelia, the promised land

4. Karelia, the lost land

Economic futures

5. The Paper Mill of Russia

6. Model of cross-border co-operation

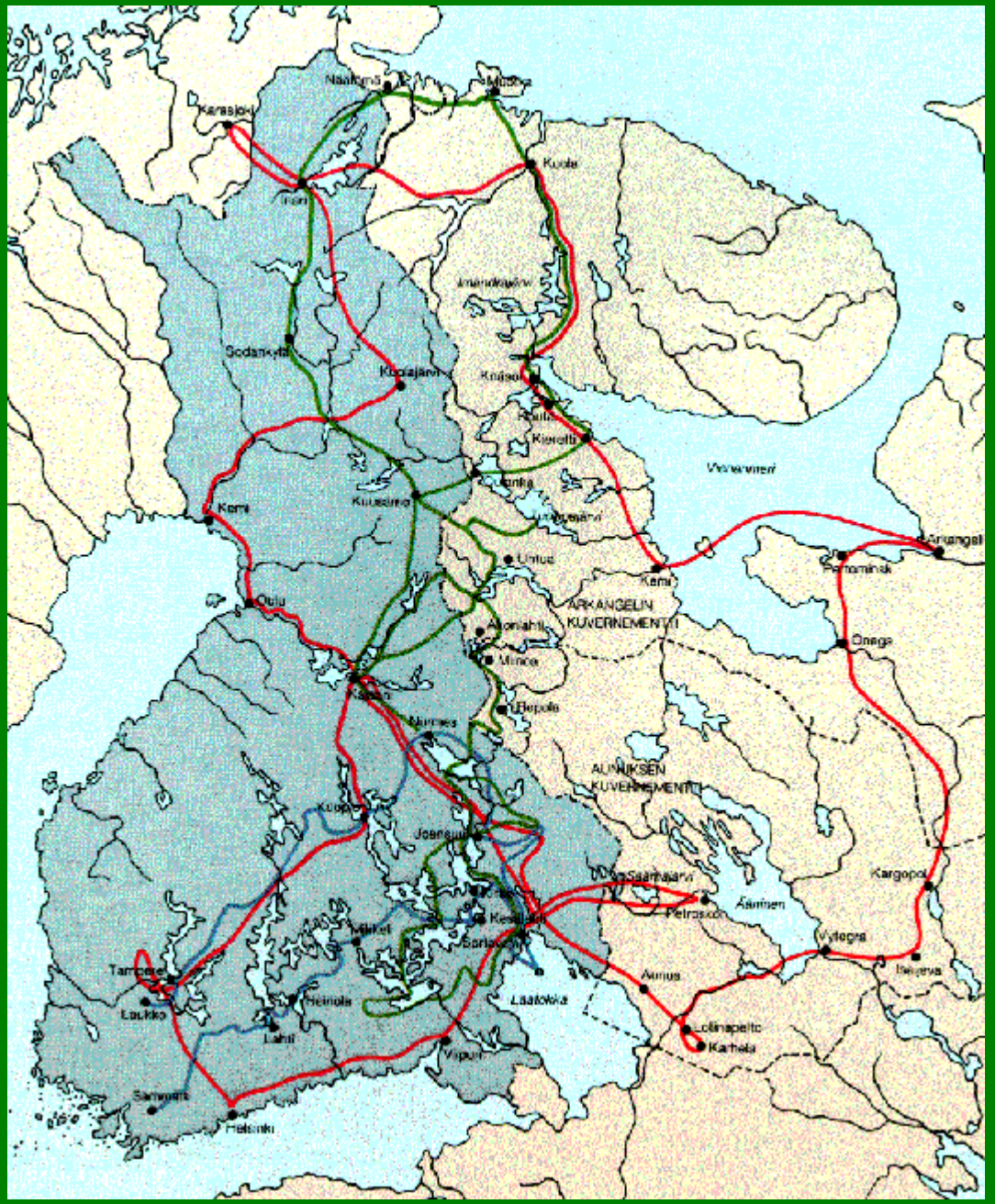
1. Origin of Finnish culture and landscape

The creation of the Finnish national identity and culture borrowed some of its fundamental elements from Karelia.

During the flourishing Golden Age of Finnish arts, the National Romanticism movement was inspired by Kalevala, Karelia, and its landscape.

The phenomena, later called Karelianism, included famous composers, painters, and writers (Sibelius, Edelfelt, Gallen-Kallela, Leino, to mention a few). The painters depicted the Finnish national landscape as the hilly and rough wild forests of eastern Finland and Karelia.

Elias Lönnrot, the country doctor who wrote down the traditional songs and edited them into Kalevala, collected the poems primarily in eastern Finland and Karelia.



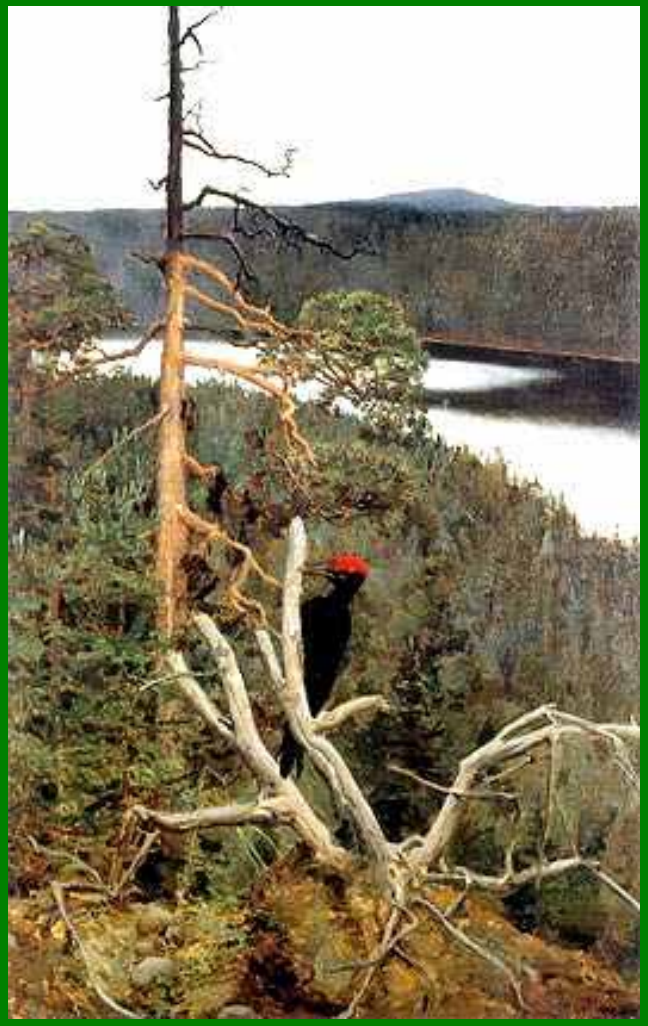
Eero Järnefelt 1893

“I am trying define why our eastern border is the most amazing one on this globe: hell on this side and the paradise on the other.”

Pentti Linkola,
a Finnish fundamentalist green thinker and writer

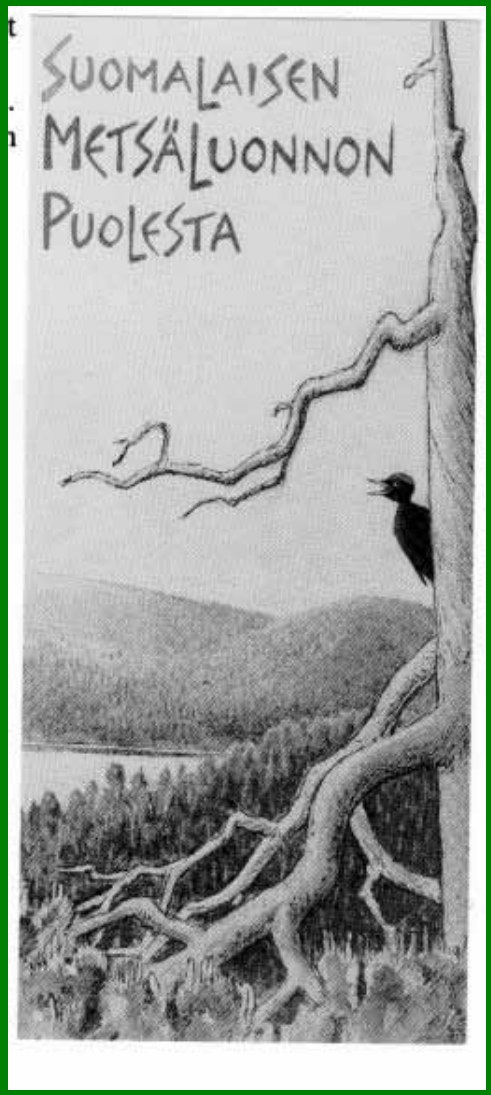
Photo: WSOY

The nature, the forests and rough landscape of Karelia is felt to be the national landscape, the real Finnish nature. In Karelia on the other side of border one may still experience the original nature.



Akseli Gallen-Kallela: Palokärki 1892

A nation-wide petition collected 220 000 signatures for the Finnish Forest Nature in 1988. The campaign posters used the same image of woodpecker in the wilderness.



For the Finnish Forest Nature (Seppo Leinonen 1988)

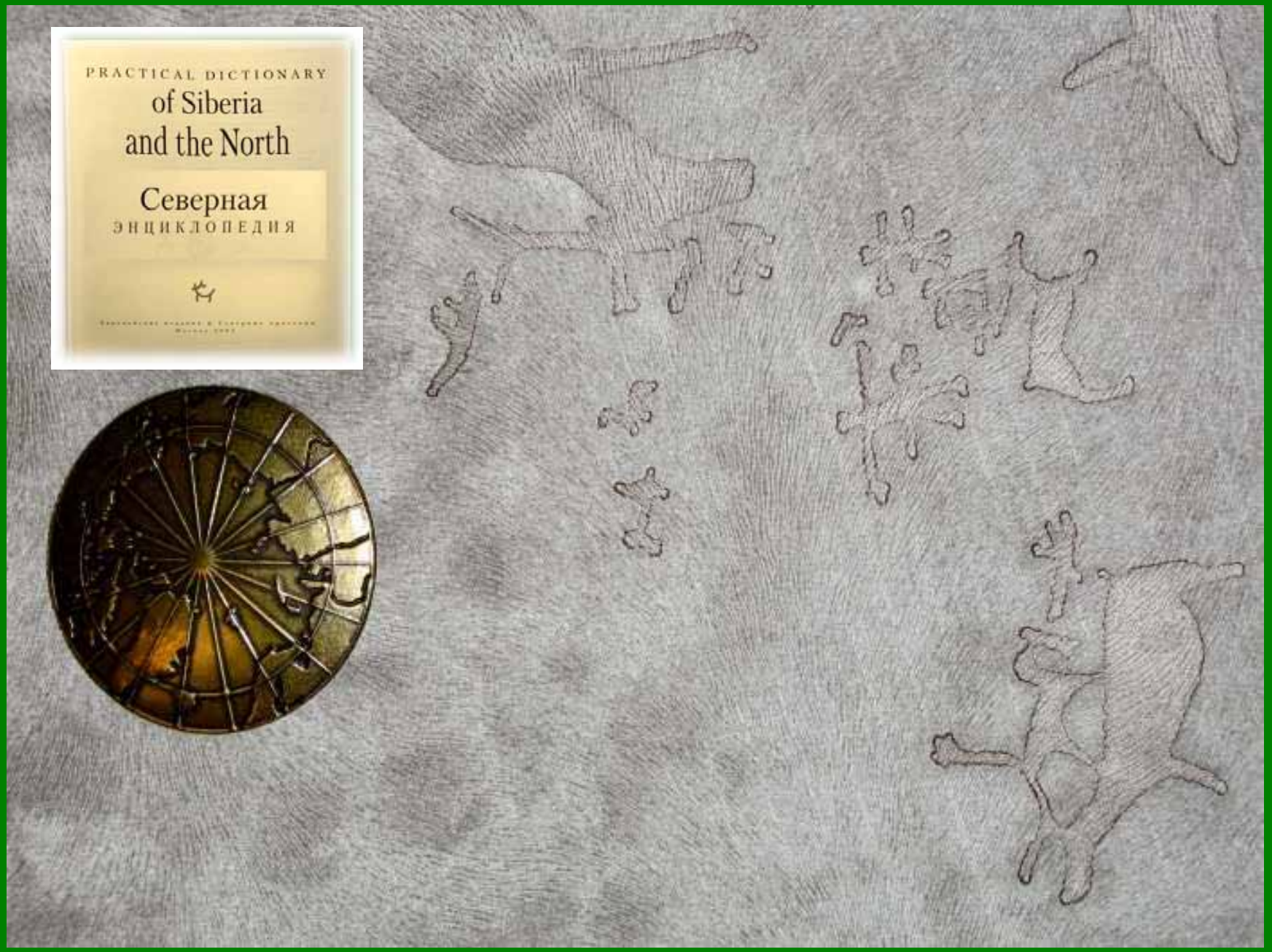
The use of marginal areas as building blocks of national identity was not a unique Finnish feature.

The romantic quest for identities looked often for frontiers, remote and peripheral places with authentic traditional cultures.

2. Karelia as a part of the Russian North.

On the Russian side of the border, the traditional culture and the northern landscape of Karelia are joined into the Russian national image of the Russian North.

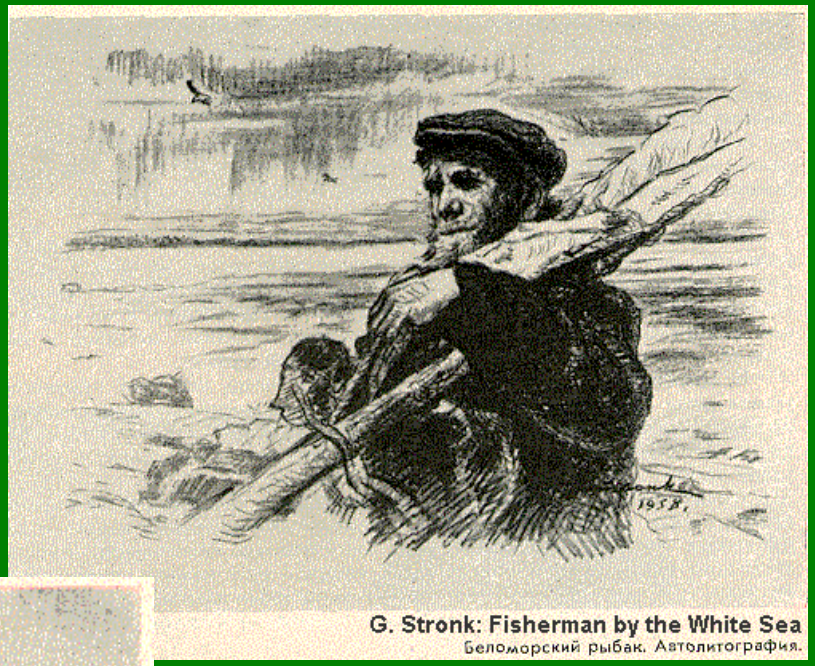
The harsh but rich nature and ethnic cultures inspire northern arts.


PRACTICAL DICTIONARY
of Siberia
and the North
Северная
ЭНЦИКЛОПЕДИЯ

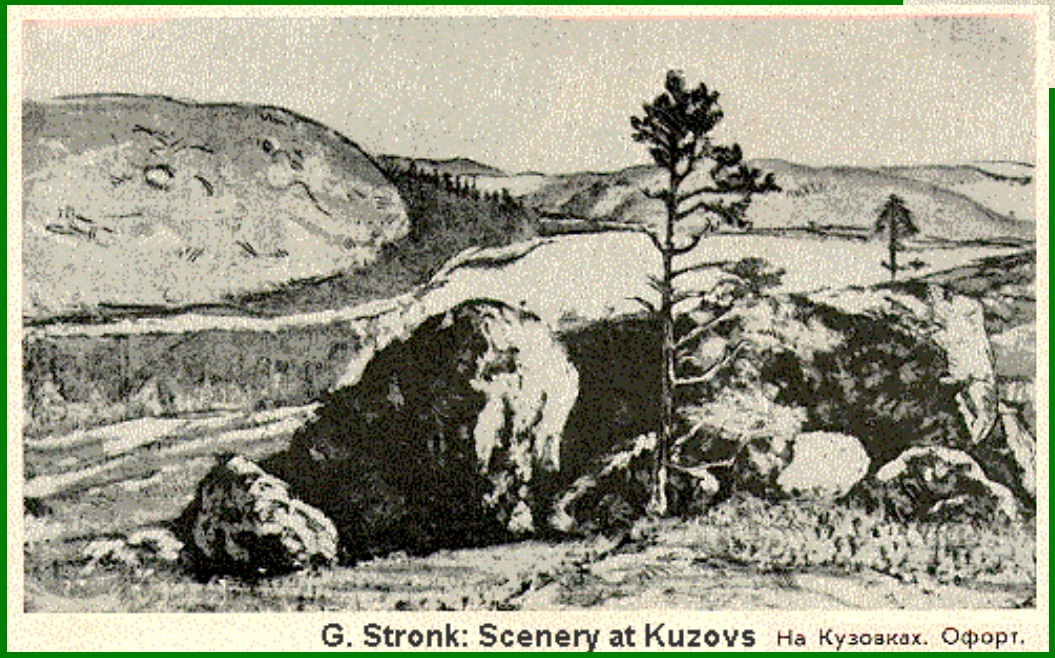
Russian North is beautiful wooden architecture, buildings with a soul.

Pictures from Kizhi island outdoor museum

North is rough nature and people with rich culture, it is the wild frontier “dikij sever”.

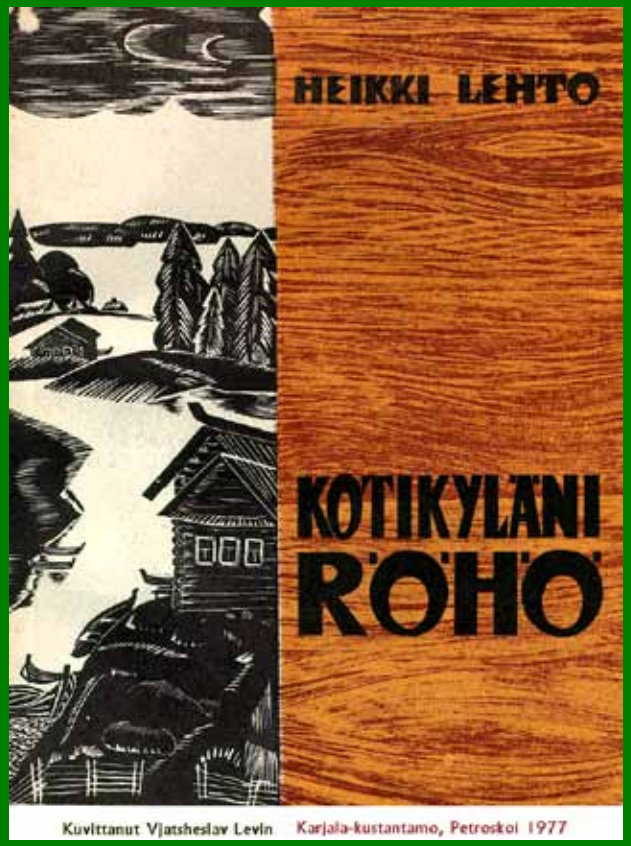


G. Stronk: Fisherman by the White Sea
Беломорский рыбак. Автолитография.



G. Stronk: Scenery at Kuzovs На Кузовках. Офорт.

Russian North is ethnic groups with traditional cultures of their own, the Kalevala is included.



Boris Akbulatov (Kalevala, Petrozavodsk 1992)

Aino maiden is courted by the old singer Väinämöinen.

The same episode in Kalevala illustrated in Finland and in Russian Karelia

A. Gallen-Kallela 1891

B.Akbulatov 1992

Karelia, the Siberia nearest to Moscow

The rulers have used the North as a place of expulsion. Prison labour was used in the 1930s to build the canal from the White Sea to Lake Onega.

The life in the taiga has taught people to take care of themselves, and not trusting the Emperor or the Central Committee.

Archetypes of nationalist ideas

1. Origin of Finnish culture and landscape
2. Karelia as Russian North

Socio-political drama in the 20th Century

3. Karelia, the promised land

4. Karelia, the lost land

Economic futures

5. The Paper Mill of Russia
6. Model of cross-border co-operation

3. Karelia, the promised land

Three waves of Finns migrated to Soviet Karelia.

1.
After the civil war in Finland the Red leaders fled to the Soviet Union. One of their leaders, Edward Gylling, proposed to Lenin that a workers' socialist commune be established in eastern Karelia. The Workers' Commune of Karelia was established in June 1920. It became a haven for Finnish Red rebels, and later also for economic and political migrants.

2.
In the early 1930s thousands of Finns who had earlier migrated to North America moved to Soviet Karelia to build a workers' society. They were escaping from the worsening conditions of the economic depression in the North America.

3.
During the depression of the 1930s many workers from Finland, especially from eastern Finland, fled to Russian Karelia to find work. This group has been later called deserters (in Finnish: loikkarit). Mostly they did not have ideological aspirations.

The role of Finns in Russian Karelia

Finns played an important part in the leadership of workers' Karelia in the 1920s and the 1930s. The American and Canadian Finns were also influential in the economic and cultural life. Many of them brought new technology, tools, machinery, and skills that were used, for example, to modernise forestry. The American Finns were singularly essential in founding Finnish-language cultural institutions, such as the theatre and Finnish language literature.

Log transport workers with coal gas tractors in 1930s,
Matrocy settlement, near Petrozavodsk in the Russian Karelia

The technological innovation of the time was tractors with engines using carbon monoxide. It was produced by burning wood chips in the iron barrels by the side of the tractor.

Purges of Finns in Russian Karelia

During Stalin's purges these Finnish elements were regarded as unreliable nationalists. Many were imprisoned and were killed or disappeared in the forced-labour camps of the Russian North.

Changing names of the Karelian Republic

8 June 1920

The Workers Commune of Karelia

25 July 1923

The Autonomic Socialist Soviet Republic of Karelia

31 March 1940

The Karelian-Finnish Socialist Soviet Republic

16 July 1956

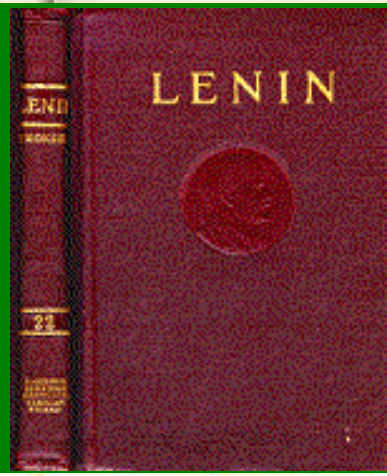
The Autonomic Socialist Soviet Republic of Karelia

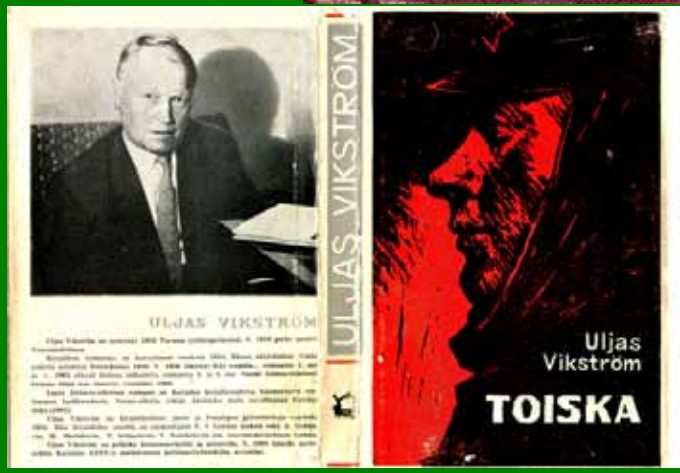
14 November 1991

The Republic of Karelia

Karelia remained a source of Finnish language material for leftists in Finland. Finnish translations of Marxist books were printed in Petrozavodsk.

In the 1970s, during the revival of leftist youth movements in the West, Finnish radical youth read a book about Toivo Antikainen, a romantic guerilla-hero of the northern taiga, like Che Guevara with skiis, who fighting against the white Finland.





The Finnish socialists enthusiastically subscribed to the newspaper Neuvosto-Karjala (Soviet Karelia) and the cultural monthly Punalippu (Red Flag).

These were a Finnish language window to Soviet socialism.

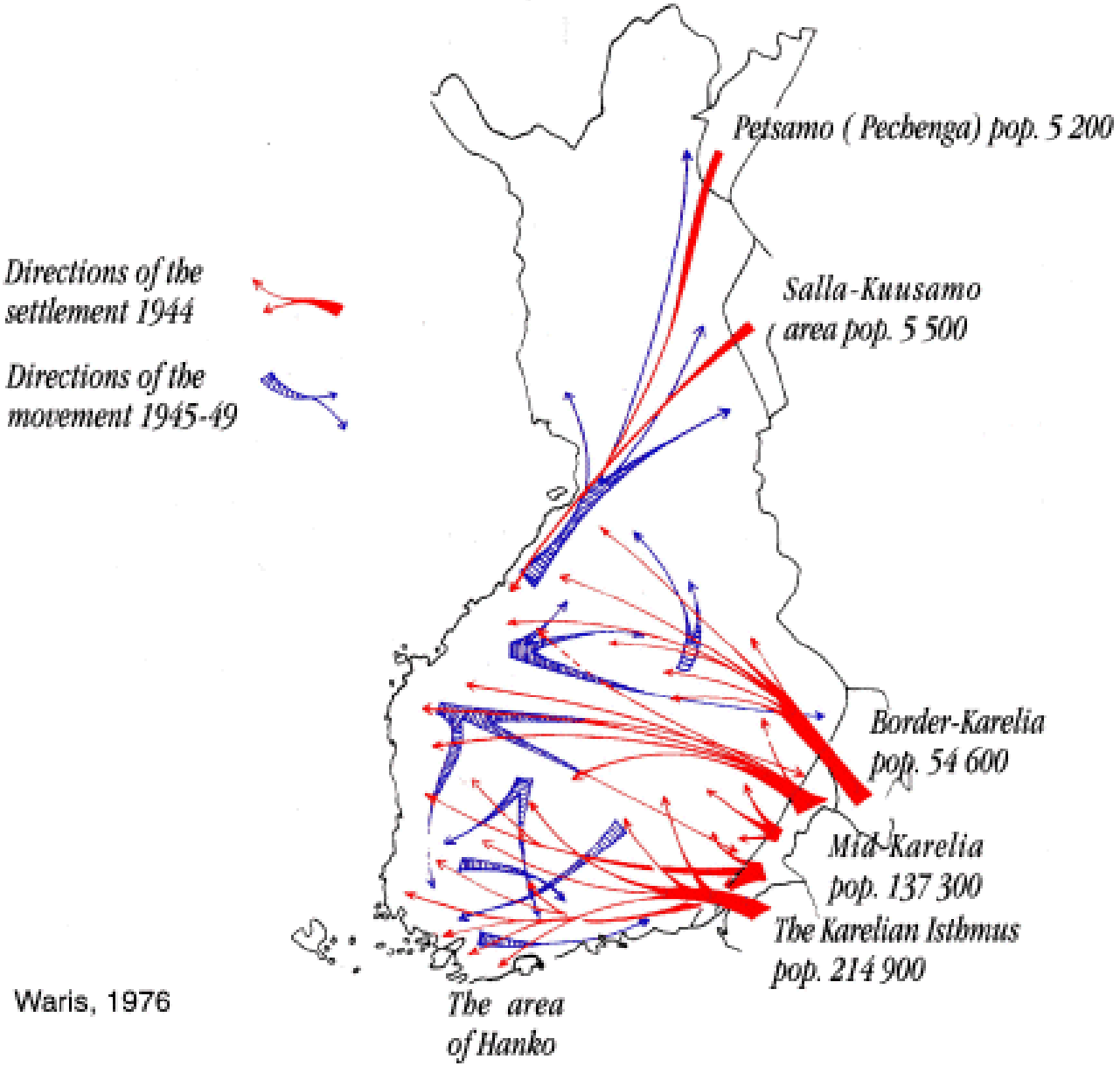
4. Karelia, the lost land

After the Second World War the borderline was moved westwards and about 420,000 evacuees from ceded territories in Karelia were resettled in other parts of Finland. Into the areas annexed by the Soviet Union new inhabitants were transferred from Russia, Byelorussia and other parts of the Soviet Union.

Large parts of these areas of Karelia were part of a border zone that was closed to the general public. Although officially friendly bilateral relationships developed between the states of the Soviet Union and Finland, the border of the Cold War separated the evacuated Karelians from their earlier homeland.

The resettling of the Karelian evacuees in Finland was a huge national effort, and the assimilation of the Karelians into Finnish society was a long, and sometimes, painful process. Because a large number of the Karelians had been farmers, they were given new farms in Finland. A few decades later they and their children experienced a dramatic structural change in Finnish agriculture and again participated in a large migration, this time from small farms to towns and factories in the south.

The direction of the settlement and the movement of the evacuees in postwar Finland



The common experience of the evacuees created a special identity for Finnish Karelians, and the core of this identity has been the image of Karelia as the lost land. In the post-war political life of Finland, the issue of settling the Karelians and later the fate of their small farms have received a great deal of attention, and there have been many influential spokesmen for the Karelians in several political parties.

The Karelian Association tries to keep the “Karelian Issue” on the political agenda.

Procession of the summer festival of the Karelian Association. Photo by Anneli Eskola

The sustained cultural impact of these events has been the longing for Karelia, the lost land. It has been an important impetus of the nationalist sentiments in the after war politics in Finland.

The common language of all the migrants and refugees is the culture of nostalgia, and the image of Karelia as a lost land has taken on a symbolic value.

Harry Martinson, a world-famous Swedish author, included in his saga "Aniara" (first published in 1956) a "Song of Karelia" (Sång om Karelen).

Aniara is an epic poem about the last human beings, who have escaped from the destroyed planet Earth. Several generations have grown up in an automatic spaceship that is seeking a new home planet.

"Song of Karelia" uses elements from Kalevala (the maiden Aino, summer lake, cuckoo bird, rustling of birch leaves, white nights). He uses Karelia as a symbol of a general human longing for lost roots.

*

Fairest, though, among fair glimpses
come the vision of Karelia,
like a lake agleam through branches,
like a lustrous lake in summer
in the June-illumined season
when no sooner evening darkens
than the cuckoo fluting clear
sends the tender Aino summons,
bids her take her misty mantle,
rise above the June-eve waters,
hasten toward the risen vapors,
meet the cuckoo at his capers
in the rustlings of Karelia.

Harry Martinson: "Song of Karelia"
(Sång om Karelen), Aniara (1956),
translated by Stephen Klass and Leif Sjöberg, (1991)

Archetypes of nationalist ideas

1. Origin of Finnish culture and landscape
2. Karelia as Russian North

Socio-political drama in the 20th Century

3. Karelia, the promised land
4. Karelia, the lost land

Economic futures

5. The Paper Mill of Russia

6. Model of cross-border co-operation

5. The paper mill of Russia

After the Second World War, on the Soviet side of the border, Karelia was seeking its role in the construction of socialism. In the geographic division of labour of the Soviet Union it became a location for a territorial forestry-industrial complex that specialised in cutting timber and producing pulp and paper.

After the Second World War large numbers of workers were transported to the forestry centres in Karelia. Over 300 new forestry villages were founded, a forest tractor factory was established in Petrozavodsk, pulp and paper factories were built, and the training of forestry engineers began at Petrozavodsk State University.

Share of selected nationalities of the population

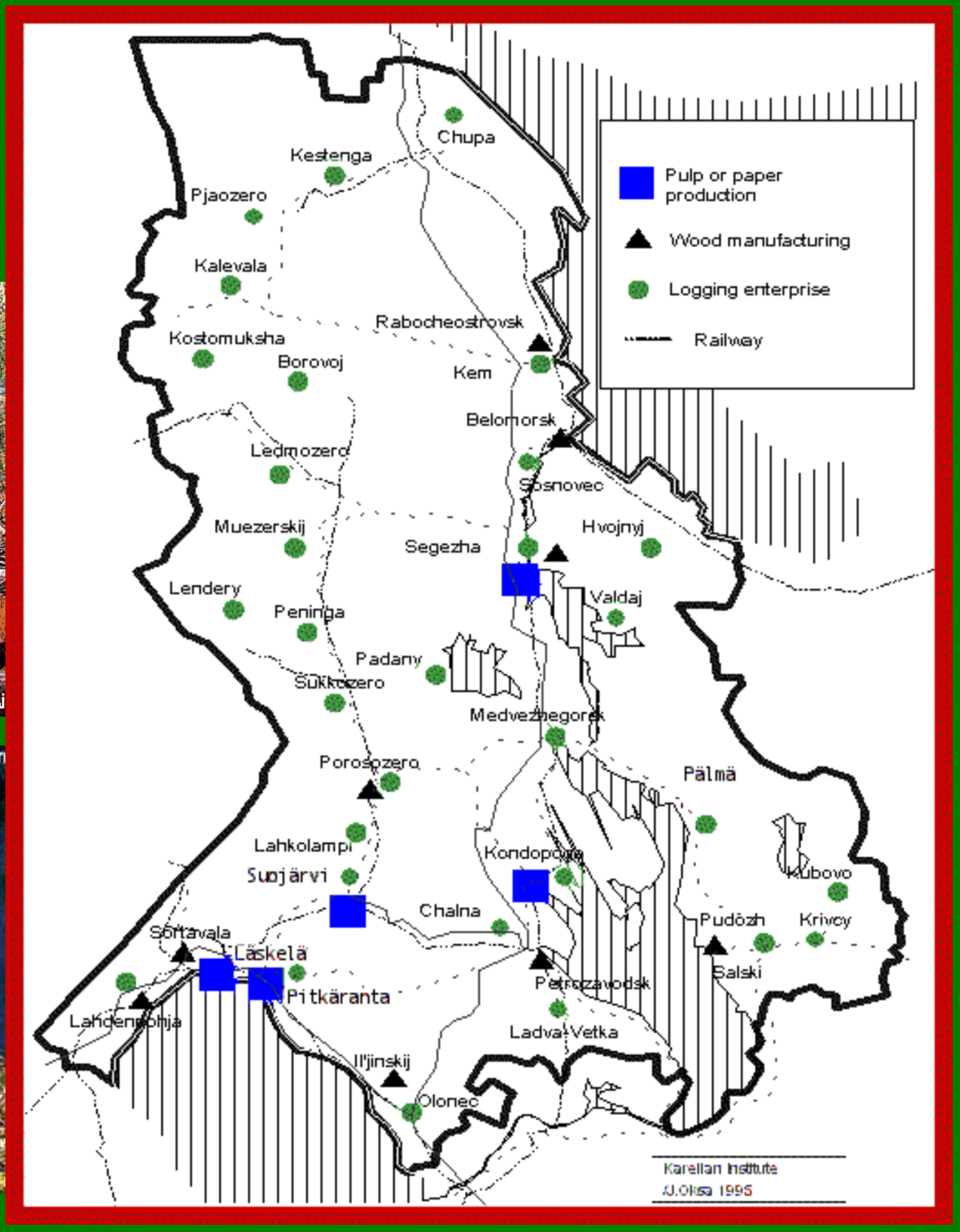
	Saint Petersburg(%)	Leningrad Region (%)	Karelian Republic(%)
Russians	89.1	90.1	73.6
Belorussians	1,9	2,0	7,0
Ukrainians	3,0	3,0	3,6
Karelians	-	0,2	10,0
Vepsians	-	0,3	0,8
Finns	-	0,7	2,3

Source: Census 1989

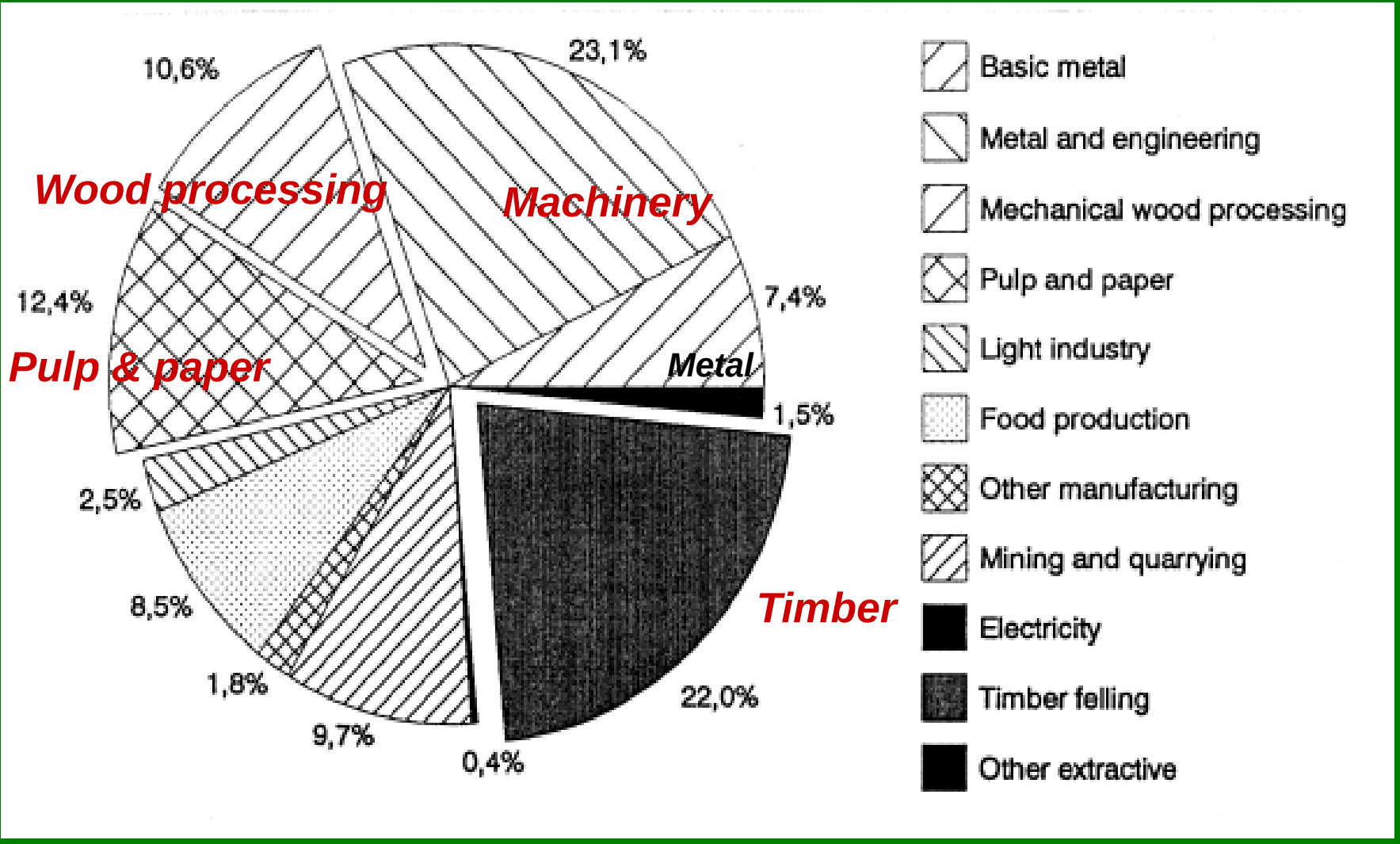
During the Soviet era all forestry companies, wood processing and transport of wood in the Karelian Republic was centralised into one huge state company Karellesprom. At the end of 1980s employed over 91,000 workers and included more than 60 different production units.

In the Soviet division of labour Karelia produced newsprint (40 percent of the Russian demand), cellulose, a high percentage of paper bags, pulp and paper machinery, forestry tractors. In return it imported energy (oil), all kinds of foodstuffs, even fodder for livestock from other parts of the Soviet Union.

Karelian Forest Industry Complex



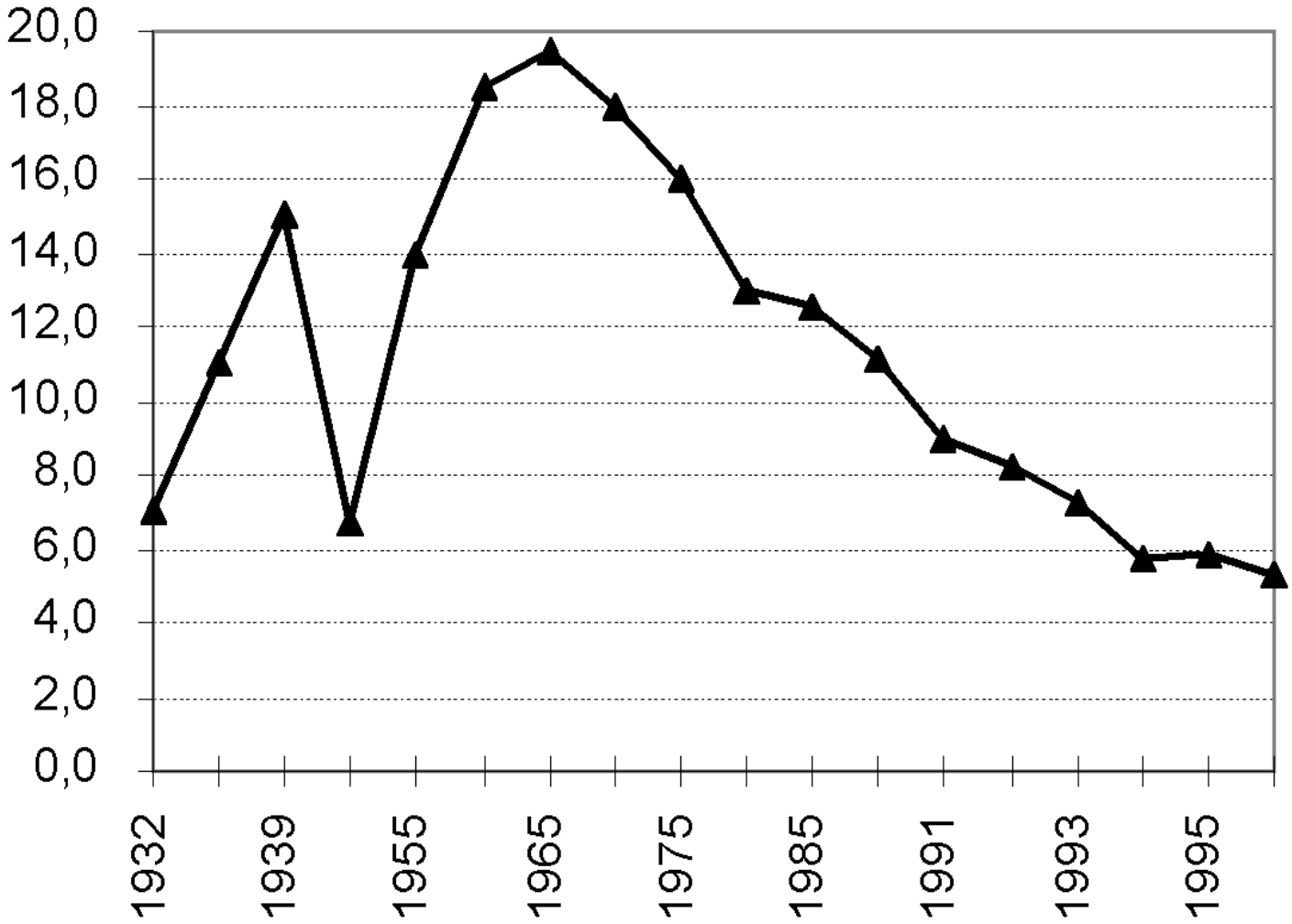
Distribution of labour working in industry in the Karelian Republic 1992



Pulp + paper + wood + timber + machinery = 68,1%

Forest cuttings in the Republic of Karelia until 1995

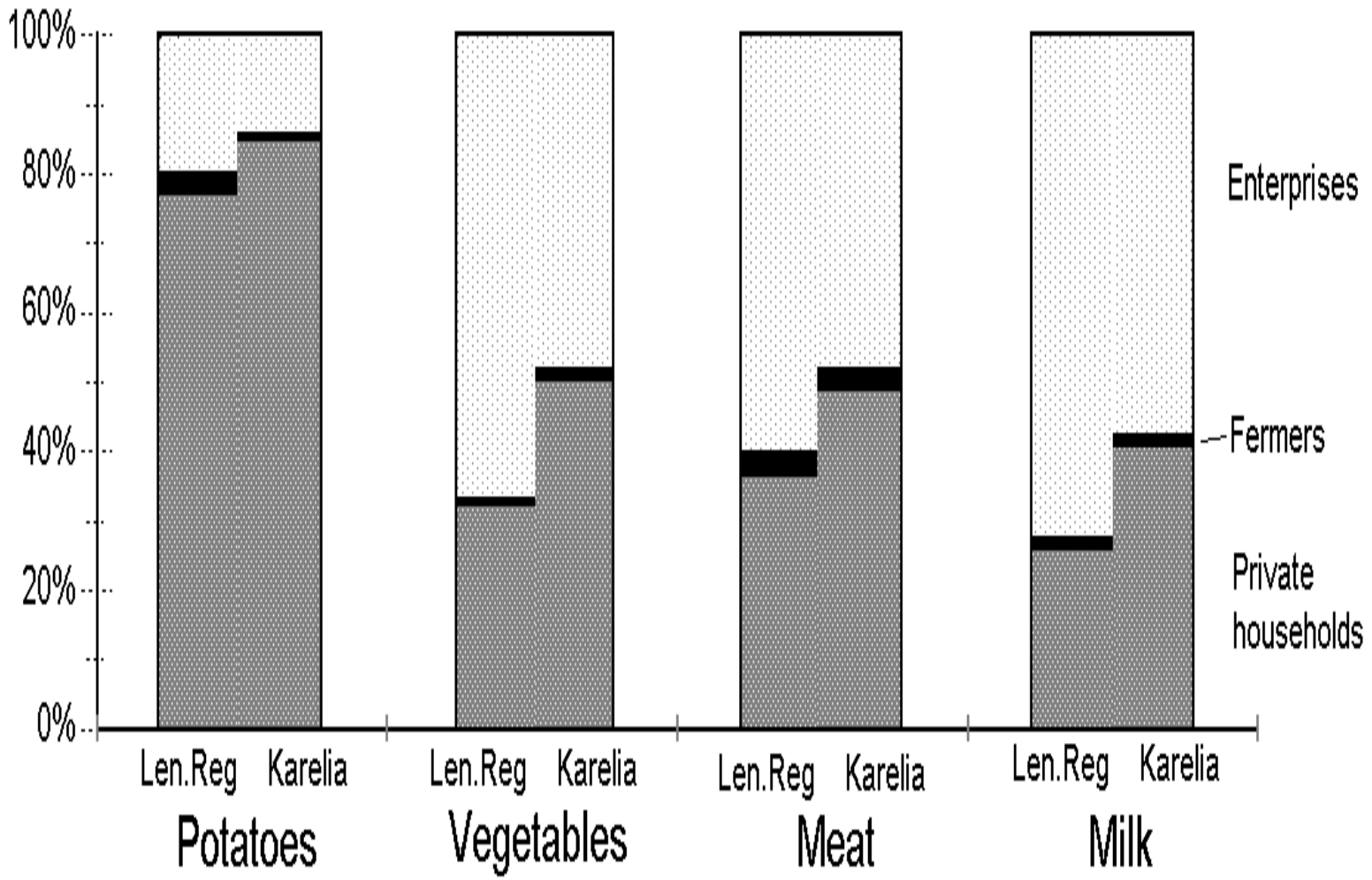
(1000 cubic meters)



Survival by household food production

Koivuselkä, Russia, September 1995, Photo: Ritva Aikonen

Share of the produced foodstuffs by the type of producer Leningrad Region and the Republic of Karelia 1996



6. Model of Cross-border Co-operation

After the fall of the Iron Curtain the possibility of cross-border co-operation has changed the development perspectives of the two Karelian peripheries on the opposite sides of the borderline.

The regional authorities on both sides have tried to increase their voices in the decisions concerning border area development and co-operation.

Euregio Karelia is an area formed by three Regional councils of Finland - Kainuu, Northern Karelia and Northern Ostrobothnia, and the Republic of Karelia of the Russian Federation.

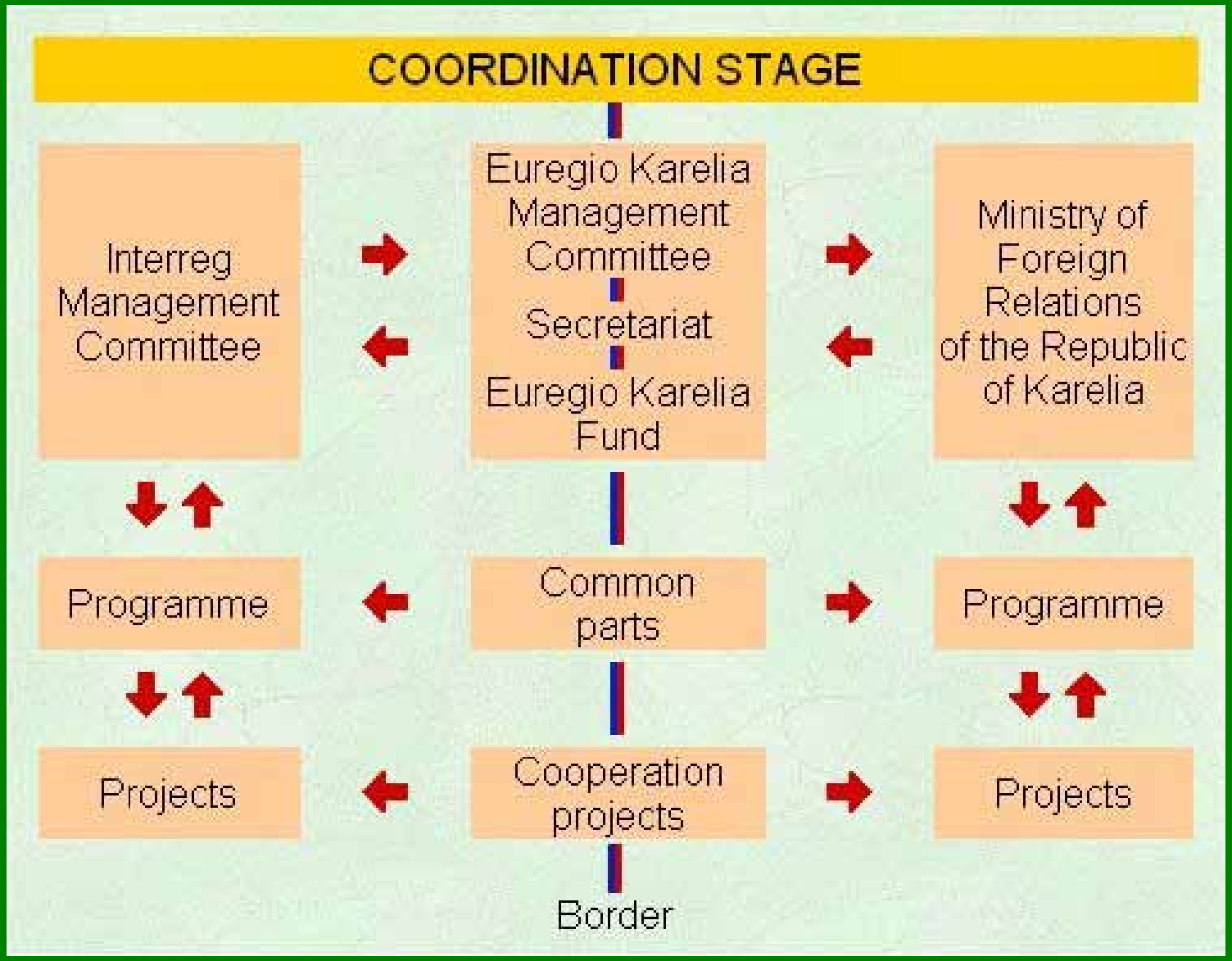
The area of the Finnish part of the Euregio is one fourth of the total area of Finland, but only 12% of population of the whole country live there.

About 750 km of the common border between Russia and Finland (total length is 1300 km) belong to the territory of Euregio Karelia.

EuregioKarelia

PART OF THE NORTHERN DIMENSION

The First Stage of EuRegio Karelia: Coordination

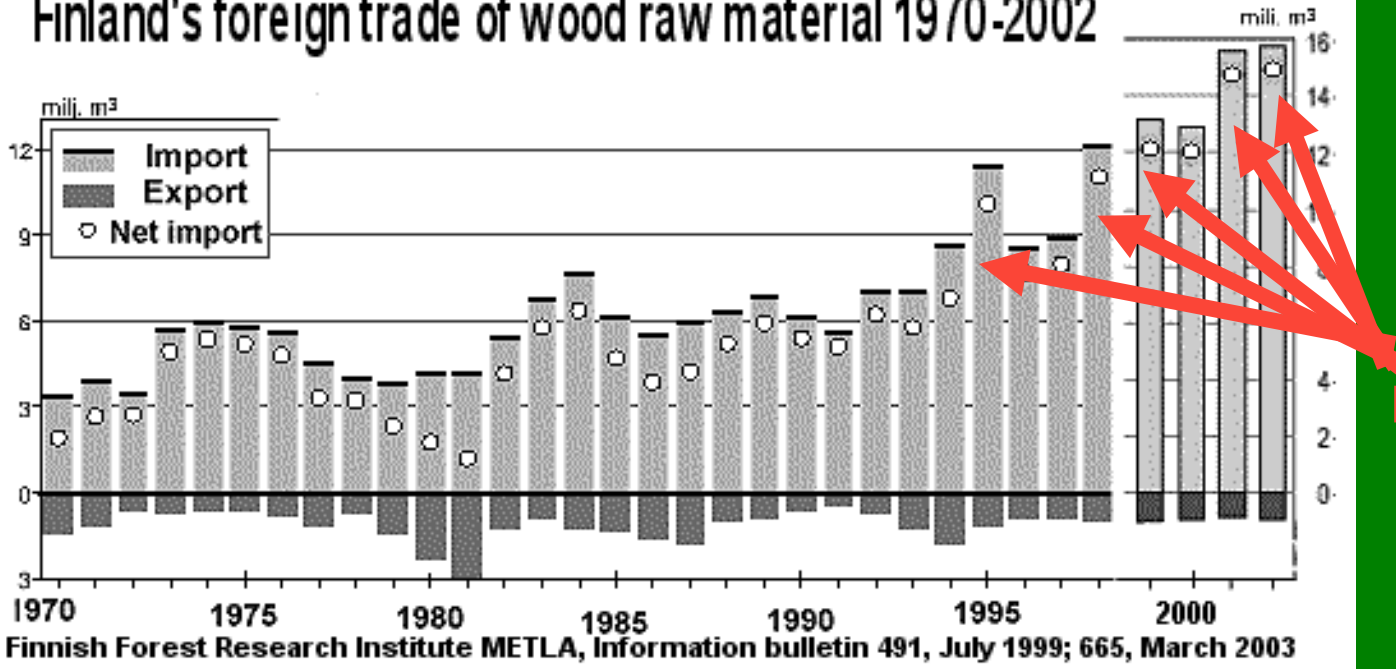


The most active cross-border cooperation takes place in forestry

The earlier Russian made forestry technology is being modernized and partly replaced with the western one, with computerised high tech).

New forestry technology is compatible with the new way of silviculture, which also transferred from the Nordic Countries, especially from Finland (thinnings, rotation of cuttings, tree plantings).

Finland's foreign trade of wood raw material 1970-2002



Finnish Forest Research Institute METLA, Information bulletin 491, July 1999; 665, March 2003

Share of Russia 84% (1998)

Share of the Baltic Countries 13% (1998)

Biggest importers from Russia to Finland

Stora Enso, 5,5 mill. (Karelia, Leningrad, etc)

UPM-Kymmene 2,0 mill. (Leningrad, Novgorod, Vologda, Pskov, etc.)

Thomesto 2,0 mill. (Vologda, Kirov, Perm, Sverdlovsk, etc.)

-subcontractor for Stora Enso, UPM-Kymmene, MoDo

Almost 20 smaller enterprises / subcontractors

Archetypes of nationalist ideas

1. Origin of Finnish culture and landscape
2. Karelia as Russian North

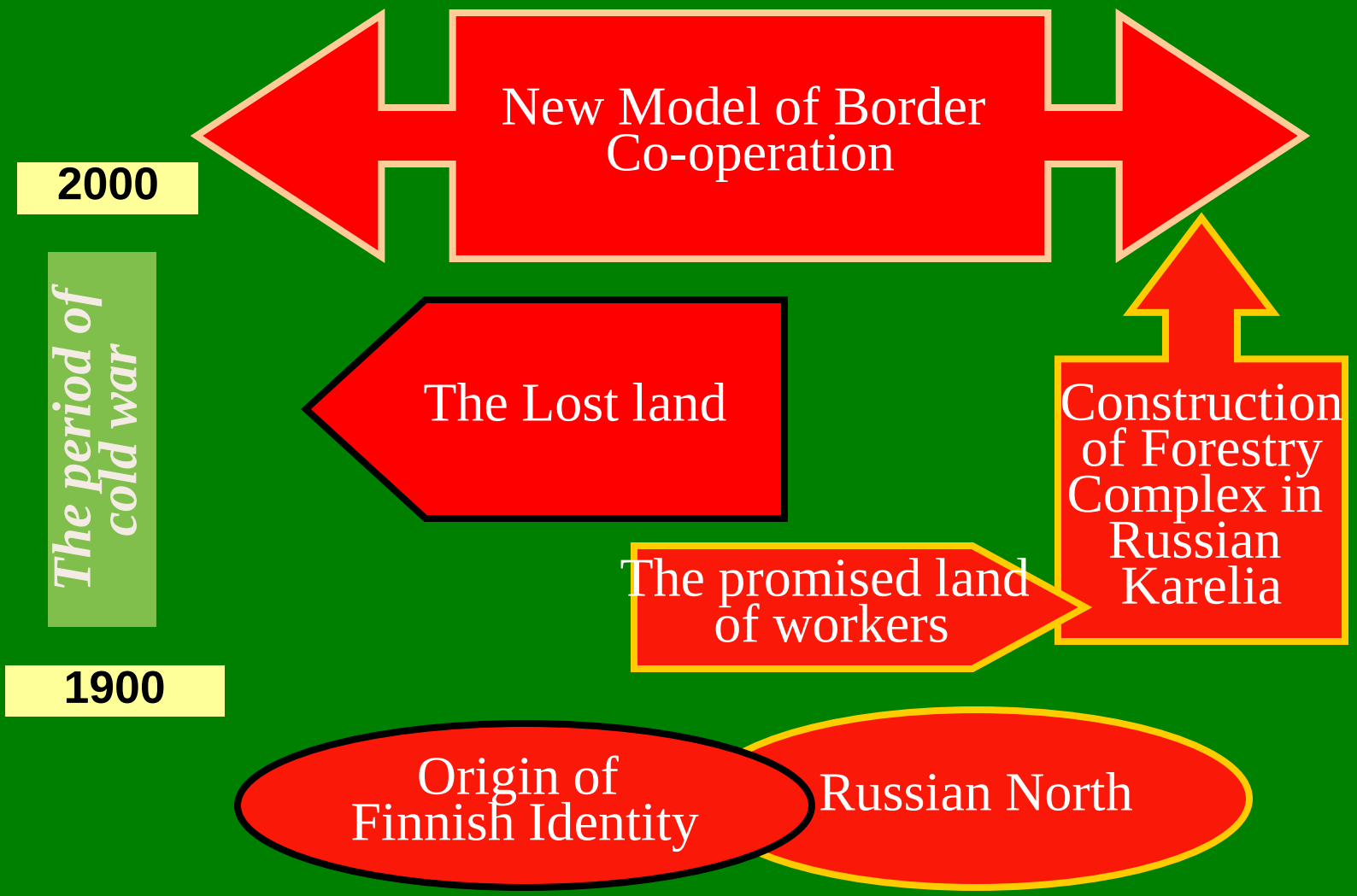
Socio-political drama in the 20th Century

3. Karelia, the promised land
4. Karelia, the lost land

Economic futures

5. The Paper Mill of Russia
6. Model of cross-border co-operation

Images in Time



Contacts

Jukka Oksa

University of Joensuu
Karelian Institute
PO Box 111, FIN-80101 Joensuu, Finland
Phone +358-(0)13-251 2454
Fax +358-(0)13-251 2472

jukka.oksa@joensuu.fi

This lecture is available as a www version at
http://cc.joensuu.fi/~alma/lue/