

DIDACTIC UNIT 3

# **Three types of indifference**

---

## **Indifference**

**Ahmo Koulu, Siilinjärvi, Finland**

**2014-2017**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1. INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>2. BIOGRAPHY RATIONALE</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>3. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>4. ACTIVITIES</b> .....	<b>10</b>
ACTIVITY 1: To discuss Case I “Ariadne” .....	10
ACTIVITY 2: To reflect in writing .....	10
ACTIVITY 3: To discuss Case II “Finland tried to get Jewish refugees to Sweden”.....	10
ACTIVITY 4: Activities for the Case III “Carelian refugees” .....	10
ACTIVITY 5: Write a short self-assessment .....	15
ACTIVITY 6: Now put your soul into the situation of a Lake Ladoga fisherman and his family, who had to leave his home, job as a fisherman and his beloved environment. ....	15
<b>5. REFERENCES</b> .....	<b>17</b>
<b>6. AUTHORS</b> .....	<b>18</b>

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### Title

Three types of indifference

### Age

Secondary education, students from 13 to 18 years

### Duration

4 sessions of 45 min each

### Sources

Translated and shortened article by Malin Valtonen and Malin Karlberg “**Compassion and reluctance met Carelians in Västnyland**”, (“**Medkänsla och motvilja mötte karelare i Västnyland**” in **Yle Västnyland 22.07.2015 – 16.14**)

### Aims

The objectives of this Indifference Lesson are following:

1. to understand what the concept of indifference means
2. to pay attention to the fact that individuals can have indifferent attitudes and indifference can also be shared collectively as an attitude
3. to understand that compassion towards refugees is not self evident even among same nation
4. to understand through the examples what political indifference can do
5. to increase knowledge about the Finnish Carelians’ difficult situation having to abandon their homes and livelihoods two times
6. to learn about refugees’ conditions in general to apply with the refugees’ conditions today
7. to reflect on one’s own opinions
8. to recognise one’s own prejudices
9. to develop students’ ability to critical thinking and understanding of the need of empathy
10. to learn to put one’s soul into an unknown refugee’s situation

### Other aspects

Classroom arrangement: normal classroom

Groups Students: work both in pairs or small groups and individually

Equipment: copied sheets and writing paper for students' working

## 2. BIOGRAPHY RATIONALE

Rise of the Third Reich weakened the situation of Jewish population in all the areas governed by the nazis. Nazi Germany occupied Austria in 1938 and the the German race laws were taken to practise also in Austria. Due to Nazi occupation the persecution of Jewish population in Austria began and many Jews decided to leave Austria and other Nazi occupied areas. Part of this stream of refugees headed to Finland, mainly because the non-visa agreement between the countries.

The first case to study, Case I "Ariadne" is about Austrian Jews who travelled to Finland by S/S Ariadne. The officials did not let the passengers come out of the boat in Helsinki and the ship was sent back to the Baltic Sea. The official Finland remained indifferent to what would happen to the Jewish passengers.

The second case, Case II "Finland tried to get Jewish refugees to Sweden" shows how the Finnish officials tried to save the Austrian Jewish refugees by transferring them from Finland to Sweden. Sweden refused to let the Jewish be transferred. The official Sweden remained indifferent to what would happen to the refugees.

The third case, Case III "Carelian refugees" shows how people can act in an indifferent way even towards a group of people of same nationality. It was not self evident for the Swedish speaking areas to relocate the Finnish refugees from Carelia.

## 3. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

### Case I "Ariadne"

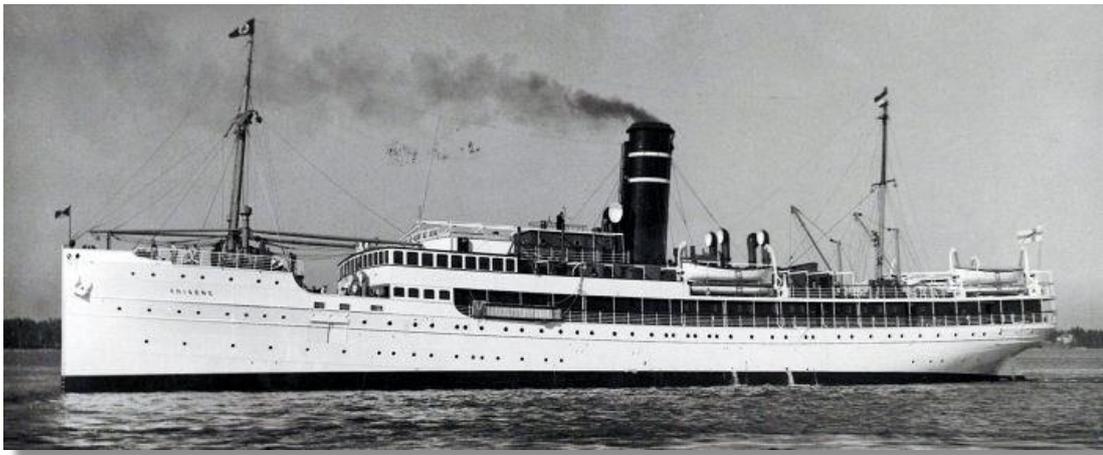
Markus Koivisto

Rise of the Third Reich weakened the situation of Jewish population in all the areas governed by the nazis. Nazi Germany occupied Austria in 1938 and the the German race laws were taken to

practise also in Austria. Due to Nazi occupation the persecution of Jewish population in Austria began and many Jews decided to leave Austria and other Nazi occupied areas. Part of this stream of refugees headed to Finland, mainly because the non-visa agreement between the countries.

During August 1938, few hundred Austrian Jews travelled to Finland, mainly by the S/S Ariadne from Stettin, Germany. Growing flow of refugees awakened the Finns, especially the political right. Also the Finnish Government's attitudes changed. The non-visa agreement was abandoned. In general, the attitudes towards the Jewish refugees hardened due to challenging grocery situation in country.

On the 19th of August 1938 S/S Ariadne arrived again to Helsinki from Stettin, with 60 Austrian Jewish refugees onboard. The Finnish officials had made a decision not to take more refugees from Austria in August and therefore those 60 Jews were returned back to Germany. The official Finland remained silent - or indifferent to the question what would happen to the returned Jewish refugees.



### **Case II “Finland tried to get the Jewish refugees to Sweden”**

Petri Hokkanen

The Finnish authorities tried to get 150 Jewish refugees from Austria and other parts of central Europe transferred to Sweden in late 1942. Anti-semitic known Minister of the interior, Toivo Horelli and the State Police were involved in these attempts. For some unknown reason Sweden refused to accept Jews from Finland. Instead, Sweden accepted hundreds of Jewish refugees from Norway and a year later also from Denmark.

The first attempt was from 17th of November to 5th of December 1942, and the other from 5th of December to 11th of December 1942. The episode was a part of a larger process in which the Finnish decision-makers woke up to the reality of the German policy towards the Jews - the Holocaust - most likely in August and September 1942. In early November 1942, Finland alienated eight Jews to Germany, and this was feared to continue.

Finnish ambassador Wasastjerna negotiated the issue with Swedish government in November 1942 and the Helsinki Jewish Community representative Isaac Pergament in December 1942. The State Police was in the background of the later try. Both negotiations failed. Sweden appealed the costs of the Jewish refugees from Norway and Denmark. Finally, after Americans promised to cover the costs of the refugees by War Refugee Board Foundation, Sweden let 131 Jewish refugees from Finland to the country in 1944.

- **Why did Finnish government try to transfer Jewish refugees from Finland to Sweden?**

Apparently Finland feared for a possible extradition request from Germany. Austrian Jews were German nationals. In addition, the Finnish feared that Germany would finish the crop deliveries. At the same time Finland signaled to Germany that they did not accept Germany to intervene with Finland's internal affairs, not even concerning the Jews.



Finnish government, 1942, SA-kuva

### Case III "Carelian refugees"

Silja Kärjä

- **After Winter War**

In Moscow Peace in 1940 Finland had to abandon more areas to Soviet Union than they had occupied. For example the area of Carelian isthmus, city of Viipuri and Carelian areas by the lake Laatokka were assigned to the Soviet Union. All the Finnish citizens living in that area had to be evacuated and relocated to the western side of the new border.

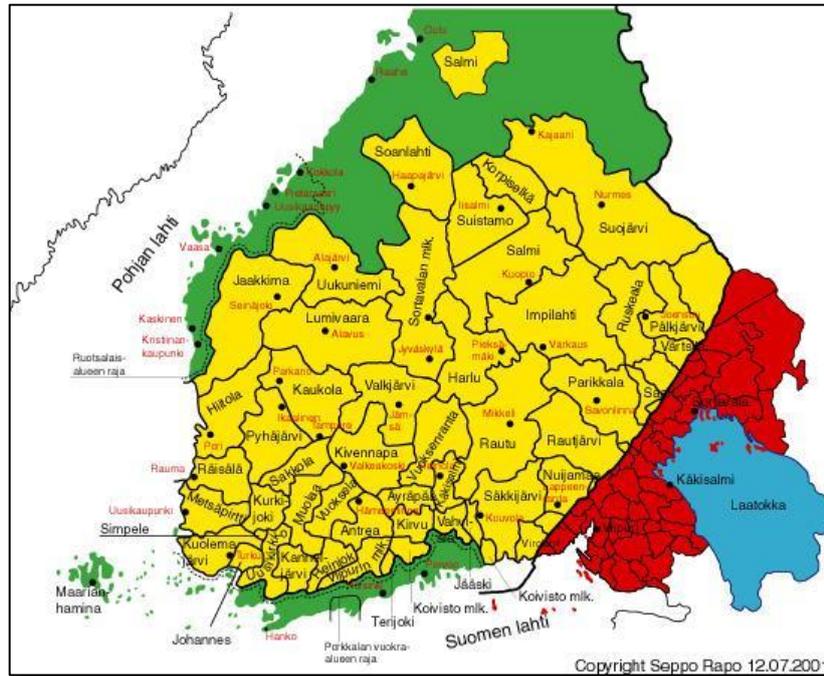
- **Continuation War**

Germany attacked Soviet Union on 22nd of June 1941. Finland could not stay neutral because of both German troops in Lapland and Russian troops in southern Finland.

Finland could conquer back the areas they had lost in Winter War and the Carelian people could move back. Finland was supported by the Germans but for example did not take part to Germans' conquest to Leningrad. According to the Temporary Peace Declaration in 1944 and the Paris Peace Declaration in 1947 the Finland – Soviet Union -border redefined as it was after the Winter War. The Carelian people lost their homes for the second time.

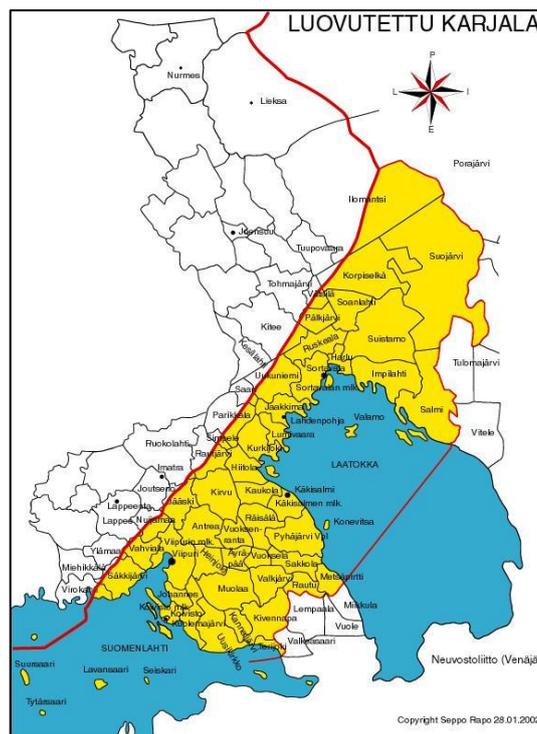
- **Evacuated Carelia**

After losing the Continuation War Finland was forced to hand over three cities, 39 counties and parts of 21 counties to the Soviet Union. The lost area was a tenth of the entire country's area, 24 700 km<sup>2</sup>. Finland had to evacuate 430 000 refugees from lost territory and due to that 11% of Finnish citizens were refugees in that time. They all had to be found new homes, fields, jobs. It was hard because the country had suffered in the war. The area coloured red in the map was assigned to the Soviet Union.



### ▪ Resettlement of the Carelians in planning

More than half of the refugees got their living from farming. Finnish government aimed to plan the refugees' conditions in their new areas as similar to the original ones as possible. People from the same county were relocated to the same area. Even new Carelian-like villages were born in the new areas. The resettlement plan aimed the new domicile of the Carelians to correspond with the old home in terms of economical conditions, nature and transportation connections.



- **The Swedish paragraph**

A so called Swedish paragraph complicated the resettlement of the refugees. It stated that no land could be claimed from the Swedish-speaking areas for the Carelian refugees' farms. This hindered the establishment of new fishing livelihoods. This is how the Carelian refugee fishermen became the most suffered part of the refugees. A Carelian delegation met the prime minister K. A. Fagerholm in 1949 because of this, but nothing could be done. The paragraph prevented 250-300 fishing livelihoods' establishment. When the Lake Ladoga fishermen did not get access to the coast to fish, they had to abandon their livelihood and learn a new one.

- **Why not refugees to the Swedish speaking areas?**

In consequence of the Land Acquisition Law set in 1945 land for the refugees could not be claimed from the Swedish speaking counties. Some rich farmers bought land for the

refugees for example from Savo area to prevent taking the refugees to live in their own county. On the background there was a concern about the Swedish language's state within Finnish language. Only half of the Carelian fishermen who applied could buy a property from the coastal area by voluntary arrangements.



- **Why did Finnish parliament and President Paasikivi let this happen?**

The Finnish politicians were afraid of Sweden to prohibit the food aid, rebuilding aid and loans if the Swedish-speaking minority's rights would be endangered. The language balance could not be threatened according to this law.

The Swedish speaking farmers even threatened not to supply food or pay taxes if the Carelian refugees would have been allowed to resettle to their livinghoods. The Council of State interpreted the law so, that the rate of the Swedish language speakers should not change more than 2% per county.

What about the relocated people in Swedish speaking areas? How were the attitudes among them? How did the Swedish speaking people adapt the new people? Pojo county in the western coast was striving not to allow Carelian refugees to come. The following examples will show how they explained their indifferent attitude to themselves.



## 4. ACTIVITIES

### ACTIVITY 1: To discuss Case I “Ariadne”

**What happened to the Jews? What do you think?**

### ACTIVITY 2: To reflect in writing

S/S Ariadne’s Jewish passengers were rejected to disembark to the Finnish grounds. The non-visa agreement was abandoned and the Jewish passengers had to travel back to Germany.

**How did they feel when the ship was turned back to the sea and headed back towards a very insecure future?**

### ACTIVITY 3: To discuss Case II “Finland tried to get Jewish refugees to Sweden”

**Why did Sweden refuse to take refugees from Finland?**

**Why did Germany not react?**

### ACTIVITY 4: Activities for the Case III “Carelian refugees”

Read translated and shortened Malin Valtonen’s and Malin Karlberg’s article: “Compassion and reluctance met Carelians in Västnyland” and discuss questions added with your partner.

Original article: “Medkänsla och motvilja mötte karelare i Västnyland” in Yle Västnyland 22.07.2015 – 16.14

Translated and questions added by Silja Kärjä

**People from one’s own country seen as threat in Pojo, a Swedish speaking village in Finland during the World War II.**



*"The Carelian threat prevented in Pojo.  
Vennamo & c:o tried to get in 40 families – 23 is the maximum."  
Västra Nyland 14.5.1947*

The question about Carelian refugees was widely discussed in the newspaper "Västra Nyland" during the WWII. The newspapers show negative attitude towards the Carelians both in newspaper articles and in readers' comments.

"For us people it is simply difficult to accept intruding to our private lives. Strange persons in our houses, strange animals grazing in our pasture, you do not become happy about such thing."

Västra Nyland 31. 8.1944

"If we decide to meet the refugees in the best way, we also do have right to set claims for them."

Västra Nyland 10.5.1941

### ▪ Discuss with your partner

How does the writer justify his prejudices?

Do you think the prejudices can sometimes protect people? When? and find at least three different examples of protecting prejudices.

How can one recognise a prejudice?

What kind of prejudices do you have?

Why is it essential for people to recognise when their actions base on prejudices?



Under a title: "The refugees and us" a writer asks if there can be anything more depressing than the war time relocating of people. The same writer continues:

"The Carelians have a different idea about hygiene."

Västra Nyland 31.8. 1944

- Discuss with your partner:

What kind of hostility can be found in this fragment? Analyze deeper with your partner.



One writer claims that "it is unfair not to be able to use three school buildings for teaching because the refugees are accommodated in them." The writer also claims that the refugee camp leader only speaks Finnish.

Västra Nyland 2.9.1944

- **Discuss with your partner:**

Who owns a country? Do we have to share a language to share a culture or a country? Try to find as many arguments for your opinion as possible.



The coming of the refugees also rose compassion. This writer encourages the people to show compassion towards the refugees through imagining what it would be to become evacuated themselves. The article claims that even the Swedish speaking villages should carry their responsibility in relocating a part of Finnish people. He claims that it is a duty to accept Karelians. Not any village should take more refugees than another, though, the writer continues.

Västra Nyland 2.9.1944

### ACTIVITY 5: Write a short self-assessment

1. After learning about the situation of the Carelian war refugees, what kind of understanding did you gain?
2. What did you not quite understand?
3. Did the text or the discussion with your partner rise a new point of view to the prejudices? What kind of?
4. Analyse your daily surroundings. What kind of correspondences can you find when comparing past and today – no matter which country you live in?

### ACTIVITY 6: Now put your soul into the situation of a Lake Ladoga fisherman and his family, who had to leave his home, job as a fisherman and his beloved environment.

He had to move to a new area to live his life in Pojo. He was not allowed to continue fishing because the local fishermen kept the fishing for themselves. The Swedish language was strange and the people of the village were not too keen to welcome him and the other Carelian refugees.

1. What did this fisherman think about his situation?
  2. What did he miss?
  3. How did he see his future?
- **Try to imagine how it was and write a text from his perspective. You can use the war time photos for inspiration.**



# Three types of indifference

Indifference

Ahmo Koulu, Siilinjärvi, Finland



## 5. REFERENCES

### Case I

<http://magma.fi/post/2011/5/9/pakolaisuus-poliittisena-aseena-1930-luvulla-ja-nyt>

<http://agricola.utu.fi/keskustelu/viewtopic.php?t=3656>

<http://virallisesti.puheenvuoro.uusisuomi.fi/99730-kekkonen-nyt-totuus-kunniaan-kuinka-montaniit%C3%A4-juutalaisia-on>

### Case II

Juutalaispakolaiset Ruotsiin: kolme viikkoa 1942

Seppo Jyrkinen 27. 12. 2015

### Case I and II

Oula Silvennoinen: Salaiset aseveljet. Otava 2008

### Case III

Pictures SA-kuvat (free picture archive with official war time pictures taken by Finnish military forces) <http://sa-kuva.fi/>

[www.luovutettukarjala.fi](http://www.luovutettukarjala.fi) Author's permission to publish maps: Seppo Rapo 8.12.2016

[www.luovutettukarjala.fi/historia/sijoittuminen.pdf](http://www.luovutettukarjala.fi/historia/sijoittuminen.pdf)

Medkänsla och motvilja mötte karelare i Västnyland/Västnyland/Västnylan/svenska.yle.fi

## 6. AUTHORS

Silja Kärjä

Markus Koivisto

Petri Hokkanen