

Styrelsen för 
PSYKOLOGISKT FÖRSVAR



ESTONIA

*The disaster in
Estonian media*

*Marju Lauristin
Peeter Vihalemm
(editors)*

RAPPORT I 68-5

”ESTONIA”

The disaster in
Estonian media

Marju Lauristin
Peeter Vihalemm
(editors)

Stockholm
1996

Utgiven av Styrelsen för psykologiskt försvar
ISSN 1401-2383
Omslagsbild: Post 29 September
Stockholm 1996

CONTENTS

PREFACE by Roland Nordlund	6
INTRODUCTION by Marju Lauristin	9
A CHRONOLOGY OF THE FIRST HOURS by Indrek Treufeldt	11
The message reaches the rescuers	11
The message reaches the media	12
Official information reaches Estonia	12
The first news reaches Estonia	14
COMMUNICATION BETWEEN AGENCIES by Indrek Treufeldt	16
Two phases in spreading the news	16
The first practical steps	18
Communication gaps between agencies	18
Problems related to the passenger list	19
THE NEWS REACHES THE ESTONIANS by Andrus Saar	21
Which source provided the initial news?	21
What time did people learn?	21
Where did people learn?	22
Who provided information to the people in the first two days following the catastrophe?	23
Assessment of media coverage	24
The cause of the accident	25
THE MEDIA AND THE AUTHORITIES by Olari Koppel	27
To be prompt or to be correct	27
Readiness to face emergencies	30
How competition influences media channels	30
Interviews with journalists	31
Conclusions for the future	34

ESTONIAN RADIO RESPONDS	36
by Indrek Treufeldt	
Eesti Raadio, Programme One	36
The state-owned commercial channel Raadio 2	39
The private station Raadio Kuku	42
A comparison of the profiles	47
Interaction with the listeners	53
Relation to the material	53
The genres used	55
Organization of work at editorial offices	55
THE DISASTER ON TV	56
by Salme Rannu and Renita Timak	
Pictures on TV	56
ETV's programmes during the first week	57
The actors on the screen	61
Errors in TV coverage	61
The TV image of Estonia	65
COVERAGE IN THE PRESS	66
by Peeter Vihalemm and Marju Lauristin	
Newspapers under review	66
Number of articles and frequency	66
Topics in the coverage	72
Sources and genres	77
Actors as sources of information	79
CAUSES OF THE DISASTER	83
by Marju Lauristin	
Comments in the Estonian dailies	83
International opinion about the cause	85
MYTHICAL INTERPRETATIONS IN THE PRESS	88
by Andres Kõnno	
The concept of catastrophe	88
Interpretation of the myths	90
Natural vs. technological	92
Ship vs. sea	93
Information vs noise	94
Official vs unofficial	95
Conclusion	98

SURVIVORS AND RELATIVES FACING THE PRESS	99
by Väino Koorberg and Jaan Väljaots	
The behaviour of the journalists	99
The attitude towards the press	100
The lists	102
Guarding the reputation of the seamen	102
Who owns photos and recordings?	103
SUMMARY	105
by Marju Lauristin	
REFERENCES	109
APPENDIX I. ADDITIONAL TABLES AND FIGURES	110
APPENDIX II. DISCOURSE ON GUILT IN ESTONIAN DAILIES	117
APPENDIX III. CODING INSTRUCTION	131

PREFACE

Citizens of democratic countries have a right to be informed. This right is a vital prerequisite to their participation in democratic debates and decision-making processes, while it makes special demands of those who have important information to be made known. The demand for prompt, accurate and reliable information is especially urgent when a society finds itself in an emergency or abnormal situation (major accidents, catastrophes, natural disasters, crises, war), and citizens' expectations regarding their leaders' and institutions' ability to meet or manage the threat or emergency — not least when it comes to information — may either be fulfilled or dashed. Faulty information may give rise to rumours and possibly panic.

Therefore, it is hardly surprising that the National Board of Psychological Defence (SPF) finds it important to study how public information and communication work and how the principal actors in a given situation operate and interact in an emergency. How, in other words, do senders (authorities, etc.), channels (generally print and broadcast media), and the many and various receivers behave in such situations? The proper function of democratic societies requires that citizens have confidence in the sources of information and in the media which communicate the information to them.

When a nuclear reactor at Chernobyl in the Ukraine exploded in 1986, sending a cloud of radioactive fallout over Sweden **and other countries to the north and west**, it served those responsible for public information in these countries an extremely difficult task. The event was totally **unforeseen in Sweden, nor were there any routines at that time for dealing with such a contingency**. Meanwhile, the public's hunger for information was virtually insatiable. In April 1987, SPF published ten studies which illuminated various aspects of the problems the Swedish "information system" encountered in the aftermath of the Chernobyl disaster. SPF has analyzed a number of critical events in a similar fashion in the decade since.

Late in the night between 27th and 28th September 1994, an Estonian- and Swedish-owned ferry, the Estonia, foundered and sank in very rough seas off the coast of Finland, outside the Finnish island of Utö. More than 850 passengers and crew lost their lives. The catastrophe caused widespread grief in Estonia and Sweden, as well as in Finland, and the event **put the national leadership in the three countries to the test. It goes without saying that** the event attracted extensive media coverage.

Thus, it was of urgent interest for SPF to study how authorities, the various actors and the media in Estonia, Sweden and Finland handled the catastrophe **and the wave of shock in its aftermath**. It was also of interest to establish how people in the three countries first heard about the catastrophe and how they reacted to it. Furthermore, it was important to gain an understanding of the interaction between the three countries and to

note possible cultural differences in how the respective countries dealt with the event and its repercussions.

The trinational interdisciplinary research project which SPF, in collaboration with the National Board of Civil Emergency Preparedness, the Swedish Rescue Services Agency and the Swedish Nuclear Power Inspectorate, initiated to investigate these aspects has been brought to completion. The project, which has engaged some twenty researchers in Sweden, Estonia and Finland, is reported in seven independent, but inter-related reports. Estonian participation in the project was made possible by a grant from the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs to SPF.

In the study at hand supervised by professors Marju Lauristin and Peeter Vihalemm of the University of Tartu, Estonia, present the results of analyses they and other Estonian researchers performed on Estonian media content, and the findings of a study of the action official persons and institutions took in connection with the catastrophe. The authors also discuss the specifically Estonian perspectives on, and problems arising from, the event. The other writers are: Olari Koppel, Andres Kõnno, Väino Koorberg, Salme Rannu, Renita Timak, Indrek Treufeldt, Tarmo Vahter and Jaan Väljaots. Valeria Jakobson, Eda Kivisild and Inno Tähismaa have also made contributions to the text.

The other six studies within the project are Larsåke Larsson and Stig Nohrstedt, *"Det ser verkligen illa ut..." Kommunikationsproblem i samband med Estoniakatastrofen 28 september 1994* ["It looks pretty bad..." Problems of communication in connection with the Estonia catastrophe 28th September 1994]; Pentti Raittila, *Mediernas Estonia — Myndigheter och massmedier som informatörer i Finland* [The Estonia in the media: Authorities and mass media as sources of information in Finland]; Stig Hadenius, Love Hedman and Kjell Nowak, *Estonia i nyheterna — Tre studier av rapporteringen i press, radio och TV* [The Estonia in the news: Three studies of the coverage in the press, radio and television]; Gert Z Nordström, *Bilder av en katastrof* [Pictures of a catastrophe]; Andrus Saar, Göran Stütz and Eino Tubin, *När nyheten nådde Estland* [When the news reached Estonia]; and Peter Hillve and Lennart Weibull, *Estoniakatastrofen, massmedierna och allmänheten — Resultat från en intervjuundersökning av den svenska allmänheten* [The Estonia catastrophe, the media and the public: The results of a survey of the Swedish people by means of personal interviews].

Finally, I, the coordinator of the project, should like to extend my thanks to my colleague, Göran Stütz, Senior Researcher, and to Information Officer Eva Jansson-Regnér and Information Secretary Ulrika Lyth at SPF, who are responsible for the editing and layout of the reports. Also, thanks to Eino Tubin, SPF's former Information Officer, who contributed greatly in the final phases of bringing the present report to print.

Roland Nordlund
Director of Research, SPF

INTRODUCTION

The sinking of the ferry *Estonia*, on the night of 28 September 1994, was a formidable tribulation for thousands of Estonians whose relatives or friends remained forever in the cold stormy waters of the Baltic Sea. At the same time, it was a national disaster not only because many lives were lost. It also dealt with a serious moral blow to the self-confidence of the newly independent country, which had not yet recovered from the bruises left by decades of Soviet occupation. For Estonians, the wreck of the *Estonia* was not only a human tragedy, but a national catastrophe as well. The beautiful white ferry which used to ply between Tallinn and Stockholm evoked memories of the days in September 1944, when many Estonians were forced to flee their homeland in small fishing boats across the Baltic Sea, and lives were likewise lost in the stormy sea (this motive was introduced already on the morning after the disaster when the Estonian Prime Minister addressed the nation); the ship symbolised both the “white ship of freedom” and the pride of the people who had regained the status of a free maritime nation. The news of the disaster brought back painful memories of past history.

The sinking of the *Estonia* caused pandemic stress in Estonia, Sweden and to a lesser degree Finland, putting to the test the efficiency of rescue services, counselling centres and other official agencies for weeks to come. The disaster preoccupied media attention for several months, causing a state of lasting shock in the minds of thousands of people: those who were rescued, the relatives of the victims and of those who had gone missing, but also those who sympathized with the tragedy of several nations.

Public concerns of the post-disaster period were not only confined to ship-building and the safety of sea transport. There was a lot of talk about how the disaster might influence international relations and whether Estonia was ready to face the challenge posed by technology and the elements on equal grounds with its neighbouring states. Moreover, the catastrophe triggered ominous forecasts about the subsequent downfall of Estonian independence, which were made both by the citizens and by the media. One can conclude that the tragedy in the Baltic caused a total public shock in Estonia.

Not only was the *Estonia* disaster a trial for the psychological strength of the people; it also tested the capacity of the young Estonian governmental and public offices to function effectively in crisis and to cope with the emergencies of a disaster. Now, more than a year after the catastrophe, people in Estonia are asking: what have we learnt from the disaster? This question concerns not only the readiness of the officials or rescue teams to act adequately in crisis, but also the dual commitment of the media to inform and support people suffering as a consequence of the disaster, and to mobilize the physical and moral strength of the nation struck by a shock.

The present report comprises the results of the research into the efficiency of information delivery following the *Estonia* disaster, and the media coverage of this tragic event. The provision of the pertinent information by the authorities and the media starting from the very first hours following the

disaster until the end of the year 1994 was analysed.

Several TV-programmes have already been made and several books published in Estonia about the Estonia ferry disaster and its coverage by the Estonian media (Miks Estonia?, 1964; Mayday Estonia, 1994; Mayday Estonia II, 1995). The authors, mainly journalists actively involved in the reporting of the catastrophe, have pointed to shortcomings and conflicts in the cooperation between the media and authorities. The present research tries to give an impartial view based on the official and sociological data about the delivery of information to the public and media performance during the crisis. The aim of the project was to help officials, journalists and the public to become better prepared for situations of crisis.

The data were collected using: a) content-analyses of the media materials (1485 items drawn from 16 Estonian newspapers during three months, and 253 items from TV, and 278 items from the radio, see coding instruction in Appendix III), b) interviews with officials, journalists and survivors or victims' relatives, c) survey data concerning sources of information about the disaster.

The main questions discussed in this report are the following:

1. the timing of the first communications about the disaster;
2. the sources of information to the public;
3. the activities of the officials and journalists in order to provide people with the information about the disaster;
4. the main trends in the content of the media material about the disaster;
5. the differences in the media coverage of the disaster by different channels;
6. the national and social characteristics of the actors;
7. the discourses about the causes and the responsibility;
8. mythological discourses about the disaster;
9. the ethical problems of the disaster-related journalism concerning the reactions of the survivors and the victims' relatives;
10. the relations between Estonians and other nationalities in the course of the crisis.

The present report is a part of the international comparative research project initiated and funded by the Swedish National Board of Psychological Defence. On the Swedish side, the participants also included the Universities of Stockholm, Lund, Uppsala and Örebro. In Finland the partner was the University of Tampere. In Estonia, the research was carried out by the research team of Tartu University in cooperation with the polling agency Saar Poll and the research group of Estonian TV. Press materials for the content analysis were collected by the Estonian National Library.

The Estonian research team express gratitude to the Swedish National Board of Psychological Defence for the opportunity to participate in this international project. We also thank our Swedish and Finnish colleagues for their cooperation in preparing the research and discussing the results.

Marju Lauristin

A CHRONOLOGY OF THE FIRST HOURS

(Estonian time, UTC +2)

The message reaches the rescuers

- 0120 The Estonia sends out a distress signal on the international VHF Channel 16. Having caught the first distress call, the radio operator of the nearby passenger ferry Silja Symphony turns on a tape recorder.
- 0124 The Estonia repeats the distress call. Andres Tammer, third mate of the Estonia and Teijo Seppelin, third mate of the Silja Symphony establish contact. The Estonia informs about her 20-40-degree list. The distress call is received by the Finnish Turku Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC) officer Ilkka Kärppälä, and the ships Mariella, Finnjet, Silja Symphony, Finnmerchant, and also by the Mariehamn MRSC, Kökari coastguard station and Utö marine base.
- 0126 The Turku MRCC began to alert various parties. The Turku MRCC contacts the Turku MRSC to check if the message has been received and to alert the coastguard ship Tursas.
- 0129 The passenger ship Mariella tries to establish contact with the Helsinki Radio on two channels, but fails.
- 0130 The last contact with the Estonia. The latter gives her coordinates: 59°22'N and 21°40'E. Tormi Ainsalu, second mate of the Estonia: "This is really bad. Now, this is really bad."
- 0131 The Mariehamn MRSC checks whether the Turku MRCC has got the distress call from the Estonia.
- 0133 The Turku MRCC duty officer Ilkka Kärppälä reports of the event to his superior duty officer, Mikko Montonen.
- 0135 The lights of the Estonia are seen from the Mariella.
- 0140 Duty officer Mikko Montonen reaches the Turku MRCC.
- 0142 After unsuccessful attempts to contact the Helsinki Radio by VHF Channel 16 and emergency frequency MF 2182 kHz, the Silja Europa informs the Helsinki MRCC about the Estonia's distress call, on a mobile phone (NMT).
- 0145 The message about the event is delivered to Helsinki Radio by the Helsinki MRCC.
- 0145 The Helsinki MRCC makes sure that the Turku MRCC is aware of the accident.
- 0148 The Estonia vanishes from the Utö radar screen.
- 0148 The Turku MRCC obliges Helsinki Radio to send out the "mayday-relay" signal to inform about the Estonia disaster.
- 0150 The Helsinki Radio starts to relay the "Pan Pan" distress signal by VHF Channel 16.

- 0152 The Mariehamn MRSC phones the Stockholm MRCC to inform them about the disaster.
- 0155 The Turku coast guard forwards the Estonia "mayday-relay" message to Sweden (the Stockholm MRCC).
- 0158 The Stockholm MRCC phones the Turku MRCC to get the most recent information, including the need for helicopters. The Stockholm MRCC immediately contacts Arlanda Airport. Helicopters are made ready for the rescue operation.
- 0200 Commodore Raimo Tiilikainen, who is at home at Espoo having vacation, is informed by the Turku MRCC.
- 0205 The Turku MRCC announces that Esä Mäkelä, captain of the Silja Europa, has been designated the local coordinator of salvage by VHF Channel 16.

The message reaches the media

After 0200 the Swedish news agency Tidningarnas Telegrambyrå, TT, asks from the Finnish news agency Suomen Tietotoimisto, STT, if they know of the accident. They do not. STT starts to look into the matter and contacts the Turku MRCC, receiving the latest data about the event. STT starts to inform the press.

- 0212 Light, life boats, life jackets, etc. are noticed from on board the Mariella. At about 0230 the Mariella reaches the spot where the Estonia sank (coordinates 59 °23'N and 21°42'E). People are seen in the water, one person is spotted in a life boat.
- 0230 It is decided at the Turku MRCC that it must be a major disaster, and a respective alarm is given. The Finnish maritime rescue district management group gets down to work.
- 0231 A short message about the accident is given by the Swedish news agency, TT.
- 0243 STT's first news of the disaster. It is mentioned that the Estonia, formerly known as the Sally Viking has capsized and sunk. Life boats and people are seen in the sea; the ship was apparently on her way from Tallinn to Stockholm.
- 0250 The Stockholm MRCC requests the list of the passengers on board the ship from the representative of the Estline, Mats Björnudd.

Official information reaches Estonia

- 0300 The Helsinki MRCC asks the Estonian Coastguard Coordination Centre (CCC) to disclose the number of passengers and the crew of the Estonia (this message is officially registered by the Estonian Maritime Board).
- 0305 The first helicopter (Super Puma OH-HVG) reaches the site of the disaster.

- 0307 The Stockholm Bureau of the Associated Press releases the news of the disaster, being the first international agency to do so.
- 0330 The Estonian CCC informs the Board of the Border Guard Department Duty Service about the accident. The sea shipping dispatcher tries to contact the vessels Rakvere and Heinlaid to direct them to the disaster area.
- 0334 The SITREP fax was received from the Turku MRCC, informing that no additional rescue vessels are needed.
- 0336 Agence France Presse spreads the news of the disaster.
- 0339 The second news release by the STT. It relates that at about 2 o'clock the Turku MRCC received a distress call; some people have been brought out of the water; there were 679 passengers and 188 crew members on board; there are ships and helicopters in the disaster area.
- 0342 The Estonian CCC informs the National Rescue Board Coordination Center about the event.
- 0349 The third news release by the STT. It is mentioned that there is going to be a press conference at the Turku Police Station at 5 o'clock.
- 0350 The first extraordinary newscast by Radio Suomi is on the air. About 0405 the first Swedish helicopter reaches the disaster area.
- 0358 The Estonian CCC contacts the coastguard ship EVA-207. Setting sail is complicated due to the weather conditions.
- 0400 The dispatcher of the Estonian shipping company informs the Estonian CCC that the motor vessels Rakvere and Heinlaid are on their way to the disaster area.
- 0405 Helsinki MRCC reports that Silja Europa have reached the disaster area.
- 0410 The senior executive staff of the Estonian Border Guard have gathered at their headquarters.
- 0412 The Estonian National Rescue Board Coordination Centre informs the National Police Board duty officer about the disaster.
- 0415 Commodore Raimo Tiilikainen reaches the Turku MRCC. At about 4.20 the first survivors of the shipwreck are brought to Utö.
- 0425 A fax message arrives from the Helsinki MRCC, explaining that further aid from Estonia is not needed.
- 0430 The Police Board officer on duty informs President Lennart Meri about the event.
- 0433 The Yleisradio correspondent Ulla-Maija Määttänen asks for an interview with President Lennart Meri. The President says that he needs additional information.
- 0440 President Lennart Meri phones the Police Board officer on duty for further information. The officer on duty reports that the Turku MRCC is the coordinator of the rescue operations.
- 0500 The first press conference at the Turku Police Station. Prime Minister Mart Laar is informed.

- 0515 A fax message comes from the Helsinki MRCC reporting that 15 people have been rescued.
- 0520 An Estonian coastguard plane makes a flight to Hiiumaa to take on board supplies and to get ready for rescue operations.
- 0530 President Lennart Meri phones the Turku MRCC and speaks to Ilkka Kärppälä and Raimo Tiilikainen. (The President's secretary got the phone number of the MRCC from the Helsinki information service.)
Raadio Kuku is informed about the disaster by the Press Adviser of the President.

The first news reaches Estonia

- 0532 Newscast by Eesti Raadio, Programme One.
- 0538 President Lennart Meri informs the Estonian Ambassador in Stockholm, Margus Laidre about the disaster.
- 0550 The Estonian Border Guard Board offer their plane to the Helsinki MRCC. Helsinki declines help, explaining that the plane would disturb the helicopters' work.
- 0600 There is a short bulletin by the Yleisradio Tallinn correspondent Ulla-Maija Määttänen on the Radio Suomi newscast. The morning pro-gramme of Finnish MTV begins.
The Estonian Borderguard and the Estline Tallinn office start to compose the list of passengers.
- 0605 President Lennart Meri informs the Estonian Ambassador in Finland, Jaak Jõeriüt about the disaster.
- 0630 An interview with Raimo Tiilikainen is aired by Finnish MTV.
- 0633 The first interview on Estonian media with a pertinent person: the General Director of the Estonian National Maritime Board, Kalle Pedak, on Raadio Kuku.
- 0642 President Lennart Meri speaks to Raimo Tiilikainen at the Turku MRCC.
- 0715 The CNN crew applies for a visa at the Estonian Embassy in Moscow to come to Tallinn to work.
- 0742 The first media discussion : Raadio Kuku starts a discussion about how much the Estonian authorities know about the disaster. A Finnish journalist claims that in the early morning only President Lennart Meri was aware of the disaster.
- 0800 A statement by President Lennart Meri is aired over Eesti Raadio, Programme One. The President declares a day of mourning. The Estonian government gathers for a special session.
- 0810 President Lennart Meri gives an interview to Finnish MTV.
- 0815 The Silja Europa sends a message via the vessel Rakvere to the Estonian CCC saying that help from the Estonian fishing craft is not needed.

- 0821 President Martti Ahtisaari phones President Lennart Meri.
- 0830 The Russian Ministry of Extraordinary Situations turns to the Estonian Embassy in Moscow offering help.
- 0845 The first contact of the Estonian media with the rescuers. Raadio Kuku interviews Mikko Montonen.
- 0900 A press conference at the Turku Police Station. The last survivor has been brought to the island of Utö.
- 0900 Prime Minister Mart Laar makes a statement on Eesti Raadio.
- 0917 Raadio Kuku airs the first interview in the Estonian media with relatives of a survivor.
- 0925 Raadio Kuku makes an interview with Ilkka Kärrpälä, who received the Estonia's distress signal.
- 0945 The vessel Rakvere reaches the disaster area and starts the search directed by the coordinator.
- 0950 The first interview with a survivor in the Estonian media. Raadio Kuku makes an interview with a survivor, Mr. Neeme Kalk.
- 1000 Eesti TV starts an extraordinary programme. A special issue of the news programme Aktuaalne Kaamera begins. Raadio 2 quotes the traffic director of Estline, Yrjö Saarinen: Thanks to the hermetic doors that close automatically, it is possible that there is air inside the wrecked ship and there are probably people there who are still alive.
- 1100 A meeting of the Governmental Committee, formed in connection with the shipwreck of the ferry Estonia, begins at the Ministry of Transport and Communications.
- 1600 Prime Ministers Esko Aho, Carl Bildt and Mart Laar give a press conference at the Turku Police Station.

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN AGENCIES

Analyzing the actions taken by the Estonian state officials in the first hours following the disaster, it seems that nobody in actual fact realized how much a crisis situation differs from the usual everyday routine. Not did the authorities recognize the importance of sharing information or the need to inform the media about the accident.

Two phases in spreading the news

On 28 September at 0129, five minutes after the Estonia had sent out her distress message "Mayday-Mayday, Silja Europa", the officers of the ferry Mariella unsuccessfully attempted to inform Helsinki Radio about the accident on two frequencies (VHF Channel 16 and the emergency channel, MF 2182 kHz). Similar attempts also failed on the ferry Silja Europa, which then notified Helsinki MRCC about the accident by mobile phone (NMT). The Helsinki MRCC informed Helsinki Radio about the accident at 0145. At 0148 the Turku MRCC requested that Helsinki Radio forward the signal mayday relay. But at 0150 Helsinki Radio started forwarding the Pan Pan emergency signal on VHF Channel 16, instead of the Mayday signal received from the Estonia.

Theoretically, the Pan Pan signal should also have been received by Tallinn Radio and other maritime rescue services, and by 0150 the relevant authorities could have been aware of the catastrophe. Yet according to the Estonian authorities, despite that there was equipment in Estonia adapted for reception of the Pan Pan signal, no Estonian station received this signal. It is also inexplicable why Helsinki Radio forwarded the Pan Pan signal instead of the Mayday signal.

Obviously, the Finnish rescue services assumed that the Estonian authorities would be informed of the accident having happened. They did not do anything to check whether the Estonian authorities had actually got the news or not, nor did they consider this to be necessary. Estonian specialists of the maritime rescue services insist that, according to the international regulations, the sender of a Pan Pan signal has to make sure that the signal was received.

The first official statement about the disaster reached Estonia only at 0300, almost one and a half hours after the Estonia sent out her distress signal, when the Helsinki MRCC contacted the Estonian Coastguard Coordination Centre (CCC), asking for the number of passengers and crew members on board the Estonia. This conversation was recorded on the control tape and time marked. The Finnish rescue services did not consider it necessary to notify other official agencies besides the Estonian CCC, evidently assuming that Estonia had an established information exchange net-

work for emergencies and so the Government and the President would know about the accident.

The CCC duty officer immediately reported the accident to the Director General of the Estonian Maritime Board, Kalle Pedak, who was at his home. Pedak has since then confirmed that at first he did not believe that there has been an accident with the Estonia and asked the CCC officer to check the information. The latter contacted his Finnish colleagues, receiving a confirmation. Kalle Pedak was then prepared to notify other state officials about the accident. He considered it his first duty to inform the Minister of Transportation and Communication, Andi Meister (the Estonian CCC and the Maritime Board are subordinated to the Ministry of Transport and Communication). Upon receiving the necessary contact information from the Minister's Adviser, Ruth Martin, Kalle Pedak called Minister Andi Meister at 0330. As affirmed by Kalle Pedak, he also contacted several colleagues and other state authorities soon after 0300. Several calls went unregistered and were not recorded in the duty journal.

The first SITREP received by fax from the Turku MRCC at 0334 assured that there was no need for assistance in the rescue operations from the Estonian side because the presence of the too many vessels on the site of the sinking would not have facilitated the rescue operations, but rather been a hindrance.

The first official information reached a cabinet member in approximately 30 minutes. During this period of time, the information was checked with the original source (the Turku MRCC, the service participating in the rescue operations). In this primary information phase a 30-minute delay is understandable. The CCC first tried to reach those involved in maritime rescue operations: the dispatcher of the Estonian Shipping Company, the Borderguard Department, and the shipowners.

In 30 minutes, the information left those immediately involved in the rescue operations, and entered into a secondary phase, i.e. it became secondary. The CCC informed the Estonian Borderguard Department about the accident at 0340 (as affirmed by Aare Evisalu, Chief of the Headquarters of the Borderguard Department). A little earlier, at 0315, a message about the accident had been received from the Finnish Borderguard Department.

At 0342 the Rescue Board's duty officer heard about the disaster. At 0412, 30 minutes later, he informed the Police Board about the accident. Five minutes later, at 0418 the latter informed the Prime Minister's Office and at 0430 the President's Office. At 0440, the President personally contacted the Police Board's duty officer.

Prime Minister Mart Laar heard about the accident at 0500.

Delays in the second phase are not justified, since it was not possible, nor was there any need, for the Rescue Board and Police Board to check the information. But both had a legal obligation to forward it. The delay may have been due to their inability to estimate the extent of the disaster and failure to decide how vital it was to inform the superior bodies about the

accident. Officers on duty were not resolute enough, and were afraid of possible indignation caused by an inaccurate estimation of the situation.

The first practical steps

As their first practical steps, the Estonian authorities made an attempt to send Estonian rescue vessels out to the site where the Estonia went down. At 0330 the dispatcher of the Estonian Shipping Company tried to contact the vessels Rakvere and Heinlaid. At 0400 the dispatcher was able to affirm that the latter had been sent out. Later, at 0425, a fax was received from the Helsinki MRCC, confirming that no assistance was needed. Andi Meister has afterwards affirmed that faxes with similar messages were received even later. However, the Rakvere arrived at the site of the accident at 0945. At 0520 an Estonian boarderguard plane left for Hiiumaa Island in order to pick up some equipment and get ready for participation in the rescue operations.

Communication gaps between agencies

In the early hours of the morning, news editors had to resort to foreign sources. At the time when the radio stations started broadcasting, only the Estonian Maritime Board had enough information about the Estonia catastrophe. This is confirmed by the 0630 Raadio Kuku interview with the Director General of the Estonian Maritime Board, Kalle Pedak. Pedak told Kuku that at 0136 the ferry Estonia had sunk, capsizing at 59°23'N and 21°42'E. Pedak also explained that there had been 679 passengers and 188 crew members on board.

The CCC did not consider news relay their duty, yet they did not refuse to do it in order to show that they were participating in the operation.

Already after 0700 radio stations began giving phone numbers for people to get information about survivors, adding, however, that there was little use in calling so early in the morning, because the authorities were not yet ready to provide any information. Therefore, here we can suggest there was a problem with information relay. Several times, the press was given the name of a person responsible for information release, but in actual fact this person was not ready to do it. For instance, at 1100 the Ministry of Internal Affairs delegated the task of information release to their Press Department, which as a matter of fact was not prepared to operate.

A couple of hours after the information had reached Estonia, the Police Board's duty officer knew only that he had been notified about the accident at 0300 and that apparently the ship was still listing. In all likelihood, the duty officer had been given the first available information. Later, however, it was forgotten to keep him informed about subsequent developments.

On 28 September, Estonia's diplomatic representations in Finland and Sweden were not officially notified by the Finnish officials. Estonia's Ambassador to Finland, had learnt about the accident on 28 September only when President Meri called from Kadriorg to Helsinki. The Secretariat of the President's Office place this call at 0605. More than half an hour earli-

er (0535) the President had informed Estonia's Ambassador to Sweden, Margus Laidre. Estonia's embassies in Helsinki and Stockholm were ready to receive messages round the clock. From the activities on 28 September we can conclude that Estonian embassies were not effectively included in the activities called for in the first hours following the accident. For example, the embassies were not immediately contacted in order to find competent interpreters. Interviews made in the first hours after the disaster by the foreign press with the survivors were interpreted by people who did not understand Estonian well and who added their own words to the survivors' incomplete phrases, often changing the meaning of initial expressions beyond recognition.

The first hours following the disaster revealed the conflict between different state officials and agencies. In his statement (delivered at 0800) the President of Estonia criticized the activity of the Estonian authorities. By that time, both the CCC and the Borderguard Department's headquarters had reported of their participation in the rescue operations and also explained that Estonia's practical contribution to the operations would not be large, primarily because they lacked the necessary equipment and there were already too many ships and planes on the site of the accident.

Problems related to the passenger list

In the morning of 28 September Estline in cooperation of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Estonian Border Guard started to work on the lists of passengers. The main problem concerned boarding cards which were not dated. Later many other institutions started to compose their own lists of passengers, also Raadio Kuku participated in this work. As the result of these uncoordinated activities several different lists were circulated. In many cases those lists were in most part improvised, other persons were added. (For instance, the head of the Wismar Hospital in Tallinn announced that the main problem was the lack of information and that the hospital would also start to assemble its own lists of passengers.)

Mistakes made on the first day of the disaster, haunted investigators and relatives of the victims for many weeks. It concerns so-called phantom-passengers, who suddenly disappeared from the lists of saved passengers. One of the sources of error were survivors who reported having seen one or another of their fellow passengers busy on board m/s Estonia. They were sure that they had to be alive.

The Estonian Investigation Board later accused journalists of bad coordination when reporting of the first lists of the victims. In the opinion of the Investigation Board, the lists should have been made on the basis of the one source of information. Publishing preliminary lists, journalists should have stressed the possibility of errors.

The Estonian Investigation Board has later confirmed that they used tapes from Raadio Kuku to verify the information.

In general passengers who survived the accident were not interested to

give any additional information on 29 September, on the day when the first saved Estonians arrived to their homeland. They were shocked and surprised when they had to meet Estonian investigators at the Tallinn airport because they had been already met Finnish and Swedish officials. According to the information from the Estonian Police Board, the saved passengers were even more confused by the journalists at the airport. Most passengers refused to give any interviews, many of them were transported to their homes under the protection of the police.

THE NEWS REACHES THE ESTONIANS

How did the people of Estonia learn about the sinking of the Estonia? Using the questionnaire worked out in Sweden, the Saar Poll company of social studies conducted a poll in Estonia between 18 and 26 October 1994. By means of random selection, 1072 individuals aged 15 and older were polled. The number of polling points was 164. The sample was representative of the population, both on the level of the republic as a whole and on the level of separate regions.

Many Estonians were personally affected by the disaster. Fifty per cent of the Estonianspeaking population had one or more acquaintances on the ferry at the time of sinking. 3% of those had either a family member or a close relative on board, 19% had a fellow worker or student, 29% had a distant acquaintance, and 5% had somebody else they knew.

The non-Estonian residents of the country were much less influenced by the disaster, 83% of them having no personal acquaintance on board.

Which source provided the initial news?

The Saar Poll Company's poll showed that 64 percent of the population of Estonia learnt about the tragedy on the radio. At the same time, a great role was played by interpersonal communication - 29% got their initial information from other people. 6% learnt about the news via television, more specifically a foreign TV channel, as there were no Estonian TV programs available early in the morning.

Generally, women appeared to a larger degree to have learnt the news of the disaster either on the radio or from other people, whereas men to a larger degree got the news from newspapers, i.e. later. On the whole, no great differences were observed.

Whereas only 48% of younger people learnt the news first on the radio, the share of those 70 years and older was 77%.

How was the news spread from person to person? Mainly, people told others about it personally, by word of mouth (89%), the role of telephone as a means of communicating being quite modest - 8% only.

What time did people learn?

A few people claim to have learnt about the accident between 0200 and 0300 (0.3%). However, that seems to be quite incredible; it rather seems that they have forgotten when exactly they heard the news, which is quite natural.

With every passing hour more and more people learnt about the accident. Between 0300 and 0600 already 5% of the adult population of Estonia had heard the news.

Between 0600 and 0700, a lot more people (20%) got the initial news. The

following hour contributed the largest number of people who were informed of the accident: 30%. By 0800, 55% of the adult population knew about the tragedy. The following hour added 18%. By the beginning of the working day, nearly three-quarters of the population of Estonia (73%) knew about the catastrophe.

The number of people who learnt the news in the afternoon was comparatively small - 8%.

At 0900, when the working day began, 82% of Estonian nationals and 57% of non-Estonians knew about the accident. Initial knowledge of the accident reached 22% of non-Estonians and 4% of Estonians in the afternoon. The main reason why so many non-Estonians learnt about the accident so late is probably due to the scarcity of Russian-language media.

Generally speaking, one can conclude that the news of the disaster reached the population of Estonia quite promptly.

As concerns all those who learnt the news through personal contacts, it appears that most of the information was imparted between 0700 and 0800 (26%). Those who learnt the initial news on the radio mostly did so between 0600 and 0700. (27%). Apparently, those who had got the news on the radio, subsequently contacted their acquaintances. That explains the time shift in the role played by different information channels. The peak time for television, however, occurred in the afternoon (53% of all those who first learnt about the news by TV did so in the afternoon).

Informing other people by phone mostly occurred between 0730 and 0800.

Those people who had close relatives on board the Estonia learnt about the accident comparatively early on. By 0730 already 65% of them know of the accident, i.e. about a third more than the average for the country. By 1000 practically all of them knew about the tragedy.

The radio served as the main source of information also for the relatives (79%). The number of those who were informed personally was relatively small - 16%. 4% got the news on television. Out of those who were informed personally, 2/3 got the news by phone.

To sum up, radio was the main source of news of the sinking of the ferryboat for the people of Estonia. This channel of information has shown most prompt operation in crisis, be it the August 1991 putsch or the attempt by the Interfront forces to seize the Government and Parliament building on Toompea a year earlier, or other moments in history when it was necessary to mobilize people for a joint action.

Where did the people learn?

Three quarters of the people learnt about the catastrophe at home. Every sixth person learnt about the accident at their workplace or school. 6% of the population got the news of the tragedy while en route.

People were not eager to contact public institutions. Only 0.6% contacted a public office (such as the police, coast guard or rescue service), an equal

amount turned to the shipping line Estline, whereas 1.7% resorted to the press and 0.3% to some other institution.

Who provided information to the people in the first two days following the catastrophe?

Table 1

Which sources of information were important in the first two days following the disaster ? (Several sources may be mentioned.)

	<i>all polled</i>	<i>Estonians</i>	<i>other</i>
radio	88%	92	80
television	84%	86	79
dailies	58%	67	42
evening papers	12%	11	15
other source	5%	3	8
do not remember	5%	3	8

Just as the radio had appeared to be the main initial source of information delivering the news of the foundering of Estonia, so on subsequent days, too, it retained its position as the most significant source of information. At the same time, the role of television grew essentially, taking its normal position among the medias.

Table 2

Which was the most popular radio channel in the first two days following the disaster ?

Raadio 2 (state-owned commercial channel)	36%
Eesti Raadio, Programme One (public Estonian-language channel)	21%
Eesti Raadio, Programme Four (public Russian language channel)	22%
Raadio Kuku (local private channel in Tallinn)	6%
Raadio Tallinn(private Russian-language channel)	6%
Raadio Tartu (local private channel in Tartu)	3%
Do not know	3%
Other local radios	3%
Foreign radio stations	1%

As shown by the data, those who resorted to the radio primarily used the national radio channel Raadio 2. On the first two days following the disaster, this channel had a significant lead. The private radio channels, e.g. Raadio Kuku, were unable to achieve equal popularity because their area of distribution was limited.

Whereas Raadio 2 serves mainly the Estonian-speaking section of the

population, Programme Four of Eesti Raadio works for the non-Estonians who speak Russian and are predominantly non-speakers of Estonian. The Estonians residing in Tallinn mostly appreciated Raadio 2 (34%), Raadio Kuku (27%), and Eesti Raadio, Programme One (25%).

On the days following the accident, the largest proportion of newspaper readers (23%) sought information from Postimees. Eesti Sõnumid ranked second, serving 11% of reader. Third was Molodjzh Estonii catering for predominantly Russian-speaking readers. Next came the Estonian-language Päevaleht (10%) and Rahva Hääl. Concerning dailies, one can say that there were no striking deviations from the ordinary pattern of preferences. The daily readership did not change their likes and dislikes, but remain faithful to their favourites.

It appears that the radio in Estonia is not only a channel for prompt information. It is also a reliable source of information in a longer perspective; that is, it advances to what should pre-dominantly be the domain of the newspapers. In Estonia, television has not yet been able to take over the functions of informing and commenting, as is the case in many countries.

Assessment of media coverage

To learn how people evaluated the coverage of the shipwreck in the media, three questions were put to the respondents:

- a) How correct or incorrect was the coverage of the event by different media?
- b) Were the reactions to the disaster of those whose relatives had perished or were missing described intrusively or with tact?
- c) Did the media pay too much attention to the reactions of close relatives of the victims?

Table 3
Assessment about how different media reported on the disaster
 (% of those polled)

	<i>incorrect</i>	<i>correct</i>
Local paper	12	61
Daily	4	71
Evening paper	9	58
Aktuaalne Kaamera (ETV)	3	80
News, commercial TV	3	75
Estonian TextTV	5	3
Eesti Raadio news programme Pävevakaja	2	84
Eesti Raadio news, Programme Four	4	82
Raadio Kuku News Programme		87
Raadio Tallinn	4	79
Raadio Tartu	6	84

A glance at the data (see Table 3) reveals that there were no serious problems with coverage of the catastrophe in the media. Positive views prevail. Less than 10% of those who used the respective information channel thought that the published materials was incorrect.

How was the material published in papers evaluated by those who were closely concerned with the catastrophe? The analysis reveals that the closer the person's connection with what happened on board the Estonia, the less correct she/he considered the published material. At the same time, one has to note that such differences in evaluations were minimal.

Table 4
Was there too much or too little reporting about the disaster in the massmedia (% of those polled)

certainly too little	15%
rather too little	27%
sufficient	39%
rather too much	4%
certainly too much	1%
hard to say	14%

The general opinion held by the Estonian people is expressed in the view that there was either too little or sufficient mention of the disaster in the media; by no means was there too much. Those who had a close relative or acquaintance on board tend to be somewhat more critical of the media coverage.

One of the most important ethical questions connected with the reporting of disaster is how to avoid intrusiveness. Responses from the people showed that criteria of the intrusiveness were different, depending on the respondent's personal involvement in the crisis situation.

In essence the poll results are logical. Those people who were more closely involved with the disaster found the media's treatment of the matter more intrusive than others. This is completely natural for those who were quite distraught on the days following the catastrophe. In spite of that we can observe that the differences in evaluations are not great.

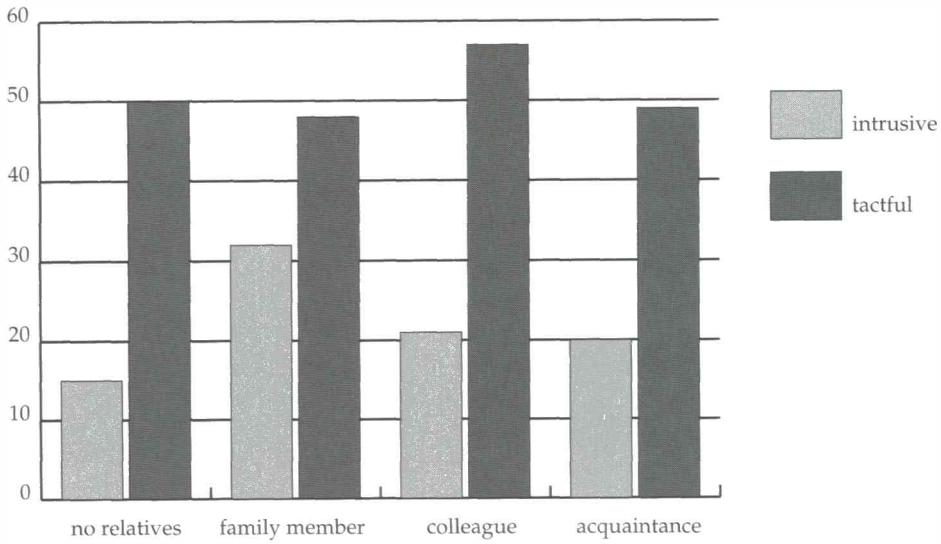
The cause of the accident

Many Estonians thought the causes of the accident were primarily technical, among them those deriving from the construction of the ship - 41% of those polled held that opinion. 18% think the maintenance of the ship was insufficient, while 16% put the blame on the human factor. 26% claim other reasons, while every fourth has no explanation.

At the time of the poll there was quite little reliable information about the causes of the accident. Thus, people's opinions were largely based on their own suppositions and different rumours circulating at the time.

Figure 1

Do the views of the respondents on the intrusiveness or tactfulness of the reporting differ with their relation to the victims? (% of those polled)



Sabotage or collision with a Russian submarine were quite frequently quoted as reasons to the shipwreck.

It seems very important to note that the prevailing opinion among the population was that the shipwreck was caused by construction of the ship or a technical error, which is often beyond human control, and not by the crew. The people polled believed in the competence of the crew.

THE MEDIA AND THE AUTHORITIES

The Estonia disaster caught the state authorities unprepared, they were not ready to either react adequately, communicate with journalists or inform the public.

In the USA, for example, media researchers and catastrophe theoreticians are worried about the tendency of some public officials and selected representatives to flood the media with all kinds of information, trying to establish themselves in the public eye as an inestimable and competent source of information (Walters and Hornig, 1993:220). In Estonia, on the other hand, taking the Estonia disaster as an example, lack of correct and checked information from official channels and an incapability to present the available information in a clear and comprehensible way seems to create a problem.

Thus, even the most responsible and socially conscious journalist has to choose between two options: either to remain, first and foremost, a mediator of official information as his/her job is defined in some dissertations published in the West (Nordlund, 1993:34), or to start filling the gaps which resulted from the officials' incapability and lack of coordination.

In case of the Estonia disaster, journalists facing this dilemma rather chose to be investigators than observers-mediators.

This is one of the reasons why the media so early in the process- in both the acute phase and later- started to criticize the authorities, focusing on their lack of competence and for being so badly informed. This sporadically caused outright confrontation between the media and state officials. In reflecting the Estonia disaster, both parties sinned more or less equally against some general principles widely adopted in the West.

Contradictions surrounding the publication of the initially incorrect lists of the passengers on board and of those who were rescued, which arose already in the acute phase of the crisis and were later widely analyzed, are expected to become a separate chapter in the history of Estonian journalism.

To be prompt or to be correct

In cases of unexpected crises we often face situations in which both the authorities and journalists, lacking information, fail to be duly prompt and correct when informing the general public.

Fragmentary news arriving slowly after the sinking of the Estonia, put a dilemma before the journalists and state officials. The public was anxious to learn about who were on board, why the ferry sank, how many survived, and who they were.

In a situation where nobody knew the exact number of those on board and the rescue operations were still in progress, the state officials and journalists had to choose - whether to repeat the three or four facts they knew exactly

and this way practically leave the public without information, or to spread all the preliminary, rough, unpolished and unchecked news to the audience, thus informing the public and taking the risk of facing the consequences caused by incorrectness - loss of credibility and possible additional harm caused to the victims.

There are several opinions about possible solutions to the dilemma. Up to now the majority of Estonian journalists stick to the opinion that after the Estonia disaster the public badly needed information, and it was from this need that they proceeded. They are convinced that to supply properly checked information would have meant several days of waiting, and it would have been a crime to keep people in the dark for so long.

Thus, the majority of Estonian news reporters and editors support the so-called current truth theory presented by Kalle Muuli, editor-in-chief of Eesti Päevaleht:

"It may sound rude and revolting to readers but we cannot deny the fact that journalistic truth is always the 'current' truth. Just as a fresh newspaper is printed every day, we can find a new truth printed on its pages every day. We can write about an event proceeding only from the material we have at our disposal at the moment."

The I-write-about-what-I-know attitude could be contrasted with the I-know-what-I-write-about attitude represented by Western theoreticians, who might indeed consider Muuli's statement somewhat rude.

Furthermore, one should note that Muuli did not present his opinions with regard to the shipwreck; he did it in connection with the killing of an innocent woman by a policeman, about which he wanted to inform the public. Still, as a general idea these thoughts are relevant when we consider the role of journalism from a wider perspective.

"If inevitably we have to prefer one to the other, then I as a journalist would consider some ethical aspects like, for example, honesty and good will more important than the truth, a philosophical category hovering somewhere at an unearthly altitude. In this case the truth for the reader might be the sum total of good will expressed by many writers, or a secure feeling that all the relevant information the reporters have managed to gather, and the editor has considered important, will be reflected fairly in the newspaper." (Muuli, *Rahva Hääl*, 12 May 1995).

As regards the ultimate truth, one can agree with Muuli, however, one has to admit that in certain situations presentation of "the current truth" cannot be considered ethical. What were the relatives supposed to feel when they first discovered the name of a beloved person in the list among those rescued, and some time later among those possibly rescued and two days later among those perished, when all this information was to be found in lists allegedly ready for press, which, however, the reporters had got hold of by chance? Such a "current truth", or according to the expression of one Estonian journalist, "playing ping-pong with human lives" - caused additional strain and tragedies in many homes, the price of which cannot be com-

pared with the satisfaction of certain media channels at having taken prompt action.

Factual errors are the price both the media and the state officials have to pay from time to time for prompt action which saves human lives (Nordlund 1993:31). Unfortunately, in the case of the Estonia disaster faulty information did not save a single life; it rather caused harm and mental traumas.

Some investigations have shown that in extreme situations journalists also tend to lose their heads and fail to observe the elementary rules of their profession. It may also be true that because of a great influx of information, journalists have no time to check all the facts. The amount of incorrect information also grows when electronic media open their channels to informally selected representatives of some public offices (radio talk-shows). Naturally, the latter fact should not influence the work of newspapers.

Unlike Kalle Muuli, US researcher Everett Parker thinks that "reporters describing accidents should offer well-balanced, detailed and explanatory information and ought to avoid speculations and allegations. Instead of sensation the public should get an overview of the scale of an accident, of its reasons and known consequences" (Parker, 1980= 237)

It is obvious that ill-informed public authorities or officials may also create errors and "noise". Errors in media channels are prone to be amplified and later on it is rather difficult to find out whether the media continuously receiving new and supplementary information was a passive distributor or itself a source of inaccuracies.

Several months after the Estonia disaster, Harri Tiido, editor of Raadio Kuku confessed that a mistake in their list of passengers had passed into the list of the Estline and from there back to Raadio Kuku again.

In the immediate post-catastrophe period several mistakes, first of all concerning the number of victims, were made due to the general confusion reigning at the time. Many investigations carried out in the West, e.g. J. Scanlon's study of the functioning of the Canadian press in crisis (Scanlon, 1978), have demonstrated the correctness of the media in general. Errors are specific, concerning details. Nevertheless, scientists generally advise the media not to spread such data which cannot be attributed to a reliable, verified and legitimate source of information (Kreps, 1980= 66).

In the case of the Estonia disaster, preliminary lists of passengers, the crew and those rescued which were published in several newspapers and read out in radio channels after the disaster are vivid examples of how mistakes are made and distrust is created. There were references to the lists being preliminary and incomplete, but no references to the source which they derived from.

In the post-disaster period incorrect lists of those rescued gave rise to several myths, the mysterious disappearance of Captain Avo Piht being undoubtedly the most spectacular of them. Even now there are still people with a sceptical attitude towards the public authorities and media who seem to believe that Piht is either hiding or being hidden somewhere abroad.

Readiness to face emergencies

Do all media channels need a special plan of action for a situation of crisis? How do competition and other economic factors tell on the work of the media in crisis?

More radical Western treatments (Parker, 1980) propose to make licences given to media channels dependent on their readiness to fulfill specific tasks in case of a crisis.

By these tasks is meant how the operation of a media channel corresponds to the public interest, i.e. guaranteeing as promptly as possible operative, objective, and balanced work of journalists in an emergency.

The criteria for readiness are above all the organization of work in a media channel and the training of journalists for working in an emergency. Regarding the training, it is considered elementary for a journalist to take into account all the possible ethical consequences resulting from his or her work.

Although Estonian journalists had gained certain experience of emergencies (e.g. the dramatic events in Vilnius and Riga, January 1991; the military coup in Moscow, August 1991; and the attempted coup d'état in Russia, Autumn 1993), in most media channels no formal rules for action had been worked out. Therefore the shipwreck caught the Estonian journalists unawares, and all the necessary decisions were made in the course of work.

Judgements made after the disaster showed that journalists were generally satisfied with themselves and with the way work was organized at their editorial offices. There was no need for introducing any special rules as the work seemed to be going smoothly as it was.

While appreciating the self-assurance displayed by Estonian journalists, one should still note that the reason why problems arose in the course of the covering the disaster was not only insufficient experience, the improvement of which could help avoid mistakes in case a similar event should take place in future. The previously mentioned dilemma concerning accuracy and prompt action, for example, should be paid more attention to by journalists.

As far as known, after the disaster only one media channel in Estonia, the Baltic News Service agency worked out formal instructions for work in emergencies and contemplated improving technical means to raise efficiency.

How competition influences media channels

Tight finances made it impossible for the Estonian media to send (as did their wealthy Western colleagues) reporters, camera and television teams to the scene of the disaster, to the press conferences organized by the Swedish authorities, and to hospitals in Finland on the morning following the disaster.

An important component in the functioning of a media channel is the task set by competition which forces every journalist to outwit his or her colleague to some extent.

As an example of how the Estonia disaster was covered one might consider the above-mentioned passengerlists. If there was any conscious concern at some editorial offices about publishing incorrect information, then the thought that a rival newsdesk might publish the lists and thus better meet the demands of the market made even those who hesitated forget their concern and, for fear of losing their readership, join the dubious game. Regarding actively competitive dailies on the Estonian media market, the conclusion was that fierce competition forces editors to use ever ruder forms of expression, sensational photos and headlines.

Another aspect of activating the market mechanism in an emergency concerning primarily the printed word is the publication of all kinds of special editions, when a media channel is lucky enough to capitalize on the booming need for information to earn more money for itself.

In the post-disaster period only the newspaper *Postimees* put an extra edition on the market (an evening edition, September 29). However, this edition did not yield any considerable economic profit, which such an additional effort would doubtless have deserved.

Interviews with journalists

Nearly 20 journalists employed by the dailies *Postimees*, *Eesti Sõnumid*, *Päevaleht*, *Hommikuleht*, *Rahva Hää*, *Post*, *Estonija*, the weekly *Eesti Ekspress* and the news services *Baltic News Service (BNS)* and *Estonian Telegraph Agency (ETA)* were interviewed. All those interviewed had covered the Estonia disaster.

Most of the interviewees had received the initial news of the disaster early in the morning between 0700 and 0900, the main sources of the information being the commercial radio station, *Raadio Kuku*, and state-owned *Raadio 2*. Some of the journalists had immediately rushed to their offices to get a more detailed account delivered by international news agencies, some (mostly those who live in Tallinn) had first tuned in to the Finnish TV news programme.

The prevailing impression among the journalists interviewed was that no information was deliberately held back from them by the Estonian state authorities. The reason why it was so difficult to get reliable information from public offices was more likely due to the total disorganisation and chaos among the people responsible for preparing of official statements. This situation was probably caused by shock and poor coordination.

The offices most often criticized by journalists for holding back information were the Estonian Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Crisis Commission and the state-owned Tallinn Harbour.

"The Ministry of Internal Affairs covered up information," said special correspondent of the daily *Estonija*, Ms. Galina Pantshenko. "It was clear to me when I started to look for a person, after whose name there was a question-mark in the passengers list. At the ministry I was told that all the peo-

ple with question-marks were dead, trapped in the sunken ferry. A questionmark had no special meaning, I was told."

Nearly all the journalists admitted that a great deal of information had been distorted unintentionally. During the first days after the disaster journalists obtained information about the people involved in the shipwreck from various sources. One reason for distortion was the lack of official statements, the other reason was misinterpretation of certain words and phrases. For instance, it seems that sometimes the phrase "rescued person" was interpreted differently in Estonia and in Scandinavia. Estonians understood that everybody rescued was also alive, whereas for Finns and Swedes "rescued meant recovered", i.e. the term covered all the passengers and members of the crew taken out of water, whether dead or alive.

At the same time, journalists themselves were actively involved in amplifying the distortions, i.e. they deliberately published incorrect lists of passengers and those rescued. "There were several quite similar names in the list. Only one letter was different. We could not decide which name of the two was correct. So we published both," said Tiina Kaalep (Postimees).

This is also likely to account for the fact why the earliest reports of the disaster referred to "approximately 800 people on board" and the lists published by many newspapers during the next couple of days contained over a thousand names.

"The Estonian side lacked any reasonable plan of action, therefore one cannot speak about deliberate cover-ups," said Hannes Rumm (Hommikuleht).

A few days after the disaster some people and institutions launched an attack against the Estonian media for having published the preliminary lists of possible passengers and the crew. There was a great deal of dissension among the journalists themselves on that issue - some editors thought that publishing the news, even though incorrect, was better than giving no information at all, others consider, mostly on ethical grounds, the publishing of incorrect names to have been a violation of the basic norms of journalistic work.

"Thanks to the preliminary and unfortunately incorrect lists it was finally possible to compile a correct one," said Toomas Mattson (Postimees). "Right after the publication of the first lists, people started to call our office to tell us about the people whose names were in the list but who in actual fact, for one reason or other, were not on board. We wrote their names down and passed the information on to the Interior Ministry, thus helping to establish the truth."

Some journalists argued that whereas the shipping company Estline and state officials failed to provide valid information, the media had a responsibility to inform the public about all the facts available. The Estonian media had to cope with a difficult task: to keep the public informed about

the disaster, at the same time avoiding the pitfall of doing additional harm by dispensing invalid information.

Raivo Palmaru, from the newspaper Eesti Sõnumid, thought that the only alternative for not publishing the preliminary, incorrect lists would have been an agreement between the media channels not to publish them at all. Without such an agreement, any paper avoiding the lists would have been at a huge commercial disadvantage, Palmaru argued.

Working conditions after the disaster were quite different from the ordinary routine. Some journalists complained about the enormous stress and mental pressure - one might say that they were suffering like everybody else. Some reporters and editors, though, pointed out that they did not mind working in exceptional circumstances. On the contrary, they liked the uniqueness of the situation and high speed of their usually somewhat routine job.

"It was nothing very special. We had some experience of working in extreme situations (e.g. the military coup in Moscow, August, 1991, hijacking of planes, and so on)," admitted Ainar Ruusaar and Allan Martinson (BNS). They had to skip their usual verification process. There was no time after the shipwreck to seek confirmation from different sources.

Relations between the journalists and public offices were quite normal. Estonian journalists are used to situations in which it is rather difficult to find the right person who can dispense all the information available without any delay or objections. "They were surprisingly cooperative. They tried to do their best in spite of total disorganisation. Nobody was openly hostile towards the press," said Ruusaar.

A few suggestions concerning the conduct of the authorities and their secretaries:

- *they should be more punctual and keep their promises. If they promise to call back 10 minutes later, it would be nice if they did so, too;*
- *they should be more outspoken and helpful. If there is no information, why not say so?*

It appeared that the Estonian mass media have far better means of communication at their disposal than the public offices. While nearly all editorial offices have E-mail facilities and subscribe to several international news services, the main tools of trade for the Estonian government offices are still only telephones (sometimes cellular ones) and fax machines. Estonian news editors would have preferred to receive all the necessary official information via computer networks instead of by time-consuming fax-machines.

Estonian journalists could not recall any cases of official censorship during the post-disaster period.

As for the damage to Estonia's international prestige, the journalists pointed out that the Estonian authorities should have more actively responded to accusations made by various foreign interest groups

(Finnish and Swedish trade unions). There is always a lot of propaganda involved when something disastrous happens, said Ruussaar. Officials must keep that in mind and respond quickly, without hesitation, to any accusations. "I am afraid that very many people in the West think of Estonia as a poor, small, developing country which cannot manage by itself."

The overall impression of journalists about the operation of the Estonian media during the post-disaster period was, however, that it had been quite adequate. On the negative side, it was pointed out that there had not been much analysis, and much of the information was distributed without systematisation. And naturally - the problem of publishing unchecked invalid information. "The Estonian print media were quiet, unpretentious and understanding", said Tiina Jõgeda (Eesti Ekspress).

Conclusions for the Future

1. A publication must have a concrete plan of action for work in an emergency. There has to be an appointed coordinator, a news collector, a person responsible for handling information from foreign channels, a person who puts together a longer account, which includes all the important details. Prior training, a well-considered division of labour, coupled with all the necessary technical means helps save time and avoid overlapping.
2. People and the whole editorial office starting work in an emergency should have a concrete, previously worked-out point of view for rapidly solving inevitable ethical problems that may arise. The dilemma between promptness and accuracy remains, the newsdesk has to set the priorities. According to Western press traditions, no media channel is allowed to give incorrect information, except maybe to save lives.
3. The situation following the Estonia disaster showed that the Estonian authorities were not ready to communicate with the press. This was, on the one hand, due to lack of work organization and poorly functioning information network and, on the other, the fact that the Estonian authorities did not receive update information from their Swedish and Finnish colleagues.
4. Information explosion in an emergency makes it necessary for official sources to have an overview of all incoming topical information in one centre, which will then coordinate its work with the media, delivering systematized news material and preventing as much as possible the spread of incorrect and contradictory information.
5. Media channels should keep in mind that during an emergency it is the information derived from official sources that is most efficient and reliable. However, independent work of the media in finding out the reasons, consequences and possible culprits is also impor-

tant in giving objective information to the public. In the immediate post-disaster period the media should primarily proceed from official information to avoid panic, noise, misinterpretations and the spread of myths.

6. Every media channel has to recognize its specificity. The public satisfies its need for updated information by watching TV and listening to the radio. The readers of the newspapers expect, first of all, thorough background analyses, detailed interviews and open discussion.

ESTONIAN RADIO RESPONDS

The research examines the activities of three radio stations within a few hours of the catastrophe: the Eesti Raadio, Programme One (ER 1), the commercial channel Raadio 2 of the state-owned Eesti Raadio (R 2) and the biggest private channel in Tallinn, Raadio Kuku (Kuku).

In the early hours of 28 September, after the news of the Estonia disaster had reached the rescuers, no radio station in Estonia was ready to rearrange its work. The transmitters of ER I, the state-owned channel, were not operating, while R 2, the commercial channel, and Kuku, the private one, were broadcasting music. ER I starts its programme at 0530, R 2 and Kuku begin with their morning programme at 0600. Thus, the first station to broadcast the news of the disaster was ER I.

Having analyzed the approach in all the radio channels under investigation, it can be said that the picture of the catastrophe was complete by 1000. By that time an adequate explanation of what had happened had been given. After 1000 nothing essentially new was added to the picture. Only the names of those rescued were listed. And speculations on such subjects were initiated that actually - considering the lack of information - should not have been discussed yet. The probable causes of the catastrophe were suggested, the professional aptitude of the crew as well as that of the whole of Estonian navigation was evaluated. Another topic was the possible air cushion formed inside the sunken ship alongside with the possibility of rescuing people from the wreck.

Eesti Raadio, Programme One

At 0532 the first news programme of Eesti Raadio was on the air with the following news :

The Estline passenger ferry Estonia, on her way from Tallinn to Stockholm, sank last night, Finnish TV reports.

The approximate time of the catastrophe was according to the first reports 0100. The SOS signal was sent out from the boat at 0124. Then communications ceased.

There were 679 passengers and 188 crew members on board.

So far, only 20 persons have been saved, Finnish information agencies report.

At 0400 no dead bodies had been found.

Those involved in the catastrophe say the boat sank quickly - within five minutes.

The sea was stormy last night, with wind speeds of up to 27 metres per second.

As to the Estonian sources, the dispatcher of the Estonian Shipping Company could only say that they had received the news by phone at about 0300. The officer on duty at the Police Department said the ship had not sunk but was listing. The Rescue Service is to find out the actual details.

In half an hour, Eesti Raadio added that the accident had happened 40 nautical miles off the Finnish shore. Reuters and DPA's (Deutsche Presse-Agentur) information was also included: by 0400 no dead bodies had been found. Five passenger boats were assisting in the rescue operations. The opinion of the duty officer, Mikko Montonen, was also referred to: there may be hundreds of casualties.

At 0700 it was reported that the Estonia had sunk 35 kilometres off the Finnish island of Utö, 100 kilometres from Turku. It was added that 163 passengers were citizens of Estonia, as were most of the crew members. By that time it was known that about 30-40 persons had been rescued. The news programme added, "Those rescued say that the ship listed and sank within five minutes. Prior to that, the power supply was cut off. — Finnish TV thinks the number of those perished can exceed 800. — It is thought that those in life boats can hope to be saved. Those in water may have frozen to death, Finnish physicians fear. The rescuers say not all on board could leave the ferry...". Eesti Raadio mentioned, too, that President Lennart Meri was already informed of the situation. He was said to be considering possible rescue operations and plan to make a statement. The "State Committee established to deal with the accident is headed by Andres Tarand", it was said. For the first time condolences expressed by the Estonian government were delivered.

At 0715 Eesti Raadio broadcast the first press release by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Among other things, it specified the number of passengers on board. The Ministry announced, "A coast guard craft and emergency plane have been sent out. — The state Crisis Committee headed by Andres Tarand has been formed. The Ministry of Internal Affairs is at the moment composing the list of passengers. The Ministry will give information after the list has been completed on phone 6399126."

At 0800 Eesti Raadio reported that 70 people had been rescued and 11 had been taken to Utö, among them four Finns, but also Estonians, Swedes, Russians and Dutch citizens. A few minutes past 0800 President Meri's statement was broadcast. He said, "The only call for help was received by Ilkka Kärppälä, a Turku coastguard official."

The President implied he was dissatisfied with the government's activities, "As no governmental crisis committee existed at night, I established a crisis centre, under the leadership of Tarmo Mänd, my Head of Chancellery, and Vahur Glaase, my Legal Adviser." The President asked Estonian physicians, especially those of the Island of Hiiumaa to be ready to receive the victims. In the name of the Republic of Estonia, the President expressed gratitude to the Turku Rescue Centre and the captains of the vessels involved in the rescue operations. He informed of his order to establish an independent committee to investigate the accident as well as the governmental procedures related to it. He declared a day of mourning and asked the public to keep state flags at half mast until sunset. Questionable was one of the President's sentences: "At 0420 the Estonia sank on a spot with coor-

dinates 59°21'N and 21°42'E within the Finnish zone of rescue." The time was later repeated in the BNS news and gave clear evidence that at those early hours there was no proper idea of what had happened or how quickly the Estonia actually went down.

At 0900, Eesti Raadio broadcast its first long news programme. The number of those rescued was given to be 90. The programme included the statement by Prime Minister Mart Laar in which he said, "The tragedy concerns us all. No state can survive it without pain and that is why we all mourn today." A historian himself, the Prime Minister drew historical parallels, "Like 50 years ago, in the days of the great flight of 1944, so today hundreds perished in the Baltic Sea. — However, the tragedy cannot put an end to the contacts between the peoples living on the shores of the Baltic Sea." The news programme said that in the morning Prime Minister Mart Laar had convened the Government's emergency session. The Government set up a Committee of Investigation.

The programme broadcast an interview with Andi Meister, Minister of Transport and Communications, who had also been appointed Chairman of the Governmental Committee. In his question, the interviewer Hillar Nahkman proposed two possible causes for the tragedy: high seas and poorly lashed down cars on board. Andi Meister said that at the moment there was no single accepted explanation to the accident, "A strong wind can cause whatever. Without further details I would not propose any versions, as these could only cause confusion." Andi Meister pointed out that information concerning the activities of the Committee could be obtained either from him personally or from Heiki Arike, his appointed representative. Hillar Nahkman protested against the poor information flow, saying that at 0500 the Ministry of Internal Affairs had said the ferryboat was just having a list. Andi Meister answered that the Coastguard Coordination Centre could have provided Eesti Raadio with updated, accurate information.

The picture was complemented by a weather report over the telephone.

It seems that by 0900 vital information about the catastrophe had been passed on. No lengthy accounts by those rescued had been broadcast yet. Eesti Raadio, however, was not eager to broadcast them later, either. The material put forward was academic and carefully prepared. No live broadcasts or on-the-spot interviews, all the material was previously edited.

ER I was cautious about reading out the names of those rescued. The first ten names were announced at the 1000 news programme. The midday news programme broadcast the list obtained from the Finnish police, but after some drastic mistakes had been detected in it, no further lists were read out.

The news board of Eesti Raadio worked in those days in close cooperation with its colleagues at the Estonian Editorial board of the Swedish Broadcasting Company. At 1100 they interviewed Ats Joorits, a member of the staff in Stockholm, who reported that passengers' relatives had gathered at the Estline terminal in Stockholm, and that crisis groups were being formed, comprising clergymen, social workers and psychologists. Ats

Joorits placed great emphasis on the principle followed by the Swedish police: names should not be the object of speculations.

Ats Joorits was on the air at the noon 15-minute newscast, too, "From the very first moment the Estline representative has kept repeating that the ship was in perfect condition and the same has been confirmed by Peter Hopstein, specialist from the Swedish Maritime Safety Inspectorate, who said that he had examined the ship a few days earlier and found it technically in perfect order and the crew well trained." Ats Joorits said that in Sweden the prevailing opinion seemed to put the cause of the accident down to carelessly lashed cargo.

At 1400 the Eesti Raadio short news programme stressed that neither state officials nor the Estline have issued an official release clarifying the cause of the disaster. Also, reference was made to Swedish Broadcasting Company's information about the press conference, where the crew-member Hendrik Sillaste appeared. It was said that the Ministry of Social Affairs had established a foundation to support the families of those who perished in the catastrophe, and Estonian Air would have an extra flight to Stockholm. The newly elected Swedish Prime Minister Ingvar Carlsson was reported to be planning, after his inauguration, to establish a team that would see to the safety of sea transport.

At 1500 another 15-minute newscast discussed the possibility of a lingering air cushion inside the wreck and the probability of rescuing people with the help of divers. Andi Meister was said to have indicated that Finland had the required specialists. Mr. Meister expressed his conviction that Captain Avo Piht would be able to give valuable information concerning the accident. He said that there had been all the necessary prescribed safety equipment on board.

At 1600 it was admitted that many of the lists were inaccurate, people who were not on board had been included in the lists.

At 1800 both ERI and R2 broadcast an ecumenical service of commemoration relayed from St Charles' Church in Tallinn.

The evening full-hour news gave more information about emergency help, fund raising, condolences. The 30-minute newscast Päevakaja, at 2000, the central programme of the day, summed up all the daily news.

Late at night, the news of decisions adopted at the meeting of the prime ministers of Estonia, Sweden and Finland was broadcast. Mart Laar gave a press conference at the airport. He stressed that he could conclude from his talk to the rescued crew members that those few whose lives were saved could be helped only thanks to the efficiency of the crew.

The state-owned commercial channel Raadio 2

Raadio 2 began to mediate the news of the catastrophe on 28 September after 0800 with an on-the-spot report from the Estline terminal by Marko Reikop. Marko Reikop was one of the few reporters who managed to enter the terminal.

In his first report Marko Reikop, referring to Estline Traffic Director Yrjö Saarinen, sounded quite self-confident, "The ship foundered because her engines stopped. Why they stopped is not clear. After they had stopped, the ship, because of the strong wind blowing at 20-25 metres per second, turned broadside toward the wind." Reikop passed on the statement made by the Estline staff about the ship having been thoroughly examined and no technical faults detected. The Estline did not agree with the accusation that the boat had been too old. Surprisingly enough, Reikop mentioned that one of the goals of the rescuers was to find the so-called black box of the boat. He said that by 0900 the complete list of the passengers would be issued. At 1024, however, he said that the list cannot be trusted as some names could still have been changed, and some people could have passed their tickets on to someone else.

At 1000 Allan Roosileht, a popular R 2 disc jockey, and Kalle Mälberg, a reporter, started to lead the programme. It seems that their primary aim from the very first moments was to present as sensational materials as possible. They aggressively repeated their names and stressed that any incoming information would be immediately passed on to the listeners. This team frequently used agency news without prior editing.

At 1024, a major discussion of the probable existence of an air cushion inside the ship was initiated. It was introduced by the statement of Yrjö Saarinen, Estline Traffic Director: "The ship has a safety system which is switched on automatically after an accident has occurred. — All the inner doors will be automatically and hermetically closed." Which means that there might still be some air in the ship and a number of people could still be alive.

Before 1100 one of the Estonian staff of the Swedish Broadcasting Company was interviewed and rendered his impressions from the Stockholm Estline terminal. Among other things, he recalled the accident with the Polish vessel Jan Heweliusz six months before, in which water had entered the ship - although more slowly. It was in this interview that the Estonian media first mentioned the possibility of lifting the vessel.

After the 1100 news, the list of the passengers was more thoroughly examined. It is known that 27 crew members were included in the list and that the list had been signed by Captain Andersson. The programme leaders listed people together with their corresponding posts.

Raadio 2 stressed that the incumbent Swedish Prime Minister Carl Bildt as well as Ingvar Carlsson, who had recently won the election, had already made official statements. The programme leader said he had tried to contact the Estonian President and Prime Minister, their secretaries, press representatives and private secretaries, but not a single telephone had been picked up. He could not reach the president's office telephones either. "Obviously, the heads of state are sitting at meetings and their staff are not supposed to answer calls," he concluded.

At 1130 an interview with Udo Parikas from the Swedish Broadcasting

Company was aired. Parikas repeated that the passenger list had not reached Sweden yet, after which the Estonian programme leaders boasted of having got the lists.

At 1145 Marko Reikop reported from the Estline terminal that he had no news about a press conference. Reikop admitted, however, that the Estline staff were very helpful and polite.

The R 2 programme carried a number of interviews with low-ranking officials: secretaries, officers on duty, clerks, which failed to contribute anything new to what was known already.

Katrin Kaitsa from the Government Press Department repeated in an interview the contents of the news: at 1130 the Prime Minister left for Finland to meet with his Swedish and Finnish colleagues. The Prime Minister was accompanied by his Private Secretary. Neither of them had taken along a mobile phone. In another interview (at 1345) Katrin Kaisa said that the Crisis Committee had been working at night, now it was the Governmental Committee that was working.

After the 15-minute newscast R 2 broadcast an interview with the President's Press Adviser. The latter explained that his workday had begun at 0500, but the President had known about the accident even before that. The interviewee mentioned that Eesti Raadio had been the first to inform the public of the catastrophe. The programme leader tried to provoke the President's Press Adviser by expressing his surprise at the President's consultations with different political parties (a day earlier the Parliament had mustered a vote of no confidence in Prime Minister Mart Laar). The Press Adviser answered that the President was performing his constitutional obligations and added that the President had stressed the need for setting up an independent committee that would investigate the catastrophe.

Subsequently the Chief Customs Inspector of the Tallinn Harbour was interviewed. In order to avoid confusion and misunderstandings he refused to comment on the Estonia's cargo. The programme leader manipulated with the data obtained from the BNS. The Chief Inspector stressed that it was an absolutely routine trip with an absolutely routine cargo. The programme leader intervened and proposed his theory that a beam escaped from a Latvian lorry and began to roll, reaching the board and listing the ship. He emphasized the name of the neighbour country - Latvia - in ironic manner. The 'Latvian card' was tactlessly employed later, too.

At about 1230, R2 broadcast a statement by Hendrik Sillaste, 24, (obtained from Reuters) in which he said that the water had entered the ship through the open car deck port.

From the interview with Tiia Kangert, Press and Information Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it appears that Brussels had communicated the NATO Rescue Service's willingness to help. Direct contacts had been taken with Dutch companies and rescue services. Ms. Kangert was asked to comment on the statement released by the Russian Rescue Service saying that the Estonia had not given an emergency call. She did not believe it to be true. The

programme leader made an irresponsible hint at AWACS¹ planes, which might enable one to overhear Tallinn phone calls.

After the ER I full-hour news at 1400, Marko Reikop broadcast another report from the Estline terminal. He clarified how the crew had been trained for its voyages. In order to evacuate all the passengers at least half an hour is needed. Reikop said the ship had been designed so that the cargo could not move forward, nor could holes be formed in her sides. Reikop also quoted an Estline official: the company was not on the verge of bankruptcy.

At 1440 the Tallinn City Council declared a day of mourning. The Press Secretary for the City Council mentioned that some people expressed worry about where they could have their lunch in case restaurants would be closed.

The 1600 interview with Estonian ambassador in Brussels Clyde Kull continued to develop the air cushion motif.

The private station Raadio Kuku

Kuku began its programme a few minutes before 0600 with introductory remark: "We have information that the first block of news is not of the nicest content." Kuku had been informed of the catastrophe at about 0530 by the President's Press Adviser.

At 0600 the news was on the air: "The Estline ferryboat on her way from Tallinn to Stockholm met with an accident caused by strong wind 100 kilometres off the coast of Stockholm. There were 867 people on board. The sea is still stormy and rescue operations are difficult, the Finnish Broadcasting Company and Reuters say. The rescue team fear that hundreds of lives may have been lost."

Kuku probably dared not to use the phrase "the boat sank" and replaced it by "met with an accident". It seems the editor was not sure which words should be used. At 0630 it was added - referring to Reuters - that the boat had capsized. It was also said that there were 188 crew members on board. Only at 0700 was it stated that the boat had sunk within 5-10 minutes.

At 0633 the first interview with a person directly involved in the case is on the air. It was the interview with the General Director of the Estonian National Maritime Board who had started his working day at the Estonian Coastguard Coordination Centre. Director Kalle Pedak explained that they had been informed of the catastrophe at 0300 and that the number of people on board was being verified. He added that the accident had happened within the Finnish zone of responsibility, and the rescuing operations were therefore led by the Turku Sea Rescue Centre. Pedak stressed that all Estonian sea rescue specialists were present at the Coordination Centre. Pedak said the cause of the accident was not clear yet, as the Finnish rescue team were busy with their operation and "can release practically no information".

In the morning programme Kuku reviewed the information obtained from the Finnish MTV Channel 3. Already early in the morning the Finns

1) *Airborne Warning And Control System, NATO's radar surveillance aircraft.*

had proposed possible scenarios for the event. At 0637 the term "hypothermia" was used for the first time, adding that the Estonia was lying 80-90 metres deep in the sea.

The Estonian-language Voice of America, transmitted by the Kuku programme at 0645 introduced a new political-patriotic angle, which the local Estonian media probably regarded improper: "It's not the first time that the autumnal Baltic Sea charges its toll. Whatever may happen - we are not supposed to simply accept our fate, even if it could be stronger than we are. Estonian ships as well as Estonian sailors will be sailing the Baltic Sea also in future. Only in future there will be fewer of them."

At 0705 the journalist from Kuku said he had visited the Estline offices but without any particular results. However, by that time the Estline had announced its information phone. Andi Meister, Minister of Transport and Communications, had made his information phone number public, but this one was of no help yet.

At 0730 the news said that the rescue operations which had now been going on for five hours had managed to save about 40 people.

On 28 September Kuku opened several new lines of inquiry. At 0742 the programme leader checked which of the Estonian authorities had been informed of the accident. The information obtained from the Estonian Board of Border Guard made him say that the President was not the only one. (This fact had been confirmed before by Ulla-Maija Määttänen, Yleisradio, Tallinn.) At 0747 the interview with the Chief of staff of the Borderguard, Aare Evisalu, was broadcast. He stressed that the leadership of the Borderguard had been at work since 0340, as had that of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Transport and Communications.

The interview with Andres Oja at a few minutes to 8 am gave valuable information about the interior of the ship. Oja mentioned the accident with the Polish ship Jan Heweliusz. He stressed that the crew had been well trained as they had attended regular weekly training sessions.

The 8 o'clock news: "According to the latest data, 50 persons have been rescued. About 800 people have perished, the Finnish News Agency says."

The journalists of Kuku sought to get live contact with their audience. At 0821 the City Councillor Tõnu Karu, Deputy Chairman of the Tallinn Citizen's Safety Committee, suggested that two phones be opened for inquiries so that "people who know more and are closer to the facts" could call. Later people were asked not to phone merely to express their opinions, views and the like.

At 0845, Kuku broadcast an interview with Mikko Montonen from the Turku Sea Rescue Centre who explained that 90 people had been recovered from the sea, unfortunately, not all of them alive. Montonen said that there was little hope that those who were still in the water could survive. The interview was the first attempt in the Estonian media to contact someone involved in the rescue operations.

At 0905 Kuku broadcast an incomprehensible tape from the Coastguard

Coordination Centre. An anonymous clerk expressed his surprise at the fact that the first signals of alarm had not reached Estonia. The reporter did not develop the subject. Captain Jüri Kreek meant in his interview that the weather could not have been fatal for the ship.

The reporter described the ship. He said the Estonia was built 14 years ago and could originally carry 2,000 passengers. Since February 1993 it had sailed under the name Estonia. Two years ago the ship had had an accident in the Turku archipelago. He mistakenly stated that this was the greatest catastrophe that has ever happened in the Baltic Sea².

At 0917 a relative of a survivor was interviewed. The woman tried to calm everybody by saying that big tragedies always involve some luck. She said that her relative was one of the crew. He had not been on duty, but had woken at the moment of the disaster and broken his cabin window. The man, who had once practiced winter swimming, had been in the water for three hours. He managed to swim to a big boat. Unfortunately from the engine's side so that the screw had begun to pull him back into the water. Finally he was noticed. He had phoned home at about 0630. "I hope the happy message can also cheer others up. I hope there are other families in Estonia who will receive similar messages today. And to those for whom the day will remain the saddest one in their lives, to those people I'd like to wish health and stamina, for the sea - it is rough and hard on us."

Just before 0930 Kuku broadcast an interview with Ilkka Kärppälä, the man who had received the distress signal. Kärppälä confirmed that the rescue operations were being continued. About 90 people had been saved, and there was still hope to find survivors. The interview added no new information. The interviewer could not make use of the fact that President Lennart Meri had named Kärppälä as the person who had first received the alarm.

At 0931 a mother called to the radio station saying that her son had been saved and was in hospital on a small island. She said that because of her superstition she did not want to tell her name.

Next Kuku interviewed Arbo Kalk, brother of a survivor, Neeme Kalk. As Arbo Kalk was telling how his brother climbed from the lower deck upwards through the ship, the reporter commented, "So people from lower decks could also reach up to the life boats and can be floating at sea. So let's keep hoping, perhaps the number of those drowned is not so great after all."

At 0950 the first interview with a survivor was on the air. This was the first one over Kuku and the first one altogether. It was Neeme Kalk, who had reached the Hanko Medical Centre. The reporter began: "It can be said that today is like being reborn to you!" Kalk said that he had heard a strange noise and woke up because of it. He saw the boat was in a list, dressed quickly and ran out to the deck. He said he had not heard any announcements. People were still in their cabins, some were rushing upwards. Those on the deck were grabbing lifebelts, the crew were not to be seen, no instructions were given. Kalk said he had waited until the ship was on its side,

2) During World War II more lives were lost when overcrowded refugee ships were sunk.

found with three other persons an inflatable boat. Later on they had picked up one more man with a lifebelt. Engines were not to be heard. The wind blew the boat far from the ship. Kalk had not noticed wooden lifeboats. From the distance he had seen the bottom of the ship. Neeme Kalk posed the question about the activities of the crew at the moment of the disaster and about their professional ability in general.

At 1000, a new phase in the coverage began. The facts accumulated by now made it possible to put together a comprehensive picture of what had happened. After 1000 the inflow of the material became scantier. Various topics were now dwelt upon: how the cargo had been fixed, and the list of passengers.

At 1023 the first reaction to the interview with Neeme Kalk was received. A crew member not on board that day called from his home to say he couldn't believe the crew did not act. He said that at that late hour most of the crew were supposed to rest and added that even crew members can be seasick in a storm. He also said that ordinary passengers are not able to lower lifeboats.

Throughout the day, Kuku gave thorough information about aid in critical situations. At 1036 a psychiatrist, Dr. Anti Liiv, was interviewed. Anti Liiv said the Tallinn City Council had designated the Wismar Hospital as a crisis centre and gave the hospital's address and phone numbers. People having psychological problems related to the disaster could contact the hospital and get help. The hospital, he said, can attend to 100-150 people per day. At 1233 Anti Liiv said that only about 10 persons had contacted the hospital. Liiv stressed that lack of information is the hardest to bear. Liiv also admitted they had refused to accept help from several international groups of psychologists, as the hospital can manage on its own. At 1422 Liiv gave a few tips to the people: "One has to accept that many problems are unclear for the Rescue Centre, too. Within a few days everything will be clear. — I advise you to talk to other people, and not stay alone." Liiv said that lack of information being the most serious problem, the hospital had begun to compile passenger lists.

After the 11 o'clock news, the programme leader reviewed the information obtained from Finnish TV. He recalled a ship accident a few years ago that had been caused by "rupture of the bow doors". It was said that the Estonia allegedly had the signalling equipment that would immediately have warned of such a fault.

A reporter, Rõõmussaar, gave the assumptions made by experts who had phoned the studio: the diesel generators could have been the first to stop. When rolling waves damaged the fueling equipment, water could enter the systems, which are not waterproof. After the generator has stopped, the engines will stop, too.

At 1120 the cargo displacement theory gained impetus. A company transporting their lorries by ferries phoned and said they had noticed that the cargo was not properly lashed down. No other means except blocks were used to bar the cars from moving.

At 1130 it was reported that the Russian Navy had offered to help in the rescue operations (ITAR-TASS). The Russian Ministry of Emergency Situations had offered its help too, the Estonian Embassy said.

At 1132 Swedish repercussions were broadcast. Mare Rebas from the Estonian staff complained she couldn't give adequate information about the Estonian ship. She said there had been a number of Swedish tourists on the Estonia. She reported that the Estonian House in Stockholm had set up a crisis group to receive people in need of help. Her colleague, Ats Joorits, said the Estline was not eager to answer his questions concerning the passenger list. He also disclosed sensational news heard at the harbour: there had allegedly been a bomb on board.

Once again Kuku focused on the subject of poorly fastened cargo: "I was reprimanded by the Estonian Pilotage Service. I was advised to keep my mouth shut altogether and not discuss things I know nothing about. Yes, I do not know how lorries are fastened. And as I had been reprimanded already, I dialled the number of a man who can tell us a few facts about it." The man said he had once travelled with a load of easily breakable glass and confessed he had been very worried about his truckload.

At 1300 the last news item in the programme reported that Hendrik Sillaste, a surviving crew member, had informed the Swedish News Agency, TT, of carelessly closed bow doors and confirmed that water had entered the ship through them.

At 1347 Kuku interviewed Martin Blumfeldt, whose mother had been working on the ship. The man had heard the news in early morning. His mother had phoned from Sweden and told him that she had climbed up the stairs and a wave had thrown her into the sea.

At 1430 differences in the passenger lists are pointed out. The Finnish police say the Estonia had 964 people on board: 776 passengers and 188 crew members. Earlier, the Estonian Shipping Company, one of the owners of the Estonian-Swedish joint venture, had spoken of 679 passengers and 188 crew members on board.

At 1636, Kuku broadcast a matter-of-fact interview with Marje Braunbrück, Head of the Booking Department, who was sure that the figure could be wrong by up to 200 people. She explained: it is not always said whether the figure includes crew members or not. She promised not to make the list public before the Estline had got hold of all the different lists. A number of groups had been registered twice. There could be those travelling without a ticket. She was critical of the Finns' readiness to give exact figures. She added that the Estline ships had, as a rule, always been full and carried up to 1,000 passengers. She expressed hope that the list would be completed within a few hours.

The news at 1700: Andrew Livingston, representing British naval officers, told Reuters that the Estonia catastrophe is as rare as a simultaneous stoppage of all the four engines in a plane. Livingston said the roll-on roll-off ferries are generally safe vessels, and that the catastrophe with the Estonia

was the world's biggest disaster with a ship of this type. Anders Lindström, chairman of the Swedish Seamen's Union, told Reuters that Swedish specialists had checked the ship's gaskets on Tuesday and found them to be in need of repair.

At 1705 "Wednesday Studio", led by Harri Tiido, begins. The programme summed up the information about the catastrophe received hitherto.

The 1800 news presented the views of Sten-Christer Forsberg, Technical Director of Nordström & Thulin: the catastrophe does not have one single, easily explicable cause. He assured listeners that the Estonia and her safety systems had been certified and corresponded in every aspect to international standards. He admitted that the crew members were of different professional levels. The news programme added that the announcement made by the survivor Hendrik Sillaste had been confirmed at the Turku press conference. Sillaste had said that the bow doors had not been properly closed. The outer one had been closed while the inner one had not. According to Sillaste, "There was so much water on the lower deck that it reached up to my knees."

It was repeated again that the lists were inaccurate. The Governmental Committee at the Ministry of Internal Affairs led by Heiki Arike asked municipal governments and the public to help in this matter.

Harri Tiido sums up information for the Estonian-language Voice of America (at 1830), laying the blame on poorly lashed cargo. He admitted that the number of passengers varied in different sources, and the data could not be trusted.

The news at 1900 reported that Raimo Tiilikainen has made a change in his former statement to the effect that 126 people from the Estonia had been saved and 42 bodies recovered from the sea. All in all there had been 964 persons on board, 796 of them are still missing.

It appears that the Swedish sea safety specialists who had checked the Estonia had been in Tallinn within the framework of a cooperation programme to instruct Estonian sea safety inspectors. The headquarters of the Norrköping organization had issued a statement saying that in spite of minor faults the ship was found to be seaworthy. In any case, the faults discovered could not have caused the sinking of the vessel in such a short time.

After 2100 Kuku broadcast a programme with a psychologist, Tiiu Meres, of the Crisis Aid Centre. The programme was needed: the psychologist gave necessary advice without being too talkative. She admitted that people had clung to hope and were not willing to accept the fact that something inevitable had happened. In the harbour, she said, she had seen many people who in spite of everything did their best to stay brave.

A comparison of the profiles

Eesti Raadio Programme One, Raadio 2, and Raadio Kuku concentrated on different things at different times of the day, offering different facts and

interpretations. At any time, however, it was possible to pinpoint what was considered the most important issue. In the case of news, the first news item could be viewed as a main theme, but in the case of longer programmes, the main theme was not necessarily presented at the beginning of the programme. The concept of the main topic was somewhat conditional, and we can discuss it as a focus or centre of a programme. After the disaster, the image of the accident changed within hours, and so did the main theme. It is interesting to follow the chronological development of the main theme. Figures 2 and 3 stand for the day's "picture" or "profile" of R 2 and Kuku on 28 September. All the texts featuring the catastrophe have been fixed and defined as the main themes.

When comparing the "profiles" of two of the stations, it appears that early in the morning (from 0600 to 1000) R 2 was more monotonous in its handling of the accident than Kuku. Kuku covered such issues as the impact of the disaster on society, problems involving the victims, and several background themes. On 28 September, the first picture of the accident was shaped and only few new facts were added. During that period, Kuku attempted to intersperse the information and to use different sources. After 1000 Kuku resolutely concentrated on the victims. This was helped by the information telephone ('hot-line') installed in the morning by which people could forward any kind of information about the people who had been on board. Kuku was in active contact with their listeners. After 1000 on 28 September, R 2 programming, on the other hand, did not have a clear direction: the main theme changed without evidence of a concrete plan. At the time when the initial picture of the catastrophe was being shaped, such an arrangement of themes spoke of lack of a clear plan and strategy.

Figure 4 shows the final arrangement of the main themes during the first day after the disaster. In comparison with R 2, Kuku more extensively covered subjects like obtaining information and public relations. R 2, however, often tried to bring to the foreground the conflicts between the different authorities and the countries involved, which often became a main theme in itself.

In conclusion, Raadio Kuku's most active work period occurred in the period when the information steadily kept coming in. Kuku's active work helped the listeners adjust to the situation. In R 2, the climax in the disaster coverage fell in the passive period, when the information influx was no longer intensive. Kuku was more active and shaped the image of the disaster. Their advantage was in a clear definition of their role in covering the disaster: as a local station, they wanted to be in active contact with their listeners and serve them, whereas Raadio 2 often seemed to lack a clear purpose in their coverage.

Figure 2 Main themes on the first day of the disaster. Raadio 2.

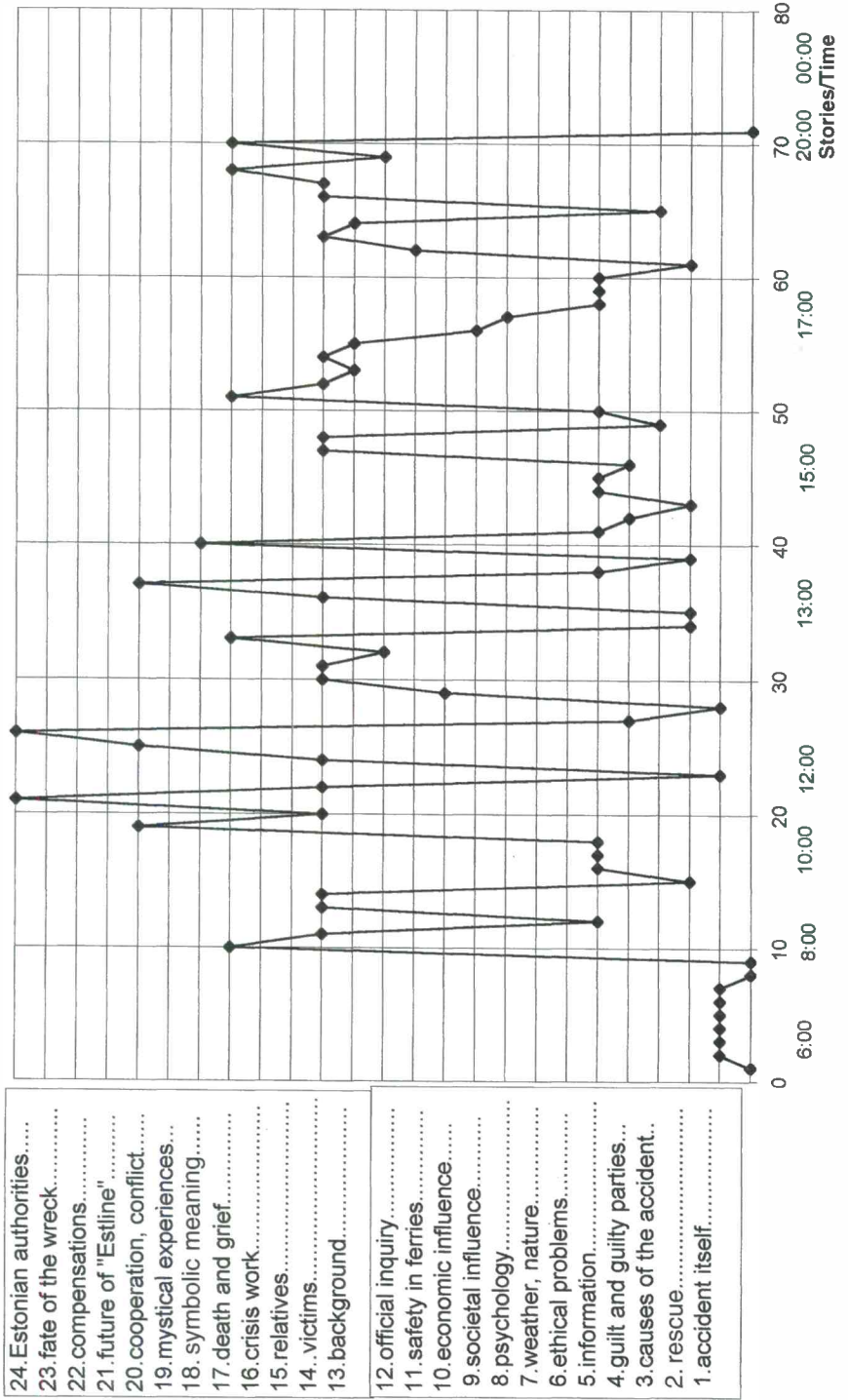


Figure 3 Main themes on the first day of the disaster. Raadio KUKU.

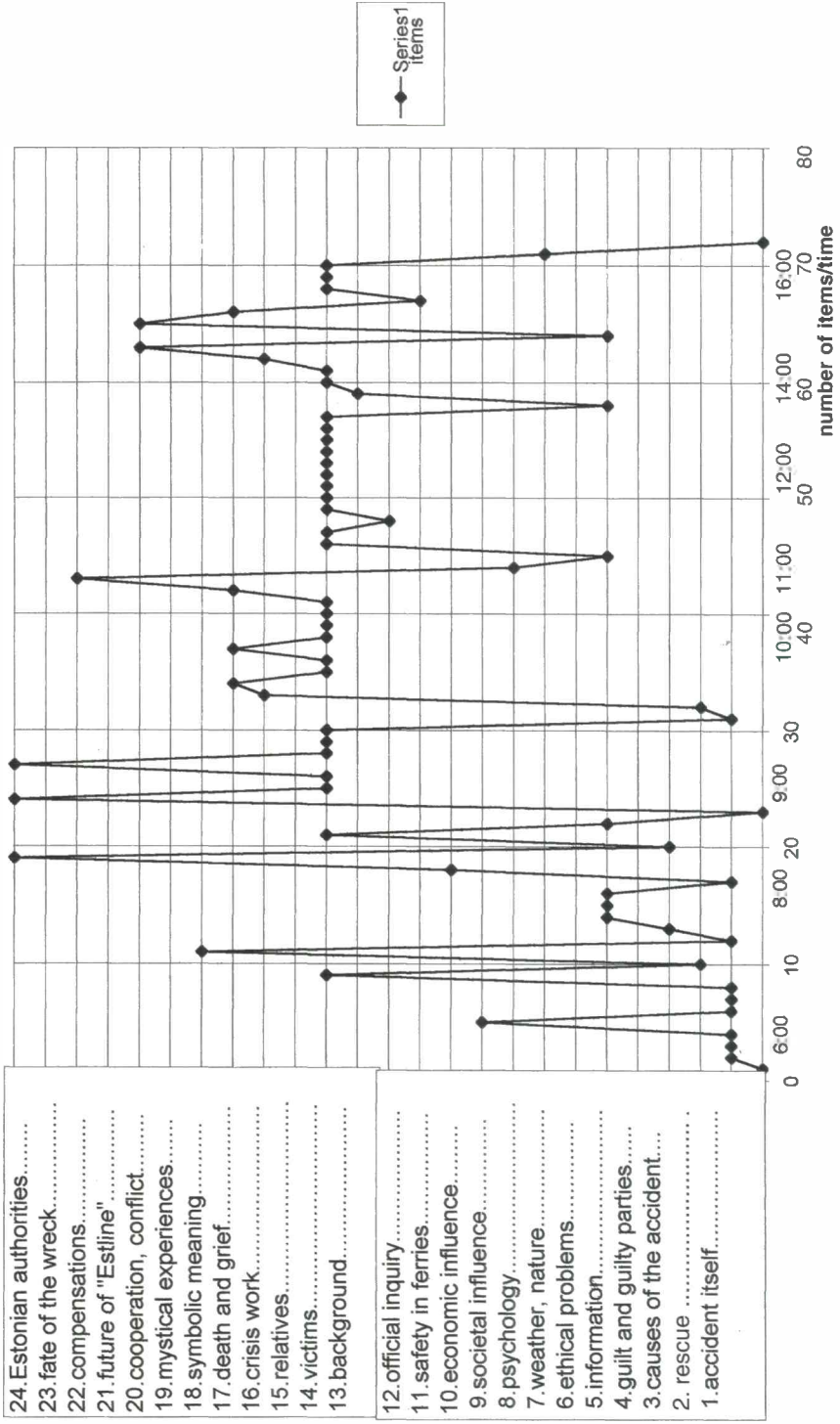


Figure 4 Main themes on the first day of the disaster.

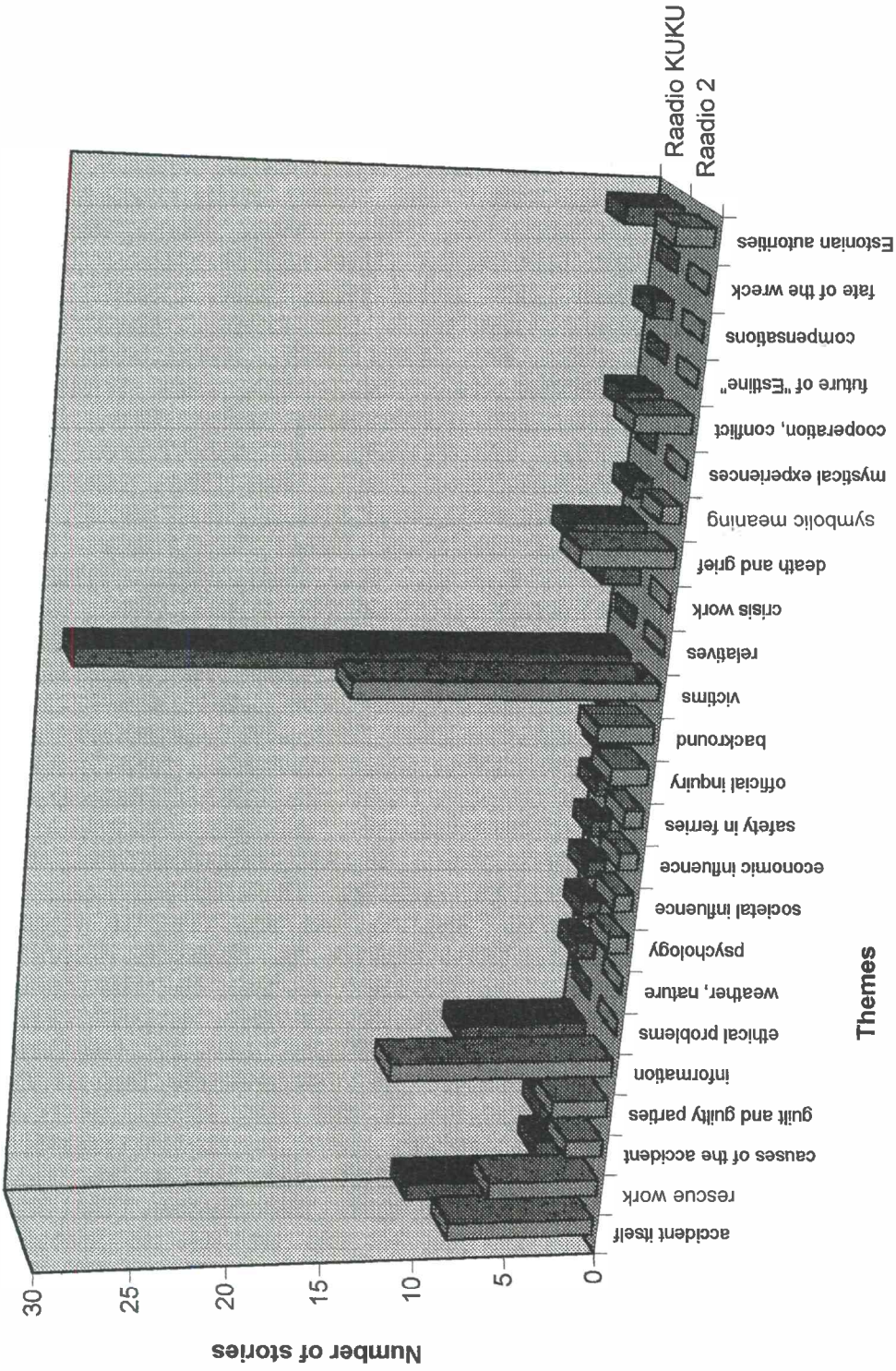
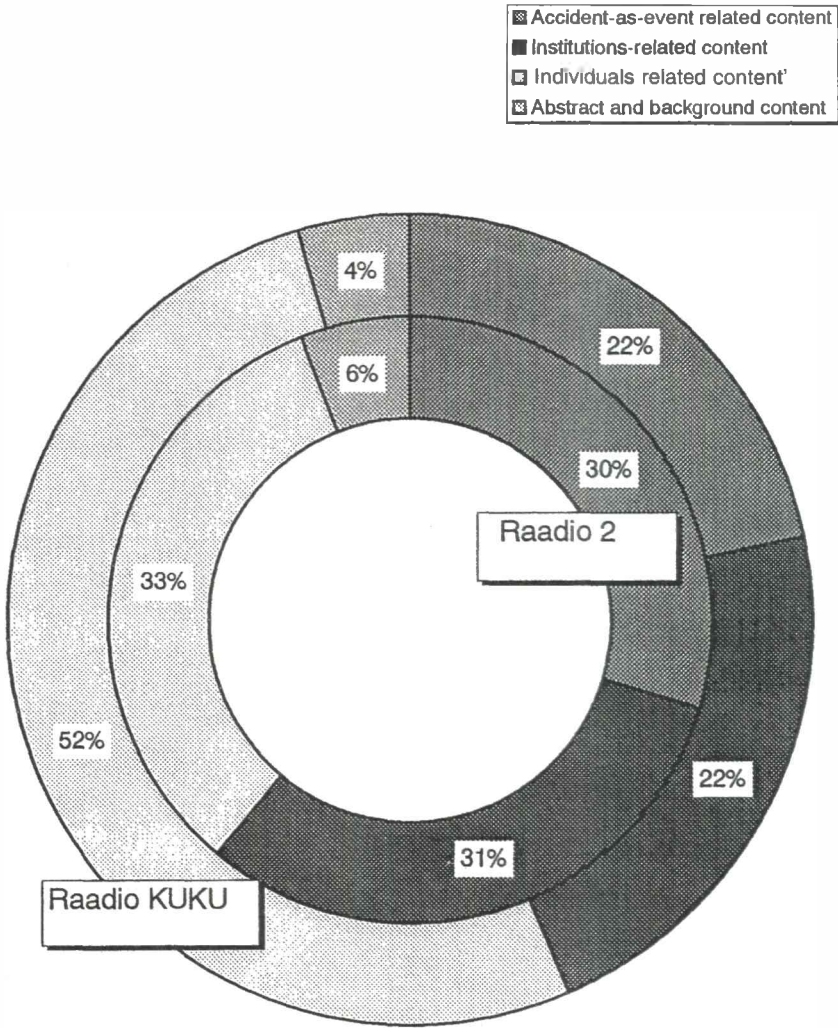


Figure 5. Main themes on the first day of the disaster.



Interaction with the listeners

At the beginning, there was a lot of optimism reflected in the coverage by all three stations. This seems a little odd under the circumstances. According to an opinion expressed early in the morning of 28 September, daylight would make the rescue operations easier and many people would be spotted in the life boats. So people were incited to hope against hope. They were frequently told not to believe that hundreds had lost their lives in the accident. However, the overall pursuit of optimism was in conflict with the desire to give an impression that all information about the accident had already been received.

Thanks to the active intervention of the listeners on 28 September, a discussion was started concerning the radio stations' coverage of the catastrophe. Kuku as well as Raadio 2 were quite sensitive to the criticism received from the listeners and expressed it on the air as well. Kuku had problems when communicating with the survivors and their relatives. The anchors were keen to ask for names and if the relatives did not want to disclose them, the request was quite firmly expressed again. Several times, the relatives refused to tell their names as they did not want to put themselves into a disadvantageous position. Listeners commented the situation on the morning of 28 September, mentioning that Kuku had been criticised for attempting to reach the survivors. Kuku defended itself by saying that The Los Angeles Times had already turned to its correspondents in Estonia in order to reach the survivors and also the relatives of those who had not yet been rescued. "So that we are being quite tactful", the reporter said.

The anchors were offended by the criticism from listeners concerning the music played. Being the nationwide station, Raadio 2 has listeners all over the country, which sets the standard for their choice of music. R 2 DJ Allan Roosileht reacted to the criticism: "I would like to ask the people who want to give us very concrete advice regarding the kind of music we should play today, to leave it to us because all our phones are already intensively in use."

Relation to the material

The coverage of the accident by ER I was the most academic and cautious among the three stations. R 2 and Kuku, on the other hand, often erred in their presentation of material, especially as regards the people interviewed. Telephone talk made up a great part of the interviews and allowed for fast communication which, however, put people in a vulnerable position.

Putting people on the air without prior notice showed disrespect. This happened especially on R 2. Anchors were often so nervous that they forgot to ask the name of the person they were talking to (for example, the interview with an anonymous rescue officer from Finland). On air interviews were not stopped even if the desired interviewee was unavailable (so some state officials' secretaries who had no authority to give any interviews happened to get on the air). The person interviewed was often put

into an uncomfortable position by vague questions like: Do you have anything else to say? What do you see there? Unprepared interviews, instead of being informative, created confusion. It seems that in such cases the anchors had not a clear idea themselves about who was the person on the other end of the line. For example, the anchor in Kuku announced at 0730 that on the air was a person "who has something important to say". But while on the air, the person handed the phone over to someone else, who did not want to add anything or did not possess any additional information. Such an "interview" lasted a couple of minutes. The anchors did not make use of the already available information of the interviewed experts, rescue officers, etc., which made the interviews often poorer than expected (e.g. those with Ilkka Kärppälä and Mikko Montonen).

The handling of the list of survivors deserves more detailed treatment. In general, the anchors understood by noon, that the lists were inaccurate. After the afternoon news ER I stopped reading the lists on the air, R 2 and Kuku later added a warning for possible inaccuracy. Kuku explained that the lists were combined from several sources and that Swedes write names in one way, Finns in another, and the fax distorts them as well.

Raadio 2 received their most recent information from their special correspondent in the Estline terminal in Tallinn.

Completely unanalyzed information was also allowed on air. Anchors had not read their texts beforehand and made mistakes when on the air, openly accusing the news agencies of poor wording.

Most of the time the radio stations used several information sources simultaneously, which suggests that a single source was not trusted. On the day following the catastrophe, all three stations used this method for selecting information. In a few weeks' time, however, the news of only one agency was considered sufficient, and no additional information was sought.

As a source of information, the privately owned agency, the Baltic News Service (BNS) was preferred to the state-owned Estonian News Agency (ETA). The BNS' advantage was their way of presenting material. Their information was regularly arranged in longer summaries, was sorted by themes (for example, categories like "The Accident", "Rescue Operations", "Reactions from Abroad", "Background", etc.). The ETA was more conservative and did not pass on any assumptions as news, which sometime occurs in the BNS.

On 28 September, the ETA was not an independent source. Nearly 5% of the sources used were foreign agencies, mainly Radio Sweden's Estonian editorial office. The information from the Finnish teletext was especially important for ER I during the first hours after the accident. They were the keenest users of foreign sources.

When comparing the stations, it appears that both Raadio 2 and Kuku used the original materials more or less equally, whereas ER I was more conservative. R 2 was often satisfied with the information from one source and

used several sources at the same time considerably less than Kuku. On 29 and 30 September, the importance of the BNS increased, especially for R 2. ETA material was now used independently.

The genres used

The news story and the news feature were the most frequently employed genres. Kuku presented more event-centered information, whereas R 2 concentrated less on the accident itself and more on the personal and institutional aspects of the accident (see Figure 5). There were also a lot of interviews and reports during the first day, but on 29 and 30 September those genres functioned more as a background. The relative monotony of the genres used shows a lack of creativity among the radio journalists. The feature was not used, and the journalists were careful about expressing their own opinions, taking a wait-and-see position.

Kuku did more commentating: they had more studio commentaries than the other stations.

Organization of work at editorial offices

None of the reviewed radio stations had a special plan for work in crisis. The disaster material in Estonian Radio, Programme One was handled only by the news staff. The work of the news editorial offices followed the regular daily schedule. One editor was responsible for the hourly news and read the news out on the air, the other edited longer news programmes and anchored them. Two other staff members selected the agency news and prepared the texts. The reporters were also at work.

In Raadio 2, the work was basically done by two anchors who hoped to get the basic information from the interviews. The reporter in the "Estline" terminal in Tallinn had an important role as well.

We could see some division of labour in Kuku: one editor worked on the news, the other anchored the programme, a third worked with the information received from the foreign agencies, especially with information from the Finnish TV channels, and a fourth editor worked as an interviewer and reporter, leaving the studio at times, and also keeping an eye on the list of survivors.

The problems in the state-owned station, Eesti Raadio, arose from a lack of coordination of the work of ER I and R 2. Although R 2 used all the news of ER I, the anchors on R 2 ignored the fact, and listeners had to hear the same information several times over. At times, R 2 tried to get ahead of ER I, broadcasting the latest agency news before the daily news coverage.

Kuku also had some cooperation problems. The early morning interviews added new information, but this was not reflected in the news programme. It seems that the cooperation between the news editor and the other editors was not the best.

THE DISASTER ON TV

Pictures on TV

In September 1994 Estonian television was normally on the air between 1800 and 2330, short news was on at 1800 and 1930, the main news programme at 2100, and late news at 2300. 28 September was declared to be a day of mourning. The programme of Estonian TV was altered. The news programme *Aktuaalne Kaamera* (AK) aired its first special report at 1000. Special news programmes were aired at 1200 and 1500. The normal slots for news at 1800, 1930, 2100 and 2300 remained as earlier.

As the Estonian news crews were not able to send a mission to the site of the accident, ETV could receive pictures from the sea and about the progress of rescue works only via international channels or directly from Finnish YLE and Swedish TV. ETV's own visuals in the catastrophe-related broadcasts show the press conferences and interviews with MPs, members of government, members of the Investigation Commission, and the Tallinn-based representatives of the shipping companies. In the evening of the first day after the accident the news aired interviews with the survivors in Finnish hospitals; from the third day on, home-bound survivors were shown at Tallinn Airport.

A separate theme on TV was grief - symbols of mourning, both clerical and secular ceremonies. A frequently exploited visual symbol was the ferry *Estonia* as it had been before the accident.

As ETV did not produce any original picture from the site of the accident and of the rescue work, all the news of the rescue work and investigation was accompanied by the picture provided through international channels. A shot featuring the *Estonia* in the skerries of Stockholm, with people on board, was shown most often. This shot covered most of the text about the accident, rescue operations, causes of the shipwreck, psychological and ethical aspects of the catastrophe.

A spoken text about the rescue works can also be covered with pictures showing the same: ships and rafts at sea, helicopters hovering above the waters, people being pulled into them, people getting onto the waiting buses from the helicopters etc. Such pictures are very dramatic and expressive; pulling a person off a raft into a helicopter is so interesting and captivating that the text accompanying it may be lost to the watcher.

ETV showed a lot of people giving information. Indeed, at a press conference the relationship is clear and linear: the person talking also gets shown on the screen. However, another question is whether the press conferences held immediately after the catastrophe should have been forwarded to the public at all. The officials were confused, the shock was general and had also overcome the people who had to give information.

Another problem concerns the interviews made in hospitals. It is natural that the journalists rushed to interview the survivors, and as long as their

personal impressions and story was shown, the subject was clear. But journalistic interviews tried to get an explanation of what had really happened from people who were in deep shock and not used to giving interviews. Here rises the problem of a journalist's professional ethics - what can be asked of a person in such a condition, and how should one comment on these answers and use them.

An unexpected feeling found in the analysis was happiness - sheer happiness at having some relative survive the accident and get back home. The TV pictures showed that happiness was primarily on the side of relatives; the homecomers were in a bit different condition.

It is quite difficult to analyse a picture that serves to support the text, especially on the point regarding emotions shown on the screen. Consequently, in the following we will focus only on the general parameters of coincidence of the text and picture: a person in the picture, the theme of the picture - the theme of the text.

The picture mostly showed various people talking or acting, starting with those who had been rescued and ending with the victims of the catastrophe prior to the fatal accident. In the first place was the journalist (among them a TV-announcer), the picture also showed those rescued, their relatives, the rescue workers, the Investigation Committee and different experts.

The most frequent objects featured were:

1. a person in the picture (582 times);
2. a press conference (248);
3. the ship (167);
4. actions out at the sea (rescue and search work, the sea) (155);
5. charts and models of the accident, search and rescue work (111);
6. action in the harbour, airport and hospital (101);
7. different ceremonies (41).

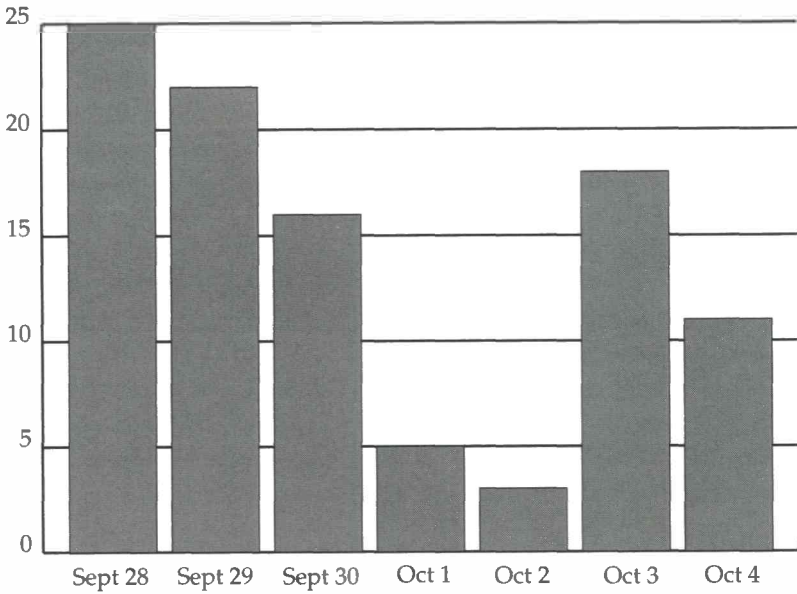
ETV's programmes during the first week

The amount of information about the catastrophe on ETV was the biggest during the first two days. Distribution of the attention to the disaster even during the first week declined quite quickly (See Figure 6). The first two days of October being Saturday and Sunday, there was less information about the disaster.

The TV-coverage of the catastrophe during the first week was dominated by the description of the accident and official responses to it from the authorities and the shipping company, Estline. The personal aspects of the tragedy were not at the forefront (See Figure 7 and Table 5).

The problems of what caused the accident and who could possibly be held responsible were not discussed in the first days after the catastrophe. These topics were first raised on 3 October at the press conference given by the ship-owners and members of the crew.

Figure 6. Distribution of disaster-related items in the TV-programmes on the first week (%)



A large part of the information given at the above press conference and broadcast on the first three days following the catastrophe concentrated on the details of the accident itself.

Let us now have a closer look at the topics which got over 2000 seconds' coverage.

The official investigation of the accident (5150 seconds)

The greatest number of references was made to the official investigation of the accident in general. A lot of attention was paid to the search for and examination of the wreck. Accounts of the organization and work of the Joint Accident Investigation Commission were reported relatively often, including the issue of the Commission Chairman's competence. When different institutions joined the Commission's investigation efforts, light was thrown upon their duties and responsibilities.

The frequent occurrence of this category was mostly due to the role played by the press conferences of the Commission which were broadcast in full. Also, news material from the press conferences was repeated in the news programme the same evening. One has to admit that the density of information of these press conferences was relatively low. Visually, only the conference situation was shown, there was no journalistic analysis of the problems and themes, nor were comments presented in the news programmes. The share of this thematic category suddenly swelled on the third day, dropping on the fifth day (Sunday) to the level of the first day, and then starting to

Table 5. Topics in the programmes of ETV 28 September - 4 October.

<i>Topic (the main theme of the broadcast)</i>	<i>broadcasting time (seconds)</i>	<i>procent of the broadcast time</i>
official investigation of the accident	5150	18
safety of ferries	2979	10
causes of the accident	2709	9
information service, public opinion	2555	9
accident itself	227	8
cooperation regarding the disaster	2041	7
rescue operations	1642	6
economic consequences of the catastrophe	1576	6
victims of the accident	1507	5
death and grief	1466	5
background themes	1295	5
psychological problems	1279	4
impact on society	848	3
crisis work	539	2
other themes	291	1
the fate of the wreck	231	1
ethical problems	214	1
weather, the elements	171	1
victims, relatives	114	0,4
Total	28878	100

diminish. The subtheme "search for and examination of the wreck" deserves to be noted separately as there was a lot of interest in this theme already on the first day and it was presented together with supplementary picture material (schemes and graphs).

Safety of ferries (2979 seconds)

The following subtopics like 'general themes concerning safety', 'safety of the design', 'rescue equipment and facilities available for the passengers' and 'training and organisation of the crew' were represented almost equally. All these aspects of safety at sea were under discussion at the press conference given by the shipping company, and later in the special programme

Katastroofi kaja (Echo of the Disaster) in which many experts and a surviving member of the crew, Margus Treu, participated.

Causes of the accident (2709 seconds)

Relatively much attention was paid to the technical and structural shortcomings, a bit less considered the possibility of terrorism; much less discussed were inadequacies of the international standards and safety control, whereas mistakes made by the owners and errors made by the crew were handled relatively seldom. The prevalent attitude of the people appearing in TV programmes during the first week was that the accident was unbelievable and inexplicable and that its causes were unknown.

Information and public relations (2555 seconds)

The leading theme under this category was the availability and reliability of the lists of passengers. It was presented primarily by the lists themselves but also by discussions on the subject of why they were incomplete. Other information-related themes included the work of the information centres, phone numbers of the crisis centres, etc. The question about how the officials dispensed information to the media was raised at the press conferences.

The accident itself (2271 seconds)

Under this category one can mostly find descriptions of the details of the accident by the witnesses or rescue workers. Only one-third of the items discussed or showed the conduct of the crew or of the passengers.

Cooperation (2041 seconds)

Information about the cooperation between different organizations and other official agencies involved in the accident and rescue operations was given mainly at the press conferences; little was said about the international cooperation of rescue services.

Due to the important role of the press conferences and preferences given by TV to official information, the distribution of air time between the different aspects of the disaster was strongly in favour of the institutional and societal aspects of the event. We summarized the time given to

- a) the official investigation, coordination and cooperation, economic and societal influence of the disaster and problems of the information service (institutional aspects);
- b) information about the rescue work, the accident itself and its causes, safety of the ferries (disaster and safety aspects);
- c) personal tragedies, victims and their relatives, crisis work, ethical and psychological problems relating to death and grief (human aspects) and
- d) all other background themes, like weather etc. (see Figure 6).

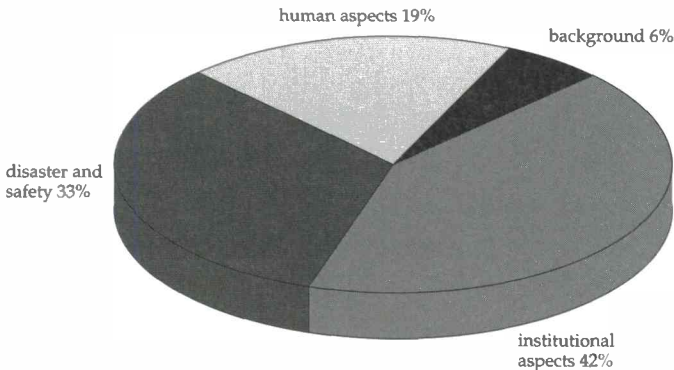
This picture shows clearly that Estonian TV overwhelmingly maintained an institutional relationship with the audience, paying considerably more attention to the institutional than to the human aspects of the disaster.

The actors on the screen

Looking at the presentation of the accident on the TV-screen (See Table 6), it seems to be rather distanced from the emotional reactions of those who had been through the ordeal, the dead, and relatives of both. The face of the crisis is not so much the face of the suffering human being as the neutral mask of the TV-announcer or the worried expression of the shipping company bosses or government officials.

In the verbal part of the TV-programmes attention was predominantly directed towards the representatives of the shipping company, the members of the Commission and the surviving members of the crew.

Figure 7. Types of the disaster-related content in the TV-broadcasts during the first week



Among the 259 actors who were sources of information, journalists, the representatives of the shipping company, and members of the investigation commission shared almost equal importance. The active role of the shipping company Estline in giving information was not sufficiently balanced by other viewpoints. Especially the role of experts, but also of the passengers as sources of information, should be more important 76% of the sources were Estonian nationals, 10% were Swedes, and 7% Finns. 2% of the sources were of mixed origin.

Errors in TV coverage

In a situation of crisis people are extremely sensitive to hints or pictures which may feed their fantasies, fears or hopes. For all such intimations which in a newspaper text would be left unnoticed, the TV-screen works as a magnifying glass. One has to admit that this hypersensitivity of the

Table 6. Actors in the TV-broadcasts related to the disaster (28 September - 4 October) (% of the observed broadcasts)

<i>Type of actor</i>	<i>in picture</i>	<i>in text</i>	<i>referred as a source</i>
journalist, TV announcer	50	15	22
representative of the shipping company passengers and crew	26	18	22
members of Estonia member of the Investigation Commission	20	14	20
officials, administrators, authorities	16	9	13
politicians	10	8	4
rescue team	4	5	3
relatives	2	1	2
experts	2	4	4
other persons (doctors, clergy, police, trade unions)	13	14	4

TV-audience was not considered carefully enough by the TV-journalists who interviewed state officials, experts or survivors.

On the first day(s) some unverified versions, estimates as well as myths, were launched by ETV which led the audience to imagine absolutely wrong things. We can point them out as follows:

1. In the very first messages the accident was believed to have been caused by the shifting cargo, especially by the loose vehicles on the car deck. "The cars moved to one side of the deck and tilted the ship" – this possible course of the accident was illustrated with three computerdesigned schemes (contrived by Swedish TV) which were shown in the first news report and in several subsequent programmes. To give a better idea, two videos were additionally used: cars driving onto the car deck and the car deck of the Estonia with stationary cars. The reason for the movement of the cargo could only be poor lashing. Hence, an indirect accusation that work had not been done properly or, in other words, the crew had been negligent. This version was further supported by an interview with a survivor, crew member Hendrik Sillaste. To the reporter's question about whether the cars had started to move he replied: "Not immediately."

Everybody could get the impression that the cars had in fact begun to move, although Sillaste never said he had seen the cargo in motion. Afterwards, in the same interview it turned out that what Sillaste had actually seen was water coming through an open bow ramp. A possible conclusion automatically drawn from this could be that the crew had not locked the bow port properly.

2. The President said in his TV speech at 1000 (the first TV news report) that he could not get any contact with the State Crisis Commission at night, so he had formed a new commission composed of the employees of his office. Whether forming a new commission meant the elimination of the old one was not pointed out clearly. In two days some more crisis commissions were formed: one headed by Minister of the Interior, Heiki Arike, another by Minister for Transport and Communications, Andi Meister; and finally the Joint Accident Investigation Commission was established with Andi Meister as Chairman. Also, several crisis centres and foundations were established. Their functions and objectives were not disclosed sufficiently in the first 2-3 days. All this leaves an impression that there was no institutional coordination, instead, a lot of overlapping and insufficient fulfilment of certain tasks and functions occurred.

3. Expressing gratitude to the Finnish Rescue Service, the President mentioned the incapability of the Estonian state to cope in such situations. Allusions to the weak inadequately equipped Estonian Rescue Service gave every reason to feel helpless and inferior, which could not be mended later by journalists in their interviews or reportage.

4. Mr. Johannes Johanson, Executive Director of Estline, said in his first day's interview that, owing to its stability, a ship like the Estonia should have been unsinkable. He continued elaborating on the future plans of the company - to use another ship of the same kind on the line. This interview boosted the version of cynical and profit-greedy owners who in order to get more profit were ready to send technically faulty ships out to sea, who would neglect safety rules and, instead of calling into question their capability as an organiser of ferry traffic, made plans for the future.

5. The point earning most incisive criticism, when speaking about the shipping company and shipowners, was the problem with the passenger lists. It appeared that the shipping company did not have a full list of the passengers, and compiling the list was not an easy job. As the most important thing was to find out who actually was aboard, numerous lists were drawn up by several agencies including TV and

radio stations. On the first day, a list of surviving Estonians was spread in which Captain Avo Piht, crew member Kalev Vahtras, and the twin-sister dancers Veides were mentioned. Later, these names drifted into the list of casualties. Especially much attention was paid to Avo Piht, whom Andi Meister on the screen had called the most important source of information, the person who might help throw light on what caused the fatal accident. Psychologically it is understandable that the first thesis tends to linger in mind, and Andi Meister's later statement, "We have to accept the sad possibility of Captain Piht's death", did not sound convincing to many people any more.

6. In the first days, a theory of a possible "air pocket", which could keep some people alive in the depth of 80 metres, circulated. This idea was supported by the news spread by ITAR-TASS that Russia was ready to send divers to help bring out the survivors. On the night of 29 September a special programme of *Aktuaalne Kaamera* was aired which was meant to refute the theory. An expert explained with the help of charts how this "air cushion" is formed. The programme had ambiguous influences. Why? At the beginning of the programme the journalist said that according to information from ITAR-TASS from St. Petersburg, there may still be some people alive in the wreck. In what followed a contrary version was presented by an expert based on the following arguments:

- *no air cushion can be formed in the cabins because they are not hermetical;*
- *hypothermia kills a person in the water at +4°C very quickly;*
- *should someone still be surviving inside the ship thanks to some kind of a miracle, the differences of pressure and lack of appropriate technical equipment would make it impossible to bring him/her onto the surface unharmed.*

The programme was designed to give a sober and clear explanation why there was no reason to trust the propaganda of the neighbouring country and to cherish illusions. Unfortunately, several mistakes were made: although the impossibility of survival could be proved, the words "if there is still anybody alive" together with the description of the cold and darkness reigning in the wreck fed the fantasy of the audience, leading their agonizing thoughts to the horror of the last moments of the victims and inevitably prompting the painful question: What if now, 24 hours later, he/she is still alive there? The news of ITAR-TASS was later refuted by a Russian maritime expert who reported that Russia, nor any other country, did not have the necessary equipment for undertaking such an undertaking. The same topic was also discussed at the first press conference, where the

Director of the Estonian National Maritime Board, Mr. Kalle Pedak, explained it. Unfortunately, this explanation was far from perfect and fell somewhat out of the context of that press conference.

7. ETV broadcast several press conferences after the catastrophe. There maritime experts and officials gave explanations. In the first days the information contained the rescue work, investigation of the accident, and aid to the victims. A press conference is organized to give information to the journalists. However, this information needs to be processed before it becomes understandable to the general public. Another problem is how much such raw information from the press conference gave to the audience. At the first press conferences the speakers were nervous and tried to protect their firm. The questions the journalists asked carried an accusing undertone. The analysis and investigation of the causes of the accident were still in progress.

The press conference of the shipowners and the crew given among the others by the Estonia's surviving third engineer Margus Treu, the First Mate Roland Lemendik and ex-Captain Ehrlich. They described the working routine of the crew aboard and how the steering system of the ferry functioned. The information was presented objectively and logically, but the emotions of the first days had already released and spread unofficial versions, which were hard to change.

The TV image of Estonia

In the evening of 5 October, Estonian TV aired the programme *Katastroofi kaja* (Echo of the Disaster) in which the damage inflicted by the media upon the Estonian Republic's reputation following the accident was under scrutiny. In some sense it is natural that in those trying days nobody took any particular effort to create a certain image. More was thought about the victims of the catastrophe. It was a state of deep shock, not only for the general public but also for the journalists. On the first days after the disaster, the ETV news department believed it would be necessary to air as much information as possible to the audience regarding the surviving Estonians and directions about where to get material and psychological help.

The image of Estonia developed without any interference on the part of Estonians. Even the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Press Service did not give any instructions or supplementary materials to the journalists in order to prevent the spread of hostile or otherwise negative attitudes towards Estonia in connection with the Estonia ferry disaster.

COVERAGE IN THE PRESS

Newspapers under review

The present content analysis was carried out on 16 newspapers in the period from 28 September to 31 December, 1994.

The study comprised all the Estonian national dailies, of which the newspaper Post was classified as belonging to the yellow press. Of the two Russian-language national dailies we studied only one, viz. the newspaper Estoniya. The popular press was represented by two weeklies published in Tartu - Liivimaa Kroonika (Livonian Chronicle) and the paper Liivimaa Kuller (Livonian Courier).

Five local papers were included in the content analysis - Õhtuleht (an evening paper in Tallinn) as the only full-capacity local daily; Pärnu Postimees (The Postman of Pärnu) representing a major provincial newspaper; Meie Maa (Our Country) from the island of Saaremaa, representing the coastal area newspapers; Võru Teataja (Võru Gazette) representing the area worst hit by the disaster (the delegation of Võru Municipality was on board the ferry); and Sakala, representing areas relatively less affected by the disaster (on board were only four persons from Viljandi County). The Estonian weeklies under review were the newspaper Eesti Ekspress, which has the widest readership, and the political-cultural weekly Eesti Aeg (Estonian Times).

Table 7 gives the general characteristics of the papers under review and their circulation and readership in November 1994 based on the data obtained from the major Estonian media analyzing firms - the Baltic Media Facts and the Saar Poll (Baltic Media Book 1995; Baltic '95 Media Book Estonia).

Number of articles and frequency

In the period between 28 September and 31 December 1994, 1,485 articles dealing with the Estonia catastrophe appeared in the 16 reviewed papers. Of these, 918 were written between 28 September and 16 October (see Tables 8 and 9, and also Tables 19 and 20 in Appendix I.)

Data presented in Tables 9 and 10 show that regardless of the differences between the Estonian, Finnish, and Swedish press (in Estonia we have neither seven-day dailies nor commercial evening papers; our local papers are small and mostly appear three times a week, etc.), similar tendencies could be observed in the coverage of the events. The first two days after the shipwreck, in Estonia as well as in Finland and Sweden, about one-fifth of all the disaster-related articles of the period from 28 September to 10 October were published, and during the first five days following the disaster (28 September to 2 October) about half of the total appeared. The number of articles per newspaper was much bigger in Finland and Sweden than in Estonia

Table 7. Main characteristics of the newspapers reviewed

	<i>ISSUE s per week</i>	<i>Format</i>	<i>Volume (pages)</i>	<i>Circulation in Nov. 1994 (in thousands)</i>	<i>Number of readers in Nov. 1994 (in thousands)</i>	<i>Characteristics of readership</i>
<i>National dailies</i>						
Rahva Hääl (People's Voice)	6*	A2	8-12	24	120	
Eesti Sõnumid (Estonian News)	6*	A2	8-12	35	188	Tallinn, Northern Estonia older people
Päevaleht (Daily)	6*	A3	16-24	30	180	Tallinn, Northern Estonia
Hommikuleht (Morning Paper)	6*	A3	24	15	87	younger people
Postimees (Postman)	6*	A3	24-40	52	246	Tartu, Southern Estonia
Estoniya (Estonia)	5	A2	4-8	18	105	non-Estonians
<i>Yellow pappers</i>						
Post	6*	A2	4	11	82	younger people
Liivimaa Kroonika (Livonian Chronicle)	1	A3	24	35	185	younger people
Liivimaa Kuller (Livonian Curier)	1	A3	24	27	134	younger people
<i>Local papers</i>						
Õhtuleht (Evening Paper)	6*	A3	16-24	20	96	Tallin
Võru Teataja (Võru Gazette)	3	A3	8	8	25	Võru country
Sakala	3	A3	8	14	38	Viljandi country
Pärnu Postimees (Pärnu Postman)	5	A3	8-12	20	59	Pärnu country
Meie Maa (Our Country)	4	A3	8	7	22	Saaremaa
<i>Weeklies</i>						
Eesti Ekspress (Estonian Express)	1	A3	84-96	53	259	younger people
Eesti Aeg (Estonian Time)	1	A3	24	15	40	

* no Sunday edition

Table 8. Number and volume of disaster-related items during different periods of reviewing

	<i>Number of issues reviewed</i>	<i>Number of items</i>	<i>Average number of items per one issue</i>	<i>Total volume of items (cm²)</i>	<i>Average volume per one issue (cm²)</i>	<i>Average volume of one item (cm²)</i>
<i>Sept 28 – Oct 16</i>						
dailies	88	592	6.7	155,270	1,764	262
yellows	21	123	5.9	27,377	1,304	223
locals	56	155	2.8	26,768	478	173
weeklies	5	48	9.6	84,603	16,921	1,763
all told	170	918	5.4	294,018	1,730	320
<i>Oct 17 – Dec 31</i>						
dailies	385	400	1.0	89,790	233	224
yellows	88	59	0.7	19,839	225	336
locals	231	74	0.3	12,609	55	170
weeklies	22	34	1.5	45,723	2,078	1,345
all told	726	567	0.8	167,961	231	296
<i>Sept 28– Dec 31</i>						
dailies	473	992	2.1	245,060	518	247
yellows	109	182	1.7	47,216	433	259
locals	287	229	0.8	39,377	137	172
weeklies	27	82	3.0	130,326	4,826	1,589
all told	896	1,485	1.7	461,979	516	311

(see Table 10). During the second week after the disaster (from 3 to 9 October), in Estonia fewer articles were printed in any given newspaper (in one issue on the day of publishing), the number of disaster-related articles having declined to half as many as immediately after the disaster.

The average number of articles per day between 28 September and 2 October was 11.2, and 5.7 between 3 and 9 October. A week later the attention of the press was even more on the wane, the process being considerably faster in Estonia than in Finland and Sweden (the number of articles was less than a third of that in the previous week; whereas in Sweden and Finland it was roughly half of the earlier volume - see Table 9). That from the third week following the disaster on attention was fading away is shown by the fact that the articles had more frequently ceased being front-page news, as they were neither illustrated by pictures nor having glamorous headlines. Nevertheless, the disaster got constant coverage in the Estonian press almost up to the end of the year (see Figure 8). About half of the articles were still front-page news, illustrated by pictures and/or having glamorous headlines.

Figure 8. Number of disaster-related materials in all th newspapers.

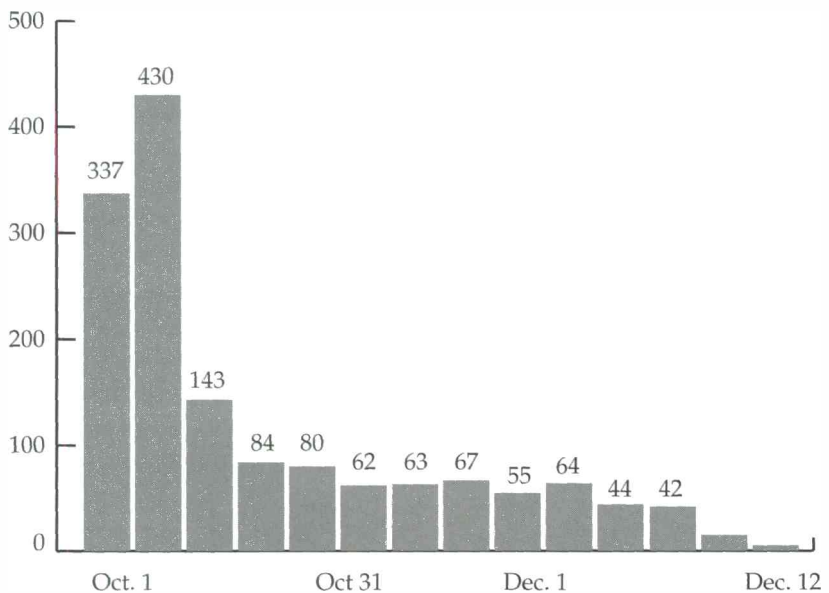


Figure 9. Average number of disaster-related materials per issue

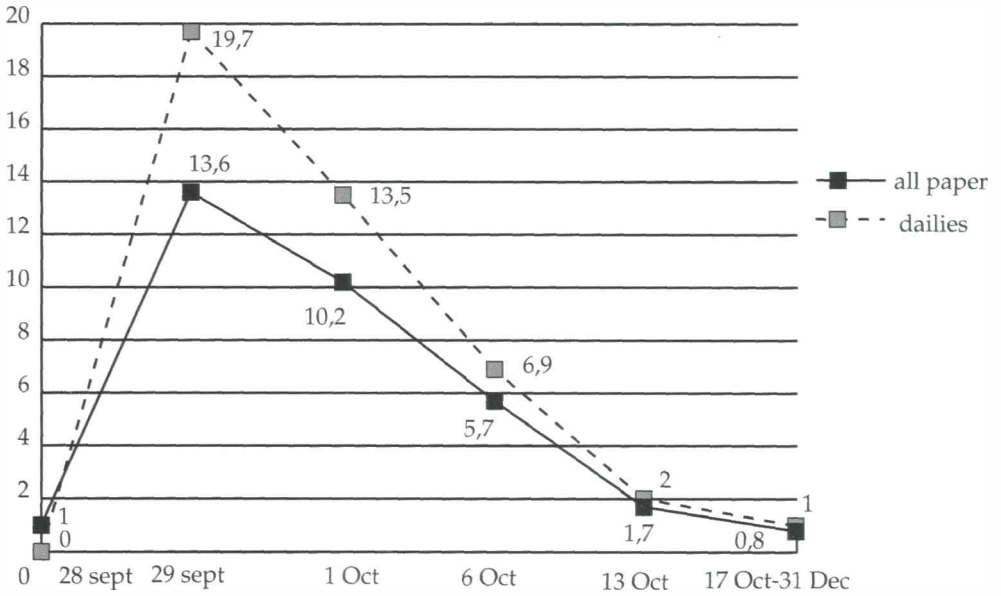


Figure 10. Average volume of disaster-related materials per issue (cm²)

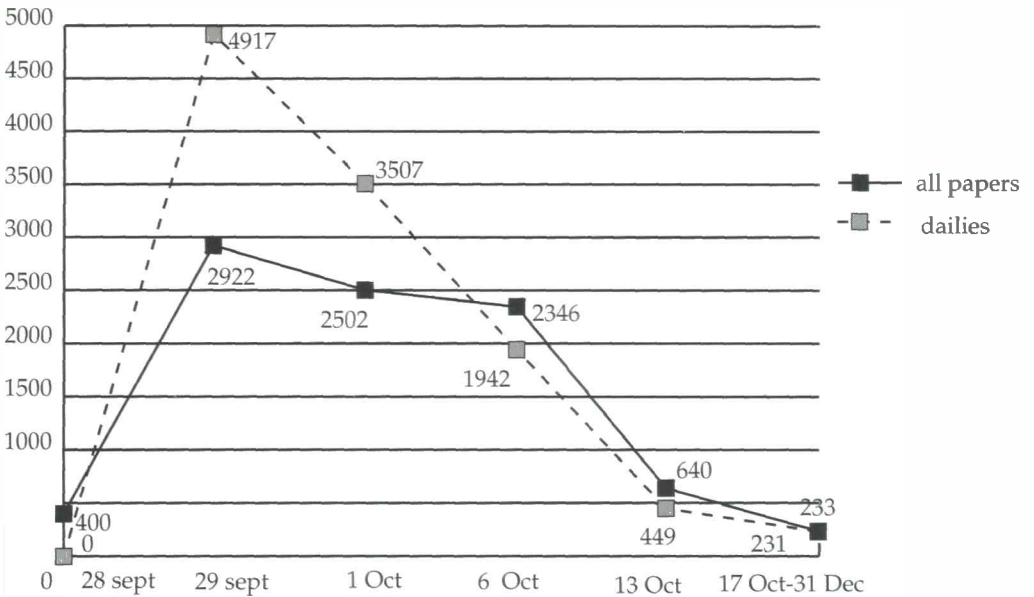


Table 9. Disaster-related items in Estonian, Finnish and Swedish newspapers (number and % of all items during the time specified)

	<i>All pappers under review</i>					
	<i>Estonian</i>		<i>Finnish</i>		<i>Swedish</i>	
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Sept 28–29	192	21	227	21	234	18
Sept 28–Oct 2	427	47	499	46	659	50
Oct 3–Oct 10	377	41	390	36	468	35
Oct 10–Oct 16	114	12	205	19	202	15
Sept 28–Oct 16	918	100	1094	100	1329	100

On the basis of the size of the articles, the general tendencies are basically the same, although not without any differences, e.g. in terms of the size of the articles, waning attention in the period between 3 and 9 October is not so remarkable as that in the period 28 September to 2 October. However, it is more clearly revealed when we consider the number of articles (cf. Tables 8 and 10, Figures 9 and 10). It is largely due to the fact that within the period 3–10 October, many long disaster-related articles were published in the weeklies. At the same time, in the period under discussion, the size of the articles published in the dailies diminished more slowly than their number, as many long analytical articles made their appearance. In the following week, however, (10 to 16 October) the size diminished more quickly than the number, the respective figures being approximately fourfold for the size and threefold for the number. The average size of an article dealing with the disaster remained stable during the whole period under review, varying, for example, in case of the dailies from 224 to 337 cm². Naturally, the weeklies constituted an exception, being more similar to journals with their seven to ten times longer articles (see Table 20 in Appendix I).

Comparing the average size of an article with the data from Sweden, it appears that in Sweden the articles were longer, especially in provincial papers and the yellow press. The average length in the Estonian dailies and in the Swedish Svenska Dagbladet was much the same, 262 and 254 cm², respectively.

Table 10. Number and volume of disaster-related items in Estonian, Finnish and Swedish dailies

		<i>Number of material</i>			<i>Volume of materials</i>		
		<i>Estonia (6 dailies)</i>	<i>Finland (4 dailies)</i>	<i>Sweden (2 dailies)</i>	<i>Estonia (cm²)</i>	<i>Finland* (cm²)</i>	<i>Sweden (cm²)</i>
	number, volume	118	147	70	29 501	46 015	23 396
Sept 29	% of all materials	20	20	12	19	23	14
	average per l issue	19.7	36.8	35.0	4 917	11 504	11 698
	number, volume	162	196	179	42 087	56 948	55 581
Sept 30-	% of all materials	27	26	31	27	29	32
Oct 2	average per l issue	13.5	16.3	29.8	3 507	4 746	9 264
	number, volume	242	285	248	67 983	71 139	73 553
Oct 3-	% of all materials	41	38	42	44	37	43
Oct 9	average per l issue	6.9	10.2	17.7	1 942	2 575	5 254
	number, volume	70	116	86	15 699	21 571	19 875
Oct 10-	% of all materials	12	16	15	10	11	
Oct 16	average per l issue	2.0	4.1	6.1	449	769	1 420
	number, volume	592	744	586	155 270	196 661	172 405
Sept 29-	% of all materials	100	100	100	100	100	100
Oct 16	average per l issue	6.7	10.3	16.3	1 764	2 730	4 809

* 1 column centimeter = 4.2 cm²

Topics in the coverage

The most widely used topics throughout the whole period in all the newspapers under review were the following (main or subordinate) themes:

1. Victims - occurred in 30% of the articles
2. Official investigation - 27%
3. Economic consequences of the disaster -22%
4. Causes of the disaster - 22%
5. Background topics - 22%
6. Grief, death - 21 %

Some of these topics were in the centre of attention throughout all the three months under discussion - e.g., the victims, causes, background themes, some were considered nearly equally important - e.g., the official investigation, economic consequences of the disaster, some receded for a time, only to be brought into focus again by certain events and ceremonies and end-of-the-year reflections - such as, for instance, death and grief.

Compared to the Finnish and the Swedish press, the Estonian press had

Table 11. Most common focus of the disaster-related items in Estonian, Finnish and Swedish newspapers between 28 Sept. and 16 Oct. 1994 (rank of main or essential topic):

	<i>Estonia</i>	<i>Finland</i>	<i>Sweden</i>
Psychological problems, grief, death	1*	3*	1
Victims	2	2	2
Official investigation	3	6	9
Economic consequences of the disaster	4	10	6
Causes of the disaster	5	7	8
Background topics	6	4	7
Official information work	7	13	15
The disaster itself	8	8	4
Safety of ferries	9	1	2
Rescue operations	10	5	5
Fate of the wreck, salvage of the ship and bodies	15	9	10

* To compare it with Swedish data, we have integrated in this Table two types of analysis, which in other Tables have been analysed separately: psychological problems together with crisis help, and grief, death, ceremonies.

more different than similar features concerning the topics in the centre of attention. The common feature shared by the newspapers of the three countries concerned was the predominance of emotions relating to the victims, grief, and death, and psychological problems. As for the other topics, there were fundamental differences in the attention of journalism (see Table 11).

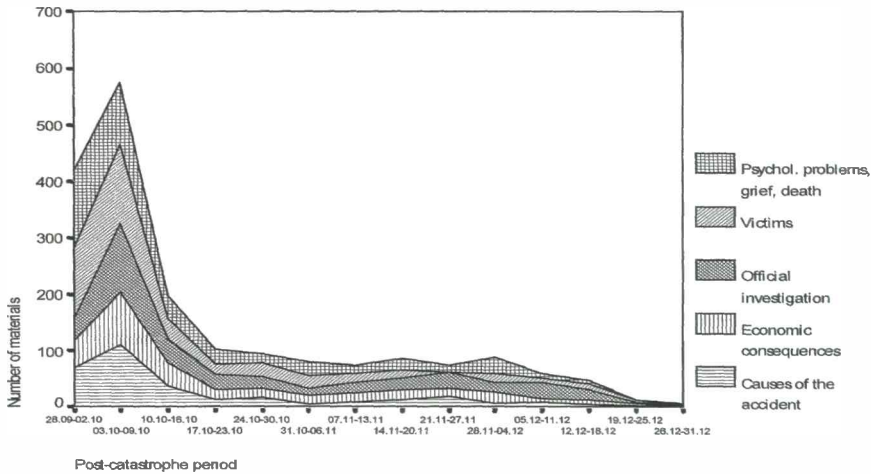
In the Estonian press the course of the official investigation of the disaster remained in the centre of attention. In the period between 17 October and 31 December, it proved to be the topic most often dealt with (see Figure 11 and Table 24 in Appendix I).

Regarding the great interest the Estonian public had in it, we must note a kind of defensive, repudiating attitude, which was generally characteristic of the treatment of the disaster in Estonia.

The topic of the safety of ferry boats emerged in Sweden and Finland but never reached an equal position in Estonia. Apparently, the Estonians were well aware of the fact that the safety of ferry traffic was beyond their control; they could not opt for different ferry boats or choose other vessels. The traffic was, first of all, dependent on the decisions of their wealthy neighbours. For the same reason, Estonia was not very actively involved in the debate over salvage of the ferry boat, and her part in the rescue operations was comparatively small. Thus, coverage of these topics in the Estonian

press was accordingly moderate compared with Finland and Sweden. On the other hand, in the Estonian press there was a lot of talk about the shortcomings in the spread of official information. The distribution of information to journalists and those involved was a more serious problem in Estonia than in Finland or Sweden.

Figure 11. Main or other essential topic of the materials (number of materials, all newspapers under review).



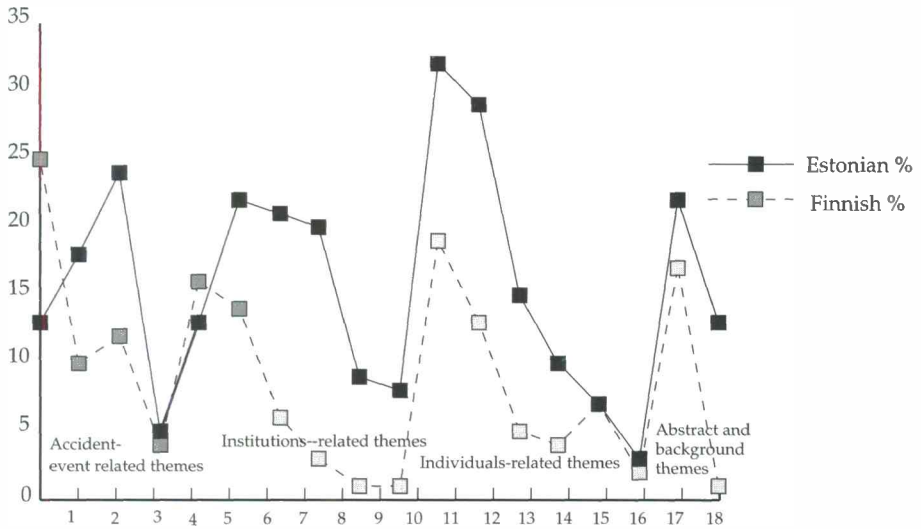
But despite these differences, the general topic structure of the press coverage in Estonia and Finland was quite similar (see Figure 12).

Studying the topicality of various themes during different post-catastrophe periods, we notice that the attention gradually concentrated more and more on the official investigation of the disaster and on the economic consequences. However, the victims, grief, psychological problems and emergency help remained widely used themes right up to the end of the year.

As mentioned above, the material analyzed comprised both main and subsidiary themes. When taking into account only the main topic, i.e. only one theme per article, the results largely agree with the material given above (see Table 23 in Appendix I).

Comparing various types of newspapers (see Figure 13, Table 12, and table 23 in Appendix I), we find that background themes, rescue operations, religious and mystical experiences, the disaster itself and, to a lesser degree, its official investigation were more often dealt with in the yellow press than in the national dailies. Grief, death, psychological problems and crisis help are especially prominent in the provincial papers. As journalists have pointed out in their later interviews, strong emotions were primarily reflected in the provincial papers. Two weeklies under review were more analytical than

Figure 12. Types of the catastrophe-related content in the Estonian and Finnish press (28.09-16.10)



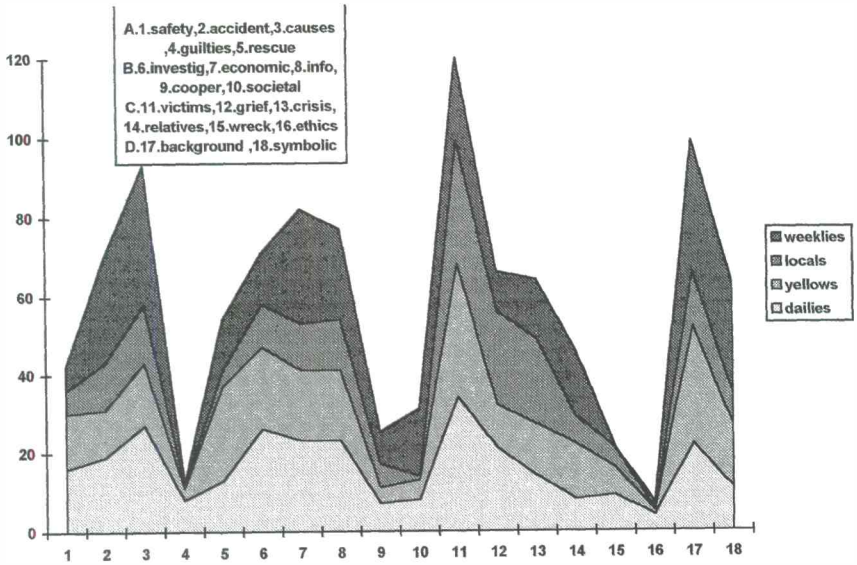
others, paying, on the one hand, special attention to the circumstances and causes of the disaster, to the economic and social consequences and background themes and, on the other hand, featuring religious and mystical experiences connected with death.

Looking at the content profiles of the different types of newspapers (Figure 13), the subsidiary character of the roles played during the crisis by the different types of newspapers could be clearly observed. We grouped all topics in four types: A. accident-as-event topics; B. institution-related; C. individual -related and D. abstract themes. The provincial papers are distinguished by their lower concentration on the accident-as-event themes and abstract background themes, and a greater emphasis on the personal aspects of the catastrophe, whereas the content of the weeklies is characterized by an accent on symbolic and analytical interpretations of the accident; it is saturated with abstract themes and looking for causalities. The profiles of the 'serious' dailies and yellow press are quite similar, the latter being more interested in victims and symbolic interpretations, the former in the institutional aspects of the events. The different types of papers are characterized also by their different functions during the crisis (See Figures 14 and 15 in Appendix 1).

Table 12. Coverage of the disaster in different newspapers by topics between Sept 28 and Oct 16 (main or other essential topic, % of items)

	<i>All papers</i>		<i>Dailies</i>		<i>Yellows</i>		<i>Local</i>		<i>Weeklies</i>	
	%	rank	%	rank	%	rank	%	rank	%	rank
Victims	32	1.	34	1.	34	1.	31	1.	21	6.
Grief, death	29	2.	21	7.	11	12.	24	2.	10	14.
Causes of the accident	24	3.	27	2.	16	7.	15	4.	35	1.
Official investigation	22	4.	26	3.	21	4.	11	8.-9.	13	11.-13.
Background themes	22	5.	22	6.	30	2.	11	8.-9.	33	2.
Economic consequences	21	6.	23	4.	18	5.-6.	12	6.-7.	29	3.
Information service	20	7.	23	5.	18	5.-6.	13	5.	23	5.
The accident itself	18	8.	19	8.	12	11.	12	6.-7.	27	4.
Psychological problems, crisis help	15	9.	14	10.	13	10.	22	3.	15	9.-10.
Safety of ferries	13	10.	16	9.	14	8.-9.	6	12.-13.	6	16.
Rescue operations	13	11.	13	11.	24	3.	4	15.	13	11.-13.
Relatives	10	12.	8	14.	14	8.-9.	7	10.-11.	17	7.-8.
Symbolic meaning of the catastrophe	9	13.	9	12.-13.	6	16.	7	10.-11.	15	9.-10.
Cooperation between countries	9	14.	7	17.	4	18.	6	12.-13.	8	15.
Impact of the accident on society	8	15.	8	15.	5	17.	1	17.-19	17	7.-8.
Fate of the wreck	7	16.	9	12.-13.	7	14.-15.	5	14.	-	
Guilt or those responsible	5	17.	8	16.	3	19.	1	17.-19.	-	
The elements, the weather	4	18.	5	18.	7	14.-15.	3	16.	-	
Religious and mystical experiences	4	19.	2	20.	10	13.	1	17.-19.	13	11.-13.
Ethical problems	3	20.	4	19.	1	20.	-		2	17.

Figure 13. Content profiles in the different types of Estonian papers.



Sources and genres

As seen in Table 13, domestic writers and sources dominated in the newspapers.

Materials received from foreign sources were used mostly after alterations and supplements (12 % of all the articles in the dailies), articles compiled directly and only on the basis of foreign news agency or newspaper copy formed about 4% of the whole catastrophe-related material. It is interesting to note that BNS, a news agency based on private capital, was more efficient in the situation of crisis than the state-owned agency, ETA. Materials received from BNS found three or four times more intensive use in the newspapers (excluding the yellow press, which often has a cheaper, long-term contract with ETA). As for the genres, news stories dominated in all types of newspapers, although to a lesser degree in the weeklies, where background articles, commentaries and features occupied an important place (see Table14).

Table 13. Types of sources in different newspapers (% of all items)

	<i>Dailies</i>	<i>Yellows</i>	<i>Locals</i>	<i>Weeklies</i>
Own authour, original	37	59	42	89
Estonian newsagency BNS (private)	27	14	25	4
Estonian newsagency ETA (state-owned)	7	4	11	-
Foreign agency	1	-	4	-
Other foreign channel	2	9	1	5
BNS or ETA + foreign channel	12	4	4	3
Own author + news agency or foreign channel	9	4	11	-
Official announcement	3	1	3	-
Other source	1	2	1	-
Total	100	100	100	100

One peculiarity of the Estonian press as compared to the Swedish and Finnish press is a comparatively small significance of letters-to-the-editor - concerning materials about the disaster in the Estonian dailies and the yellow press, only 1 %, compared to 6% for the Finnish and the Swedish.

**Table 14
Type of the materials (% of items)**

	<i>Sept 28- Oct 16</i>					<i>Oct 17- Dec 31</i>				
	<i>On average</i>	<i>Dailies</i>	<i>Yellow papers</i>	<i>Local papers</i>	<i>Week lies</i>	<i>On average</i>	<i>Dailies</i>	<i>Yellow papers</i>	<i>Local papers</i>	<i>Week-lies</i>
Editorial/leader	3	3	4	1	5	1	-	3	-	6
News	60	61	69	54	38	73	80	41	77	34
Background article	8	8	11	3	19	8	5	19	1	28
Feature	5	5	7	1	10	5	4	12	8	3
Interview	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	7	3	3
Commentary	5	4	-	8	11	4	3	7	7	6
Letter to the editor	1	1	1	-	5	2	1	3	3	13
Practical information	8	6	1	20	4	2	3	2	-	3
Other	7	8	4	10	10	2	2	6	1	4
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Actors as sources of information

When analyzing the content of the press, all actors were divided into two categories: those who were referred to or quoted as having said something, having given information or having expressed opinions, and those who were only mentioned as subjects of some events or actions. On the other hand, all actors were characterized by their national and social qualifications. (See Figures 16 and 17 in Appendix I). This allows us to compare contributions made by actors from different social categories and different nationalities when they acted as sources of information (see Tables 15, 16, 17).

We distinguished between

- a) those who were directly involved in the accident and rescue operations (victims, eyewitnesses),
- b) those who represented the interests of others (lawyers, insurance organizations),
- c) politicians,
- d) interested parties (shipping company, owners),
- e) neutral experts and commentators (specialists, journalists, clerks),
- f) the general public.

Whereas individuals who suffered through the accident may be expected to be mostly interested in the truth to be disclosed about the causes and about those who were responsible for the shipwreck, and the experts and

Table 15
Social categories of the actors as sources to different topics

Topic	social categories of the sources %							
	<i>all sources</i>	victims others, directly involved	officials	company	experts	journalists	organizations	insurance
	<i>n</i>							
accident itself	104	49	22	14	6	9	-	-
rescue	97	48	33	7	8	1	1	-
causes	205	22	21	24	15	12	2	1
information	76	7	43	26	-	20	1	-
psychological	75	4	40	1	20	8	7	3
economical	154	3	16	38	2	5	6	27
safety	68	4	32	37	9	15	-	-
investigation	327	6	67	8	7	10	1	1
background	53	15	27	13	19	13	2	2
victims	202	43	25	5	3	7	4	1
death, grief	152	3	51	5	5	3	4	1
wreck	85	8	59	12	8	9	-	-

commentators are expected to contribute to the fulfilment of these claims for truth, the other side - officials, shipping company, lawyers, organizations may be expected to represent their specific interests in constructing the picture of the disaster.

Looking at the figures in Tables 15 and 16, we can assume that the Estonian media were strongly dominated by official viewpoints. At the same time, the shipping company was also rather active in distributing their opinions: the representatives of the owners and the company had twice as many opportunities as the experts to express their views and even caught a bit more media attention than the Investigation Commission. Their role was also more active (and supported by media) than that of the

Table 16
Actors from different social categories as sources of information

Social categories	all actors		among sources		dif.of %
	number	%	number	%	
1.those directly involved in the event:	1556	24,5	317	17,1	-7,4
passengers	456	7,2	91	4,9	
crew	449	7,1	74	4,0	
rescue workers	472	7,4	100	5,4	
relatives	179	2,8	52	2,8	
2.officials:	2260	35,6	709	38,6	+3,0
politicians	689	10,8	173	9,4	
investigation commission	613	9,7	242	13,2	
police	121	1,9	22	1,2	
administrative staff	837	13,2	272	14,8	
3.shipping company, owners	755	11,9	262	14,2	+2,3
4.experts:	449	7,1	142	7,7	+0,6
technical, scientific	398	6,3	120	6,5	
medical,psychological	51	0,8	22	1,2	
5.journalists	374	5,9	169	9,2	+3,3
6.clerks	176	2,8	41	2,2	-0,6
7.organizations:	161	2,5	52	2,9	+0,4
trade unions	64	1,0	13	0,7	
others	97	1,5	39	2,1	
8.insurance	178	2,8	56	3,1	+0,3
lawyers	55	0,9	27	1,5	
insurance agencies	123	1,9	29	1,6	
9. the public	134	2,1	14	0,7	-1,4
10.others	309	4,2	77	4,1	-0,1
Total	6352	100	1839	100	

people who had suffered because of the accident. Looking further at how the discourse about the causes of the accident developed in the Estonian media, we can see that those topics which were directly related to the responsibility of the shipping company and owners were more seldom discussed by the Estonian actors than by Swedish and other foreign sources (see Table 17).

In general the presentation of the Estonia ferry disaster in the Estonian media seems to have been more state-centered than oriented towards the individual experiences of the human beings involved in this tragic event. The media were strongly dependent on institutional sources. The share of experts and independent commentators who would be in a position to provide a deeper analysis of the causes and impact of the accident on people, society and economy was too small in comparison with the role played by the state bureaucrats and shipping company representatives.

Looking at how different actors were presented as sources in the framework of prevailing topics, this latter tendency becomes even more evident (see Table 15).

It is quite typical for the Estonian media that even such emotionally sensitive topics as grief or the problem of what to do with the wreck were mostly tackled on the institutional level by officials, not by the people themselves. On the other hand, problems like the safety of ferries or causes of the accident and its economic consequences were predominantly considered to be within the competence of the shipping company representatives. The fact that even the problems of safety or the economic consequences of the catastrophe were so seldom discussed by experts speaks of the still relatively low professional standards of the Estonian media. The only topic in which experts' opinions were represented on a significant level is psychology, but even there the officials predominated among sources.

Looking at the national background of the actors as sources of information (see Table 17), the situation is different compared with the picture described above, where only the institutional channels of press materials, not the actual sources of information, was taken into account. Whereas among the sources of press materials the Estonian agencies and channels strongly predominated, and foreign channels being used in less than a quarter of all the materials, the actors of non-Estonian origin were referred to as the source of information or opinion in about 40% of the cases. There were certain topics which were more "closed" and presented mainly from a domestic Estonian viewpoint, like, for instance, all the victim-related themes, grief, and psychological problems.

But some more general themes, too, were presented, primarily from the national perspective, viz. information, economic consequences of the catastrophe, and even cooperation with other countries. At the same time, the role of non-Estonian actors increased when information about such problems as the impact of the catastrophe on society, rescue operations and evidence about the accident itself, safety of ferries and especially the

Table 17. National background of the actors as sources of information in the press

Topic	Nationality of actors (%)				
	<i>Estonian</i>	<i>Est- Nordic mixed</i>	<i>Swedish</i>	<i>Finnish</i>	<i>Other foreign</i>
psychological	81	–	4	5	9
relatives	81	7	–	–	3
information	80	1	8	5	5
symbolic	68	3	8	10	5
victims	67	1	11	11	7
death, grief	67	1	7	7	15
economic	66	2	16	1	13
cooperation	62	3	11	16	3
religious	60	10	5	20	5
society	54	–	21	8	17
causes	53	4	20	8	8
safety	52	2	21	6	13
rescue	50	1	10	29	3
investigation	50	6	12	26	3
background	47	–	15	13	13
accident itself	46	3	11	26	8
guilt	44	6	13	13	13
wreck	32	1	39	14	11

issue of salvage of the wreck was concerned. In Estonian media these topics were mostly discussed with reference to Swedish rather than Estonian sources.

In general, we can say that actors of other national backgrounds than Estonian played quite a significant role as sources of information and opinions in the Estonian media in connection with the presentation of some disaster-related issues.

CAUSES OF THE DISASTER

Comments in the Estonian dailies

Discourses in the content of Estonian dailies concerning the causes of the disaster (see Appendix II) can be grouped according to four main lines of argument, as follows:

1. Clarification of the most likely technical causes,

ranging from the initial suggestions about the moving cargo to the elaborate presentation of the typical weaknesses of the ro-ro ferries, and the discussion of the specific design of the bow. This discourse was neutral in character, the main sources being statements by experts and the International Investigation Commission. The main points of these arguments were repeated by all channels and the content of the discourse developed as progress was made by the Commission.

2. Accusations directed at the Estonians.

For Estonians, the most sensitive aspect in the international newsflow about the disaster consisted in statements blaming the Estonian crew of the wrecked ferry. Comments on these accusations developed into a separate discourse in Estonian papers: relevant articles drawn from the foreign press were quoted with almost masochistic thoroughness. Especially the newspaper *Rahva Hääl* (The Voice of the People) set out to amplify the accusations and suspicions coming from outside Estonia. (Pieces written by K. Muuli and J. Allik were incisively critical of the Estline and of Estonia as a whole). S. Kiin sent detailed accounts of materials published in Finnish newspapers which raised doubts about the performance of the Estonian crew. The image of being a victim suffering historical injustice and inequity, which is deeply rooted in Estonian national psychology, is a good breeding ground for developing opposition - "us" contra "them" - with regard to other nations. Now this attitude was strengthened in a dramatic situation which presupposes compassion and solidarity, especially from fellow sufferers in the disaster. The resentment of Estonians was most clearly expressed in the newspaper *Postimees* (The Postman):

It was to be expected that one reason for the disaster that would at once be mentioned was the crew and its bad performance. This possibility was indicated by both the Scandinavian officials and reporters, and the same idea was discernible in the American press. The essential difference is that in the USA they spoke and wrote about the crew of the Estonia, whereas in Scandinavia it was at once emphasized that the crew consisted of Estonian nationals. And this was not the only thing. It was immediately added that Estonians were people belonging to the post-socialist system and they should not be allowed to sail on European seas. Other European countries, to say nothing of the USA, never made such claims. (Kalmre, Fight for the Estonia, Postimees, 05 Oct. 1994)

Notwithstanding the conviction of the Estonian seamen and of other experts about the Estonian crew being as qualified as their Swedish or Finnish counterparts, the issue of the crew's guilt still continued to be the order of the day until December when the Joint Investigation Commission dismissed all such allegations.

3. Counter-accusations directed to foreigners.

The third type of disaster-related discourse in the Estonian papers could be characterized as counter-propaganda on the part of Estonians, targeting the foreign sources. In response to the Finnish and Swedish trade-unions' accusations, which were supported by the press of these countries, the Estonian press in its turn began to accuse the Swedish and Finnish seamen of being involved in unfair competition and trying to take advantage of the ferry catastrophe in order to protect the positions of Finnish and Swedish seamen on the international labour market against Estonian rivalry, thus gaining an advantage in the competition between ferry lines on the Baltic Sea. In that context the suspicions and charges at the Estonian-Swedish monopoly company Estline were turned against the Swedish partner. As a side issue, possible Russian terrorism was invented. It deserves mentioning that one of those who launched the theory of terrorists was the representative of the Estonian management of the Estline, J. Juhanson. On the first day following the disaster he told the press that a ship like the Estonia could not sink unless there was some kind of an external cause, like a collision or a bomb blast. A theory pointing at terrorism and mafia involvement made the investigation turn to eastern quarters, which are traditionally regarded by Estonians as the source of all miseries. The power of mutually

Table 18
Differences between nationalities in the discourse about the causes of the accident

Type of cause	<i>From those who mentioned this cause were...</i>						
	<i>From sources this cause was mentioned by</i>	Estonians		Swedes		Finns	Est+ Others Nordic
	<i>n=100%</i>	%	%	%	%	%	%
The elements	65	4	51	20	15	4	12
Design	357	19	50	14	19	6	10
Crew	213	12	55	17	10	2	12
Owners	40	2	43	23	13	5	18
Standards	56	3	34	36	11	5	10
Terrorism	100	5	64	15	12	2	5
Post-Soviet mentality	19	1	37	11	16	5	31
Capitalist mentality	49	3	39	20	10	6	22
<i>All sources</i>	1851	100	58	14	13	3	12

augmented distrust between Estonians and Russians is reflected in a libelous article in the Russian press, translated and published by Estonian newspapers, which refers to Estonian politicians being connected with the mafia as being responsible for the disaster. A small detail added to the commentary on the above-mentioned article clearly shows how Estonians tend to dramatize hostile attitudes towards themselves: the Russian source is termed to be "one of the few quality papers issued in Moscow", whereas it was in fact a special edition of a detective stories periodical.

4. The discourse on unfair competition.

Parallel to these writings, there comes up another discourse about the reasons for the disaster in the Estonian press. Here the main targets are the international shipping and ship-building companies, and the register services. The aim of this discourse is to discuss the role played by the shipbuilders and shipowners in allowing the Estonia to start on the voyage in such stormy weather. These arguments are mainly based on foreign sources, which are not contested this time, but, on the contrary, are referred to as being authoritative and authentic. Like in the previous one, in this discourse, too, one of the themes is unfair competition in the ferry traffic on the Baltic Sea, but additionally there appears a more general theme of greed which jeopardizes passenger's safety. What is surprising is the fact that in contrast to practices in the West the Estonian-side management of the shipping company Estline was not attacked, nor were its past, competence and practices questioned, either. Rahva Hääl's attempt to raise the problem of Estline as a monopoly was quickly pushed aside. As the work of the International Commission concentrated on principal faults in the design of the ship, the issue remaining on the agenda was why those faults had not been brought to light after earlier accidents with ferries of the same type.

Readers' opinions that were formed on the basis of this discourse are summed up by Estonian reporters in a brochure, *Mayday Estonia II*, which was published in September 1995 to observe the first sad anniversary of the disaster: The Estonia disaster could have been averted, had the shipbuilders and the shipping company not put profit before people's safety, and had the crew been more aware of the dangers of the roll-on-roll-off type ferries. In this respect the effect of the Estonia disaster could be compared to that of Chernobyl, which likewise awakened awareness of the danger after the shock, unleashing an international campaign for safety in nuclear power stations of the same type. For Estonians, the disaster served as a double lesson, because it weakened our confidence in the solidarity of our Nordic partners.

International opinion about the cause

When analysing the contents of the Estonian media, all public figures whose opinions were printed in the press were classified by their nationality. Altogether 1,851 different opinions about the causes of the disaster were analysed. Of those, 58 % were expressed by Estonians, 14% by Swedes, 13% by Finns, 3% by mixed groups consisting of Estonians and Scandinavians

(e.g. "the Joint Investigation Commission"), and 8 % by representatives of other countries and nationalities (see Table 19).

While analysing the above data, we noticed some interesting differences in the concepts derived from sources attributed to different nationalities:

- 1) the Swedish sources referred to natural causes relatively more often than do the Estonian ones;
- 2) with regard to faults in the design, the Finnish sources were somewhat more numerous than the average;
- 3) as for errors committed by the crew, the Estonians were as eager to point them out as were the other nationalities;
- 4) the Swedes and representatives of other nationalities thought that both the owners and the shipping company were also to blame; the Estonians were rather reserved in this respect;
- 5) the Swedish sources pointed out that the International Standards and the Register were to blame as well, whereas the Estonian sources referred to this less often;
- 6) the Estonians, conversely, were most inclined to suspect a terrorist act as the cause of the disaster;
- 7) a post-Soviet stance was seldom mentioned by Estonian actors ; it was mainly connected with the foreign sources;
- 8) the motive of capitalist competition being responsible for the disaster was more often brought forth by the Swedes.

Considering the activity of people of different nationalities in giving different explanations for the disaster in the Estonian press, we note the following profile of national attitudes:

Estonians suspected more than others that there was a premeditated hostile action against the Estonian ship; at the same time, they were not eager to discuss circumstances related to economic or international competition.

Swedes were keener to discern the dangerous effects of capitalist competition between lines in private ownership.

Finnish sources were somewhat more often referred to in relation to causes involving technical questions linked to the design of the ship.

Others, non-Estonian and non-Nordic sources raised comparatively more subjective issues that cast Estonia as a post-socialist country.

Indeed, such an interdependence between opinions and the national background is bound to reflect the prevailing tendencies in the Estonian media rather than give an objective overall picture of the attitudes among different nationalities. To find out about the latter, an analysis of press materials from different countries would be needed. We can see that discussions about what may have caused the Estonia disaster reflect a stereotyped description of Estonians as a small nation living in a hostile neighbourhood, of Swedes as people with 'socialist' attitudes, and of Finns as impartial experts.

What kind of psychological impact the catastrophe-related discourse had on the development of national stereotypes and attitudes of Estonians

toward themselves and their neighbours is also reflected in the evaluations of the actors of different nationalities (see Figure 17 in Appendix 1)

To sum up, it can be said that the discourses dealing with the Estonia disaster expressed a more general attitude of Estonians towards the world around them. This attitude was based on the subjective national feeling of inferiority and danger which regarded the outside world as dangerous and repressive. In developing such a stance, prejudice and manifestations of mistrust inherited from the Soviet period no doubt played a role. In papers, rational expert analyses of the causes of the disaster were published side by side with irrational and mythological interpretations without drawing a distinct line regarding the journalistic value of the material.

MYTHICAL INTERPRETATIONS IN THE PRESS

This chapter is based on the analysis of different discourses published by the Estonian press in the course of three months following the Estonia catastrophe. Our aim was to study the mythical interpretations of the accident. Articles drawn from the newspapers, Post, Liivimaa Kuller (Livonian Courier), Liivimaa Kroonika (Livonian Chronicle), Estonija, Meie Maa (Our Country), Oma Saar (Our Island), Pärnu Postimees (The Pärnu Postman), Eesti Ekspress, Rahva Hääli (The Voice of the People), Eesti Sõnumid (Estonian Tidings), Päevaleht (The Daily Paper), Õhtuleht (The Evening Paper), Eesti Aeg (Estonian Times), Postimees (The Postman), Hommikuleht (The Morning Paper), and Äripäev (Daily Business) were used for the analysis. The discourses reflected upon are naturally controversial, as it was the author's subjective judgement which provided guidelines for distinguishing between mythical and non-mythical material.

The concept of catastrophe

A catastrophe is a turning, an end, a downfall, a cataclysm. All these words denote a shocking accident, the causes of which will often remain undetected, in spite of our endeavour to decipher them. Such an event is always unexpected and unpredictable - a catastrophe brings about a shock and astonishment, it is upsetting and difficult to explain. Owing to the ambiguity of the word, we will have to specify what kind of a disaster we are going to focus on in the present paper.

The anthropologist Clifford Geertz has described three cases in which chaos, i.e. a jumble of events evading rational interpretation, threatens to push a person to the verge of his/her analytical capacity (inability to understand), to the limits of his/her endurance (patience), as well as his/her ability of ethical discrimination (cognition of an insoluble ethical controversy). All of these, if sufficiently intensive and of a rather long duration, according to Geertz, "a serious opposition to the premise that life is subject to understanding, and reasoning will help one to get him/herself well oriented in it" (Geertz, 1990:2304). A catastrophe can embrace all these events, both separately and together. A catastrophe, being a phenomenon which borders on culture, is, because of its position, both unpredictable and partly inexplicable.

Chaos being one of its integral parts, a catastrophe gets inevitably labelled as 'mystical'. Both for the general public and for those involved, a catastrophe is a leap into the unknown. The dividing line between the known and the unknown has always been veiled in secrecy and has never lent itself to sufficient and unequivocal explanation.

The problem with any catastrophe is its interpretation, i.e. answering the questions 'why?', 'how?', 'due to what?', 'who is responsible?', etc.

Discourses arising from any given catastrophe must answer these questions.

Following on the studies of modern mythology by Roland Barthes, a myth is interpreted as a current semiotic cultural phenomenon. The word 'myth' itself denotes a certain traditional image of the genesis of the world or social phenomena and of the supernatural creatures who allegedly brought it about. A myth is best characterised by the fact that it gets spread as if it were the truth (Barthes, 1957). Nobody doubts the truthfulness of the myth.

Like any system, culture, too, requires stability for its normal functioning. A catastrophe upsets the routine patterns which operate under normal conditions: a ship, instead of arriving at the destination, sinks; a plane, instead of taking off, explodes; the earth which is usually standing still, quakes and spits out fire, etc. All these events await explanations which would bring forth what caused them to happen, and would help to prevent other similar events from happening. An inexplicable deformation of the usual models provides food for our fantasies. A myth, then, is our model of something which in reality is far from replicating what it describes. A myth is very much like a 'curtain' behind which the unknown is hidden by our maximally rational explanations. There must have been very special causes to the sinking of an absolutely safe ship. The mysticism of the shipwreck is something which fascinates people.

A catastrophe is part of the chaos which our culture comes into contact with and therefore becomes aware of. The catastrophe crumbles our beliefs, distorting the rules we have established for ourselves. Circumstances unknown to us get interpreted depending on the context in which they occurred (or, in which they were delivered to us by the press). As an example of a subjective approach can be the problem which got especially vivid coverage in the 'obituary' genre where headlines like "Estonia's name on the bottom", etc. asked us rhetorically: "What is one to think of a country, when a ship bearing its name sinks?"³ The metaphoric notion of 'a state-ship' and the ship called the Estonia become identical objects in the human mind and fatalistic mysticism is developed around the name - one can never be sure that he/she won't go down to the bottom him/herself. American Indians believe names to be closely associated with their owners; names mean destiny, fate, they accompany us from the cradle to the grave. A blemished name spells a blemished reputation. Undoubtedly, the ambivalence of the Estonia's name enhanced the drama of the shipwreck for Estonians. Thus, the object lying on the seabed acquired both symbolic, political, and existential meaning. In a similar fashion, the words 'sea', 'seabed', 'travelling', 'storm', 'shipwreck', etc., have become connotative in our subconscious mind.

The 'thrill' of the show which a catastrophe provides for the spectators also has a certain role to play in the appearance of a mythical discourse. The pub-

3) When the German "pocket battleship" *Grafspie* was sunk at the beginning of the second World War, Hitler, who was superstitious, ordered the remaining ship *Deutschland* to be renamed *Lützow*. *Lützow* survived the war and was taken as booty by the Russians.

lic are fascinated by critical situations. For there is in humans an ever-present subconscious curiosity to learn about the world beyond. By probing the latter tentatively, they cherish hope to be able to evade the catastrophic 'ninth wave' themselves.

Interpretation of the myths

Many researchers view the mass media of today as a 'mechanism of brainwashing' which, using its own angle of vision, provides the audience with aberrant accounts of facts of reality, thus shaping the frames for everyday interaction. It is from the mass media that many common myths derive. They help people to explain everyday reality, and by doing so facilitate their integration into the society. Clifford Geertz notes that the myths in the media influence us in a subconscious way, one could even say, in a religious way - a myth is the society's means for (re)production and expression of the existing social structures. The well-known culturologist Marshall McLuhan described the creation of a myth as an aesthetic strategy which lends topicality to our reminiscences of the past, reanimating them into co-functioning with some recent objective information. That in its turn will heighten our awareness of the reality which is responsible both for our subconscious desires and 'conscious self'.

According to Levi-Strauss' structural treatment of myth, in order to comprehend the logic of myth, one has to

- 1) divide the empirical categories involved into opposite pairs,
- 2) determine the mythical structure and distance of these pairs, and
- 3) describe the ascertained relationships.

The main source for catastrophe-related myths lies in the interpretation of the event as a fatal accident or the outcome of someone's evil will. As confirmed by Post (7 November 1994), the opposites 'a terror-act - accident' involve altogether 34 myths, which can comprise all the theories about what may have caused the shipwreck.

The accident may have been caused by either a) internal or b) external reasons.

The internal reasons involve :

- 'a technical fault' : 1) metal fatigue; 2) failure of the water-tight bulkhead of the car deck; 3) failure of stabilizers;
- 'a navigation error' : 4) excessive speed; 5) a starboard turn of the ship helped waves to overturn the vessel more quickly; 6) the harbour failed to give a storm warning; 7) the ship was blown 18 km off course, in case of sinking on 'the right course', at least some parts of the ship should have remained afloat; 8) the ship ran upon the rocks; 9) the ship ran over a smaller vessel;
- 'an exploitation error': 10) technical surveillance was insufficient; 11) heavy lorries tilted the balance of the vessel; 12) the vehicles on board came untied; 13) smuggled goods exploded in contact with oxygen.

As external reasons one can view:

- 'a collision with something natural': 14) a giant wave; 15) a whale;
- 'a collision with something technological': 16) a sea mine; 17) a floating pontoon; 18) an unnavigable ship or submarine (a kind of 'Flying Dutchman').
- An act of terror could have been committed by 19) a torpedo; 20) a bomb, or 21) sabotage of the electricians of the bridge. The reasons for that could have been either
- 'political': 22) revenge for breaking up the Soviet Empire; 23) focusing the anger of the West on President Yeltsin; 24) paving the way to annexation of Estonia, driving Swedes against Estonians, causing great material damage to Estonia, doing damage to the country's reputation, thus bringing down the number of tourists;
- 'economic': 25) breaking the Estline monopoly; 26) collecting the insurance ; 27) the accident was caused by envious Latvians who have no shipping links with Stockholm; 28) it was an act of revenge from Palestinians because Estonians had bought weapons from Israel; 29) warning a rival mafia grouping who trafficked drugs on board the Estonia; 30) blackmailing the Estline into paying ransom; 31) aimed at the 70 Swedish criminal police on board;
- 'maniacal': 32) to become a celebrity like Herostratos⁴; 33) to take revenge for unrequited love; 34) to commit suicide in a particularly spectacular way.

The very first theory as to the causes of the catastrophe made the crew accountable for what happened (unfastened loads on lorries); then followed the versions of a careless closing of the visor, a sea mine, etc. (e.g., Eesti Sõnumid, 1 October 1994; Hommikuleht, 3 October 1994, etc.) Little by little, new facts were added; a broken visor (a new word for many), the survivors speak of a great bang, some in the fore, some in the stern. There is talk about an explosion. Upon getting more evidence, metal fatigue was held as the only likely reason which could be seriously considered and subjected to verification by scientific means. At the same time, there was a lot of talk around the confused lists of survivors, the latter bringing about an avalanche of versions which put the accident down to terrorism.

In the general search for a culprit, political interests came to play a role in their own right. The blame for the accident was laid on some dark Russian-related forces. The Swedish trade unions made an attempt to discredit the Estonian crew.

In the mythology there is a place for astrologers who had allegedly predicted a 'Black Friday' (Pavel Globa) and a numerologist (H.Ree). Out of a few 'modest' facts fantastic theories were conjured up, in which the above mentioned related pairs boil primarily down to the opposition 'own - alien'. In this framework, one should compare the opposites like culture vs. chaos;

4) A Greek who put the Artemis temple in Ephesos on fire in 356 B.C. to become famous.

ship vs. sea; accident vs. terror, natural vs. technological; official vs. unofficial (normal vs. abnormal); information vs. noise; reliable vs. suspicious; certain vs. uncertain; predictable vs. accidental; (predictable vs. unpredictable); verifiable vs. unverifiable (scientific vs. unscientific); proven vs. unproven.

It is essential to find the underlying facts which gave rise to different interpretations of what caused the catastrophe. Juxtaposition and analysis of the relevant discourses makes it possible to construct a mythology specific to the catastrophe, scrutinizing the opposites and contextually relevant connections.

Natural vs. technological

Both natural and technological arguments refer to the 'accident' theory, as do some of the arguments indicative of the so-called 'other external circumstances', which, however, emphasize its chance nature. The catastrophe, then, is the result of uncontrollable processes or of a completely random external agent: a ship caught by a typhoon; high seas; sailing in a dangerous area near the Finnish island of Utö which seafarers generally avoid because of a particularly rolling sea (it is there one can find a 'shipa' graveyard' and a 'Bermuda Triangle'); collision with a whale; hitting of the fore by a giant or 'killer' wave, 'unlucky stars' - these are all natural causes. They are primarily related to the 'sea' as an element, whereas the technological arguments relate to the 'ship' as an expression of rational human thought. While technology can be subordinated to our rules and regulations, Nature cannot.

One of the 'natural', albeit mystical, explanations is the fatalistic-metaphysical one proposed by Mr. Tõnis Vint, an artist, who saw the accident as an outcome of the powerful curse put on the Bay of Tallinn by numerous crimes committed here in the course of history, a symbol of which one finds the Death Angel of Russalka⁵ standing high on the coast overlooking the Bay of Pirita. One should likewise consider the 'Flying Dutchman' version to be natural. According to that, the Estonia collided with either a smuggler ship abandoned in storm (cf. Post, 7 November 1994) or with a Russian or Swedish submarine. Versions of a collision with a sea mine or floating pontoon belong to the same class.

Fatalistic interpretations also treat the event as an 'accident', casting light on what may have made such a coincidence of circumstances possible (See Paradoks, 95/2, comments on the predictions made by Pavel Globa, a St. Petersburg astrologer; Eesti Ekspress, 21 October 1994, "A Black Angel of Death converted to a Golden Angel of the Sun?" by Tõnis Vint). One should also mention prediction-based discourses which, although they do not bring forth what may have caused the catastrophe, link its occurrence with a numerological combination (See Liivimaa Kuller, 3 November 1994 where H.Ree, a reader, claims that the accident happened because of the coinci-

5) *A monument in Tallinn commemorating the sinking of a tsarist Russian battleship.*

dence of certain numbers - the sum of the date of the catastrophe and some other factor (.) tends to make up the satanic combination 6666, which is admittedly a bad omen). The press has also given coverage to descriptions of dreams ('telepathic visions') which are retrospectively associated with the catastrophe (See Liivimaa Kuller, 3 November 1994, "A Telepathic Vision of the Estonia Catastrophe").

Ship vs. sea

The Estonia catastrophe is rich in symbolic elements. Everything associable with the sea in our mind can be associated with a border, a boundary of some kind. The sea represents the border line between the known and the unknown, the water is the borderland to where no human existence can continue; ships at sea balance on a dangerous border, travelling by sea means leaving yourself to your fate. The chaos which as an element is symbolized by stormy seas, is in opposition with the sailing ship, which represents a borderline between the stable and the unstable. Some nations traditionally divide the waters into 'living' and 'dead' - the former bringing life and being heavenly, the latter being salty and unsuitable either for drinking or giving life (Toporov, 1980).

Water represents the female substance, it is the mythological analogue of the womb in which the sea once upon a time was fertilized by an unknown creature, as a result of which the earth was born. The marriage between water and the skies as the male party is very common in Indo-European traditions (Toporov, 1994). Empirically, water as a symbol fixed in the subconscious mind is used in advertising psychology as a sign of chastity, innocence and rebirth (Bachmann, 1994). In the Christian tradition, a ship symbolises the Christian church, and her mast the cross on which Christ met his death. A ship is thought to be a safe place in the midst of floods (an allegory to Noah's Ark); even if everything else should perish, the ship and her passengers will escape. The ritual washing with water, baptizing, means rebirth, stepping on a 'firm ground' (Ferguson, 1992). Deep down the water hides mysterious creatures like water sprites, fairies and other underwater inhabitants. Among the best known creatures the spirit Russalka epitomises all the evil spirits in Russian mythology contextually linked with the sinking of the Estonia (Eesti Ekspress, 21 November 1994).

In Estonian folklore, too, the sea occupies a special place, although it is insignificant as compared to earthbound topics. Whereas water is primarily associated with young and old sprites, the sea is perceived as an organic whole. The sea is powerful and there is no hope of containing it. The sea is paradoxical and unfathomable. Vast though it is, collisions can occur even there. The sea is mysterious, hiding a lot, at the same time it is kind and open. "The sea is carrying in it fate/God's will, the sea has to be trusted" (Krikman, 1980).

It would be noteworthy to cite the proverb "A woman on board means the boat on the bottom," "Bitches on board will sink the ship." One of the alleged

causes for the shipwreck proceeds from the latter principle (See Post, 29 September 1994. In olden times seamen never allowed hookers on board; or, Post, 11 October 1994 - "The Finnish Parson Gloats over the Estonia Lost Souls"). This is how the mythical-Freudian association between the sea as the female substance and the ship as the male substance arises. Figuratively speaking, 'chaos generates more chaos': by forcing himself into the sea, the ship 'rapes' her. The sunken Estonia was reportedly carrying a load of especially gross pornography, which was on its way to Denmark (Post, 29 September 1994).

According to Freud, the sea and related phenomena are primarily associated with our subconscious memories of the prenatal period, when we were still in the womb. Thus, our cognition of the sea and our relationship with the sea are first and foremost based on our 'prenatal experience', the sea being the archetype, big and powerful like our precognition. The prenatal oceanic perception is primarily reflected in human postnatal dreams. The sea bottom, on the other hand, is an archetypal symbol involving death, downfall and horror, it is a kind of a depository holding all lives, past and future. The Estonia on the bottom of the sea can be likened to a human soul which imbues impressions of living and preserves the dearest of them (Toporov, 1980). This is how the sea metaphor develops, making the sea part of human 'self', which is perceived as a great elemental force.

Information vs. noise

Noise is characterized by its spontaneous nature, it is an incessant flow of external signals which disturb us. Being produced by chaos, noise is characterized by its randomness, occasionally, it cannot be unequivocally understood. A phenomenon which has been unequivocally interpreted by many observers cannot be noise, it must be objectively verifiable. As soon as it becomes evident that a topic has been raised with no sufficient reason, it tends to become 'noiselike'. The problem of noise is closely related to that of the borderline between the unusual and the unbelievable. Accommodated into the context of earlier versions, a new version inevitably is perceived either as noise or as an entirely new 'fact' which refutes the previous ones. For instance, in the morning following the catastrophe, television spread the hypothetical view about the tilt of the Estonia having developed in storm owing to the misplaced cargo, which was corroborated by interviews taken from seamen who maintained that the boat had been at a tilt already when leaving Tallinn. (See Meie Maa, 4 October 1994, an interview with Mr. Aarne Koppel.) Later, this version became noiselike, the version of metal fatigue being preferred as it seemed more likely. Noiselike discourses also include the discussions held in the press about possible survivors in air pockets on board the sunken ship (allegedly, some of them had made cellophone calls home) and explanations refuting these on account of hypothermia.

How discretionary the spread of proven - unproven, verifiable - unverifi-

able, reliable - suspicious versions were in public consciousness is vividly demonstrated by the fact that about a month after the catastrophe, Post, 28 October 1994, reported:

"Most of the survivors heard a loud bang before the sinking."

Official vs. unofficial

The mythology of the catastrophe is a mixture of official and unofficial contexts. Myths evolve primarily from mysterious phenomena involving hidden aspects, the mythical nature of which is disclosed only when the real causes are revealed. The formal explanations to the catastrophe can be viewed as a particular ideology, whereas the informal ones make up the respective mythology. Both, however, are described by mythical discourses, since despite their attempts at objectivity they fail to be objective. The most intriguing and mythical are those discourses which see a certain volition behind the external circumstances, i.e. directed activity which sank the ship.

The 'unidentified forces' are associated in our mind primarily with a kind of mafiosi who carry out their evil plans by whatever ways and means happen to be available. As a rule, such discourses relate certain pre-catastrophe events with post-catastrophe ones to make up a story which more or less holds water. (See, for instance, the so-called 'maniacal' causes like the revenge to Estonia executed by reactionary forces for breaking up the Soviet Empire, or the alleged wish to get hold of mythical insurance money, etc. (Post, 7 November 1994). A more exciting part of the catastrophe-based discourses is made up by those versions which proceeded from individual observations, not official information, and got basically published as sensational news.

The official statements came belatedly, as a rule. In Estonia, the first versions of the causes of the accident were released in the afternoon of the day of the disaster. The latter made up a 'public' discourse which sought to come to grips with the social tensions mounting as a consequence of the accident (Looking upon the catastrophe as an accident, one evades the need to identify guilty parties, and who and to what extent might profit from the shipwreck; metal fatigue, faulty design, etc., are in this sense neutral causes). Although seemingly more competent/reliable than the sensational news, the 'official' sources were not free from controversy and, thus caused a lot of misunderstanding.

In this case the usually reliable sources failed to find answers to questions. Inevitably, the border between 'official' and 'unofficial' news is not clearly identifiable. As they were released later, the official versions had inevitably to deal with the refutation of all the earlier ones, too. To illustrate how confused and uncoordinated the official discourse was, consider what a member of the Investigation Committee said to a journalist in a private conversation after the visor had been recovered from the seabed: "A decent sort of chap wouldn't use such hinges for his garage doors". (Päevaleht, 22 November 1994)

An innocent remark as it is, within the context of the catastrophe, it sounds intriguing; as a part of an 'official' discourse, however, it is quite scandalous.

A discourse of a specific kind evolved around some people who had gone missing under mysterious circumstances. First, there was Captain Arvo Piht (who for this reason earned the title 'Phantom Captain' - Post, 4 October 1994). Subsequently came all the others who had gone missing in a similar way. There was a lot of confusion around the lists of those rescued, in which the names appeared and then got deleted rather chaotically. Such 'noise' gave rise to a number of myths, especially with regard to those names which figured in the survivors' lists for several days (the Veide sisters, L. Leiger, K. Vahtras, T. Meos, T. Müür, A. Toomingas and A. Piht). This discourse is conspicuously different from the other versions, being rather concrete, relying on different sources, and leaving the direct cause of the catastrophe open. With Captain Piht gone missing, all hopes vanished to get any information about how the body of officers acted in crisis.

Probably the mythological nature of the discourse was largely due to the negative emotions and disappointment at the latter disclosure, especially after there had been reports of Captain Piht having been interviewed (e.g., Eesti Ekspress, 14 October 1994: Sten-Christer Forsberg, technical director of Nordström & Thulin, said that the Investigation Commission was trying to hide Piht, Estonia's second captain, who had allegedly been on board as a passenger and had been rescued. According to Forsberg, "the members of the Commission were afraid to hear Piht's confessions." Or Post, 28 October 1994: "Rumours about Captain Piht" - Piht was reported to have called a friend.).

Four of Estonia's crew members had seen Mr. Piht on the German ZDF (Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen) midday news programme, he had also been spotted in several CNN (Cable News Network) video clips, in which he had walked to the ambulance. Such news was also delivered by Reuters, who referred to Ronald Bergman, General Director of Nordström & Thulin. Also, the Swedish Red Cross reported the rescue of the Veide sisters, who were allegedly 'related' to Captain Piht. The Red Cross had told H. Veide, their brother, that "your sisters are alive, and if you want to learn about their whereabouts, call the Swedish police." Eesti Ekspress, 14 October 1994, by M. and M. Mikko). Likewise, reliable people had reported that on Friday, the third day following the catastrophe, Mr. Piht held negotiations with Tallinn concerning an exclusive interview to the Estonian press. (Eesti Ekspress, 28 October 1994, "A Time Bomb on board the Estonia?" by P. Hõbemägi).

There are allusions to some dark forces who were interested in sinking the ship; no names are given, however. (See Eesti Aeg, 9 November 1994 - "Versions of Kristapovitch's killing" by J. Vahtrasaar: The murder of I. Kristapovich and the sinking of the Estonia may be linked." "there is some evidence that the missing captain of the Estonia, A.P., wanted to make a

statement upon his arrival in Stockholm. It was to deal with the shipping on the Estonia of a strategically important raw material." The same topic was under discussion in the Russian papers *Zavtra* and *Segodnya*, 24 May '95; Unfortunately the authors never disclosed their 'reliable' (!) sources, which automatically made their stories mythical).

There are numerous reports from the relatives of those missing who, tracing their kinsfolk, were given elusive answers and even warnings not to deal with the problem. Mythical noise which usually originates from one source, has in this discourse, interestingly enough, emerged from different independent sources, located at some distance from one another. Loaded with meaning under the circumstances is the information delivered to K. Vahtras's wife, R. Vahtras, who was told that the names of those rescued had been learnt from the survivors themselves. (*Eesti Aeg*, 19 October 1994). To all likelihood, the confusion surrounding Captain Piht would have gradually stopped, but it was supported by seven more cases of the persons who had mysteriously gone missing and whose relatives, acting independently of one another, had got similar results.

To indicate the extent of the Captain Piht-related discourse, it would be appropriate to add here the quiz conducted by an entertainment phone-in between 21 October and 11 November 1994 - "Why did Captain Piht go missing?" 25 persons were not at all interested in the problem, 25 thought he was in Sweden, 44 answered they did not know, 24 found some other reason, 10 thought he was not on board at all, 23 thought he was alive in a hospital somewhere, and 100 thought he was hiding in a safe place waiting for the hue and cry to subside.

All the sources referred to in the above mentioned stories of the mystically disappeared persons finally get down to the published lists of survivors. What makes this discourse hard to explain is the impossibility of viewing all the 'chaotically' produced, but very similar signals as noise. Thus, the myth about the people who went missing under mysterious circumstances continues to live, as long as we are unable to explain it. A distinctive feature of such a discourse is that it allows other versions to be attached to it which in their turn disentangle the essence of the 'unidentified forces'. Such a hierarchical structure is in opposition to the notion of an accident, thus supporting the terrorism-related theories which also fit into the context.

Conclusion

The emergence of such discourse pairs is a vivid demonstration of what is conventional and what is unconventional in culture. It is natural for catastrophes to occur as accidents, whereas it is quite unusual if a catastrophe gets explained as the outcome of a terrorist act. A catastrophe, introducing a novel factor into the cultural context, also serves to disclose the society's covert disharmonies - certain factors existing in reality, which were overlooked until the disaster happened, will become topical. The mythical discourses spread after the sinking of the Estonia ferry mirror the Estonian society at the present moment: the version of an accident speaks of the need to improve safety regulations, whereas the version of terrorism is indicative of the existence of perceivable tensions which need to be defused.

SURVIVORS AND RELATIVES FACING THE PRESS

This part of the report is based on the interviews with the survivors and the victims' relatives. Altogether 20 interviews were carried out.

The behaviour of the the journalists

We have no information of the press having acted during the first days after the catastrophe in any especially condemnable or unethical way in regard to the survivors. On the other hand, everything possible was done at Swedish hospitals, airports etc, to keep the press away from the survivors. It appears the survivors were mostly disturbed only by photographers ("Many of us had a fever, the bandages were soaking through, photographing was unpleasant.") A meeting with those rescued was arranged for the press at the Estonian House in Stockholm; journalists were not intrusive there either.

Back in Estonia, the survivors complained that no rules were set for the press by the medical institutions, and the constant interviewing became tiring. The foreign press was especially intrusive ("The Germans, the Swedes, particularly German TV".) The survivors have admitted that the Security Police had recommended them to associate with the press as little as possible ("It was said that it wouldn't be good to talk. Anyway, I understood that the less I say, the better it is".) It seemed that the survivors talked more willingly to a journalist whom they knew or whom a friend had recommended.

We did not experience that the press had twisted the words of the survivors, though the latter said that if they had read the article before going to print, they would have made significant alterations ("There were drunken people on the deck" instead of "There were many drunken people on the deck".) Unfortunately, many survivors had no experience of talking to journalists, and it did not occur to them to insist on reading the article before it went to print.

We could understand from the critical attitude towards the actions of the press that often the journalists failed to make appointments for the interviews, and while interviewing they left the necessary introductory preliminary work undone. The journalists often just showed up at the doors of the survivors and demanded interviews. (The researchers point out that it is easier to refuse an interview over the phone. At the same time, the relatives developed a hostile attitude towards "the door-pounders".)

The preliminary work should have included explaining the role of the press and a journalist in case of a disaster, and the purpose of the interview as well. The press often did not take due account of the fact that the people, who as a result of the disaster all of a sudden found themselves in the public eye, lacked earlier experience of communicating with the press. They did

not suspect that their phone call to a newspaper office or a phone call from a newspaper office to them was an interview, and the press did not bring it to their attention, either. (When a person was angry and called the newspaper office, the next day his/her words were published as an interview.) There was an incident where the relatives accused a journalist of entering their premises by force, taking advantage of the emotional state of the person being interviewed. (The journalist came in the evening to visit a woman who was in shock, the children let the journalist in, the journalist went straight to the second floor, sat down in the living-room and refused to leave.) This incident made an extremely negative impression of the press on the person interviewed.

In another case, when the journalist had been recommended by a trustworthy acquaintance and showed understanding of the emotional state of the person being interviewed, promising that the article would be published in accordance with the person's wishes, the attitude towards the press was positive.

The journalist was interested in the life of the interviewee, also in the life of his/her perished relative. In that case the interviewee did not insist on reading the article before it went to print, agreeing that it would be read by the person who recommended the journalist (a close friend who introduced the journalist.) It appeared that it was easier for both sides to arrange things through a mediator. It is important, although quite complicated, to find a suitable mediator (through acquaintances, distant relatives, colleagues.)

The press has been criticized for making interviews only to find confirmation to their biased point of view. This has been said both about the interviews and the published articles. Figuratively speaking, the journalist put his/her words in the mouth of the interviewee. Those interviewed have complained that they were asked questions which they could not answer competently. To go to someone's home and ask what caused the accident from a widow who is in a shock and thinking about her children and her husband who is at the bottom of the sea, how on earth can the woman know what happened. 'What do you think went wrong?! How can someone ask a question like this? It would be another matter to go to the harbour master or someplace there and ask: What do you think might have happened to that ship, okay? But to come and ask a perished man's wife".)

Almost all the people questioned noted that the press had promised to send them a copy of the article and pictures, but failed to do so. All too often the journalists did not return the photos they had borrowed from the family (particularly Finnish and Swedish journalists were mentioned.)

The attitude towards the press

All the people questioned expressed their interest in the material about the disaster in the press. They were satisfied with the volume, but many were reproachful because of the incorrect information, rumours and insufficient background information. The people questioned also noted that they had

got most of their information from the press, the officials having failed to give sufficient information.

People would have expected to get more helpful information, like advice to the survivors and the relatives of the perished in connection with the social and crisis aid, also in dealing with the subsidies, insurance, police and courts of justice.

Emotional interviews with the survivors found a positive response among both the daily newspaper readers and other survivors. ("I wanted to see what the others were saying, I read their stories with interest.") We observed a more general reproach to the press. The persons interviewed asserted that the press had tried to overstate incompetent, ignorant opinions. (As when people in the streets were questioned by the radio about the cause of the disaster.) The publications were not duly critical of the articles printed by other publications. Invented and incorrect facts and false interpretations were taken over and retailed to a wider and wider audience. The press exaggerated the rumours and thus forced the officials to take a firm stand - which, as a matter of fact, caused the rumours to be peddled even more eagerly.

The fact that the press mediated unchecked and inaccurate information and did not apologize for it received severe criticism. "Their absolute indifference towards checking the facts" is one of the reasons why communicating with the press was so strongly opposed by the people whom that information concerned personally. (It was interpreted as an indifference towards both the subject and the source of information. For instance, a newspaper published an article about the presentation of the MS Estonia's ship bell to the Marine Museum. In the caption, the names of the captains' widows were mixed up.)

The negative attitude of the relatives generally also extended to the journalists, because the (yellow) press printed invented stories and legends about the last moments of the well-known persons on the sinking ship. Such stories caused grief even though they sought to show the victim as a hero.

On the negative side it was mentioned that the press overstated specific facts without giving enough background information and without giving the reader a complete and objective picture. A fact that was published without an explanatory and objective context favoured the development of (false) opinions. (The newspapers overemphasised the words of a captain that on the night of the disaster the speed of the Estonia had been very high. With no additional explanations or background, the reader got the idea that the captain was speeding - and that is why people perished.)

The persons interviewed thought that the press was one-sided in choosing their sources of information. On the first days after the disaster newspapers published many emotional stories about what had happened to the survivors, who all too often were not in a position to answer all the questions. ("The passengers have told a lot of rubbish to the press", said a sailor

of the Estonia.) The same phenomenon was observed when the Tallink ferry ran onto a shoal near the Helsinki Harbour - the Finnish press mostly questioned the passengers because they were most easily available.

At the time when the press was one of the few mediators between the relatives and the rescue workers at the site of the disaster, there were contradictory opinions about the press as an agent influencing the psychological atmosphere. Some interviewees felt that quashing (vain) hopes by presenting expert opinions, the press acted cruelly, wrongly. ("I was irritated by the radio and TV which instilled the idea that if a person had not been found by now, there was no point in hoping any more because so much time had passed and everybody would have been frozen by then".)

Others thought that an expert talking on TV managed to ease the emotional tension. (On the second or third day after the disaster when the hysteria over whether the ship should be salvaged or not reached its climax, a diver talked on Estonian TV and proved that the people remaining on board could by no means have stayed alive for longer than about 30 minutes, even if in an air pocket, because of great pressure, shock and low temperature. ("The night after I had seen the diver on TV was the first night I could sleep peacefully.") People questioned felt reproach towards an article that was published three or four days after the disaster, in which a psychic very convincingly gave the reader ground for hope (in vain), claiming that hundreds of people on board the ship were still alive and could be saved.

The lists

The question about whether it was justified by the press to publish the lists of survivors and of the people remaining aboard got overwhelmingly positive answers. Unfortunately we could not find and question anyone whose name was published in the list by mistake. Those people, however, have severely criticised the publication of the lists. The persons questioned, on the other hand, declared that publishing the lists was the right thing to do, although it was impossible to guarantee a 100-per cent reliability. They also emphasised that the lists had given important and relevant information. It was also noted that the Swedish side had not been able to provide information (apparently through the electronic media) as efficiently as the Estonian press. ("The Estonians were quicker".)

Guarding the reputation of the seamen

Regarding this question, a full spectrum of opinions is represented, but the preponderance of negative opinion is noticeable. Yet some people liked that the Estonian press printed materials available from the Swedish press without alterations. At the same time, there were others who admitted that they had been really sorry to see the Estonian press serialise articles which were meant to inflict harm upon the Estonian seamen's reputation.

This even led to situations in which the interviewee altogether refused to communicate with the press. ("The Estonian press did not protect Estonian

seamen. Every newspaper slandered and accused us, nobody could wait until the Investigation Committee made its decision. That's why I didn't talk to the press, neither to the Finnish, nor Swedish or the local press. I could have said quite a lot, but we had been smeared with mud all over, anyway", said a surviving crew-member who could have disproved these accusations.)

Who owns photos and recordings?

Here the researchers ran into difficulties with a problem yet unsolved - who owns the right to handle the photos, videos and voice recordings of a deceased person. In general, the relatives wished to have the final word as to which photos should be published in the press. There were several reasons for that:

- a) Aesthetic-emotional ("I would not have wanted to be photographed in the airport. Many of us had a fever, the bandages were soaking through".) People did not think that they looked presentable enough to be photographed.
- b) On other occasions photos belonging to friends, colleagues, etc., were published in which the perished person was shown in an inappropriately intimate way to the public.

In the informative articles both the survivors and the relatives alike seemed to prefer anonymous photos to those in which concrete individuals were recognizable. (About the relatives waiting in the harbour: "I wouldn't have published photos of people in tears.") If the person in the photo was not recognizable it could have been published. (We asked about a certain published photo showing a shipwrecked passenger wearing nothing but underclothes being heaved into a helicopter. One of the survivors said that she was not in the least disturbed by it, even though her acquaintances thought it was she.)

In one of the articles published about the disaster a survivor expressed his negative attitude towards taking photos of the dramatic accident ("A military man started to film (on the helicopter) and it was then that we all woke to a united protest.") It appeared that the attitudes towards photographing and being interviewed were similar - a person who did not wish to be photographed was ready to pose when approached in a humane and personal way by a trustworthy journalist.

Having no data about the underwater video recordings done aboard the Estonia that were shown on Estonian TV channels, we could only ask about the survivors' and relatives' general attitudes towards the problem. Those few who answered the question stated that as long as the dead bodies were not shown they had nothing against the public demonstration of these clips. ("It would be even interesting", said one of the surviving crew-members.)

For the first time, the press and the public consciously acknowledged the problem of copyright for the use of the photo and video material in connection with the advertising campaign for the book. *Mayday Estonia*. An adver-

tisement by BNS on the radio included a voice-recording of the crew-member who sent off the last radio-message from the Estonia. The campaign received a lot of criticism, both from the crew-members' relatives ("I was shocked. According to law, I am not the owner of my husband's voice.") and from the general public. We can only assume that such a stance was adopted because the material containing a very important message, both in content and form, was used for a commercial purpose. It also has something to do with the overwhelmingly negative attitude towards the excessive media attention which accompanied the publishing of the Estonia -catastrophe-related books ("The book presentations, parties shown on TV-screen, smoked piglets- somebody made a profit on others' misfortune"; "The books were advertised in the same manner as washing detergent.") On the other hand, it must be mentioned that a couple of weeks earlier the same voice-recording had been used by every news channel, and, moreover, several times a day, drawing neither public attention nor condemnation.

SUMMARY

1. The first official message about the Estonia ferry disaster in the Finnish waters reached the Estonian authorities with a delay of 90 minutes. The Finnish rescue services did not do anything to ensure that Estonian authorities, including the Estonian Ambassador in Helsinki, would be immediately notified of the accident. Helsinki Radio forwarded the emergency signal "PanPan" instead of "May day" on VHF Channel 16. The Finns were not aware that Estonia lacked suitable equipment for receiving the PanPan signal.
2. The Estonian authorities were not prepared to communicate with one another and with the public in an emergency. The information about the accident reached the highest standing authorities only between 0430 - 0500. The media were not informed by the Estonian authorities and were not used for informing the public. The importance of public information delivery was strongly underestimated. In the first hours following the accident the Estonian media invariably depended on the international news services.
3. Helplessness and passivity on the part of the authorities deepened the psychological shock and increased the damage to the international image of Estonia and Estonians caused by the sinking of the Estonia. Estonian information services were unable to follow and analyse international reactions or to produce their own internationally distributable messages. During the crisis, an unfavourable image of the Republic of Estonia was created internationally without any active steps being taken by the Estonian side to prevent it.
4. The Estonian authorities could not provide sufficient help and protection, including appropriate interpreters, to the Estonian survivors of the accident who, having been taken to Finnish and Swedish hospitals and being under the utmost psychological pressure, were used as the sources of information by the international media. At the same time, nothing was done by either Estonians or the Finns to facilitate access of Estonian journalists to the site of the disaster and to the hospitals.
5. The first radio broadcast delivering the news about the tragedy to the Estonian people was transmitted at 0532. The radio remained the most important source for the majority of the audience during the first days following the accident. By 0900 82 % of the Estonian, and 57% of the non-Estonian residents of the country had got the message.
6. The public's assessment of the journalists' activities during the crisis was overwhelmingly positive. The journalists had a very important role in providing people with information about the fate of the passengers and about crisis help and proved most efficient in their job. A controversial issue for journalists was connected with the publication of lists of the Estonia passengers which had not been verified.

7. The commercial radio station Kuku proved to be more effective in serving public interests in the emergency than the state-owned public broadcasting channels. Kuku was more active in seeking first-hand information, in establishing two-way contacts with the audience and had a more clear-cut concept of its role in crisis. The state-owned public broadcasting expected more information and guidance from the authorities. A similar trend was observed when comparing the efficiency of performance of the private news agency BNS and the state-owned ETA (Estonian Telegraph Agency).
8. The role of Estonian TV during the first days of the crisis was considerably less important than that of the radio, the reasons for this being its shorter broadcasting time and lack of original visual materials from the site of the disaster and the hospitals where the survivors had been taken. TV journalists were comparatively passive and could not cope with the general psychological shock. Nor could they foresee the negative side-effects released by some pictorial materials and the live broadcasts of the press conferences, which contributed to the general confusion and stress.
9. The Estonian analysis of the press coverage of the catastrophe encompassed a longer period (up to the end of the year 1994) than that made by our Swedish and Finnish colleagues. Comparing the topics covered by the press in the three countries, we can see that the themes of grief, death, crisis work and victims prevailed in all three during the first weeks. The main distinction that sets the Estonian press apart is that it paid considerably more attention to the official investigation of the accident. As part and parcel of that, we noticed a kind of defensive attitude characteristic of all the disaster-related discourse in the Estonian newspapers. At the same time, the importance given by the Estonian press to the topics of the safety of ferries and the salvage of the wreck never equalled that given in the Swedish or Finnish papers.
10. Comparing different types of newspapers, we noticed the prevailing role of the dailies as a source of neutral factual information, whereas the yellow press was more apt to give background information, report on the details of the rescue operations, communicate religious and mystical experiences, etc. An important role in the crisis work was undertaken by the local papers, which published more emotional materials concerning grief, psychological problems, and likewise practical advice about the crisis help. Background themes, and especially the economic consequences and societal impact of the disaster, were more appropriate for the weeklies.
11. The information about the accident in the Estonian media, even if transmitted by the Estonian news agencies, was largely dependent on non-Estonian sources. Among the actors referred to as sources of information about 40% were non-Estonian, predominantly Swedish and Finnish.

12. The social background of the sources of information revealed that journalists were strongly dependent on institutional sources (officials, shipping company) and less reliant on independent experts and commentators. In general, the presentation of the disaster in the Estonian media seemed to be more state-centered than oriented towards the individual experiences of the human beings involved in this tragic event.
13. The style of presentation used by different actors in the media content was mostly neutral. The materials were predominantly informative in nature. Emotions and evaluations were expressed in 16% of the items published. The evaluative content was more often negative than positive. Only two groups of actors - the rescuers and the crew - were presented in a predominantly positive context. The most negative context concerned the journalists, officials, trade unions and shipping company. Looking at the national background of the actors, Finns enjoyed the most favourable context (this is related to the positive evaluation of the Finnish rescue team) and Swedes the most negative one (evidently due to the polemics around the Swedish trade unions, who were accused of having unjustly laid the blame for the disaster on the Estonian crew).
14. The discourse about the causes of the accident in the Estonian dailies involved four different topics: investigation of the technical causes; assessment of the crew; self-defence of Estonians against the accusations made by the Swedish and Finnish trade unions and foreign media; responsibility of the shipping company and the shipbuilding firms involved. The general attitude expressed in the discourse bespoke the hurt national feelings of Estonians, who had been turned into culprits in the eyes of the international public opinion.
15. The tragedy in the sea raised a lot of mythological interpretations. Analysis revealed 34 different kinds of myths in the newspaper discourse about the catastrophe.
16. Contacts of the journalists with the survivors of the accident and the victims' relatives demanded a lot of tact and ethical awareness on the part of the journalists. Some interviewees reported that their contacts with the press had been a negative experience. Although the behaviour of the Estonian journalists was evaluated more positively than that of their Western colleagues, the former more often than not felt helpless in dealing with death, grief, and people in shock.

Some lessons for the future

- * An integrated system of communication has to be developed between the Baltic Coast countries for use in emergency.
- * Estonia needs a permanent crisis management centre, which could coordinate rescue, information processing and communication with the media in emergency situations.
- * Governmental institutions and media organizations will have to work out appropriate routines and patterns of behaviour in emergency situations.
- * Journalists need to be specially trained in order to develop their ability for appropriate professional activities in emergency situations.
- * Officials and journalists alike need to be taught to protect their national interests in crisis situations.

REFERENCES

- Bachmann, T. Reklaamipsühholoogia. Kontuur Disain, Tallinn, 1994
- Baltic Media Book 1995. Baltic Media Facts, Tallinn, 1995
- Baltic '95 Media Book Estonia. Baltic Network, Tallinn, 1995
- Barthes, R. Mythologies. de Seuil, Paris, 1957
- Ferguson, G. Märgid ja sümbolid kristlikus kunstis. Akadeemia, Nr.7, 1992
- Geertz, C. Religioon kui kultuuri süsteem. Akadeemia, Nr.11,1990
- Kreps, G.A. Research Needs and Policy Issues On Mass Media Disaster Reporting. In: Disasters and the Mass Media. National Academy of Sciences, Washington, 1980
- Krikman, A.(ed.) Eesti vanasõnad. Eesti Raamat, Tallinn, 1980
- Mayday Estonia. Baltic News Service, Tallinn, 1994
- Mayday Estonia II. Baltic News Service, Tallinn, 1995
- Miks Estonia? Eesti Ekspress, Tallinn,1994
- Nordlund, R. A Triangle Drama. Authorities, Citizens and Media in Crisis. SPF Meddelande 136:b, Stockholm, 1994
- Parker, E.C. What is Right and Wrong with the Media Coverage of Disaster? In: Disasters and the Mass Media. National Academy of Sciences, Washington, 1980.
- Scanton, J. Media coverage in Crisis: Better than Reported, Worse than Necessary. Journalism Quarterly, Vol. 55, No.1, Spring 1978
- Toporov, V.N. Istorija i mifologija. In: Mifõ narodov mira. Nauka, Moskva, 1980
- Toporov, V.N. Opsihologitsheskom komplekse morja v poetike. In: Mif, ritual, simvol. Nauka, Moskva, 1991.
- Walters, L.M. and Hornig, S. Faces in the News: Network Television News Coverage of Hurricane Hugo and the Loma Prieta Earthquake. Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media, Spring 1993.

APPENDIX I

Table 19. Number of materials related to the catastrophe in Estonian newspapers sept 28–Dec 31 1994

	Total number	number sept 28	number sept 29	number sept 30–Oct 2	Sept 28–Oct 2			Oct 3–Oct 9			Oct 10–Oct 16		
					number	% of all items	in average per 1 issue	number	% of all items	in average per 1 issue	number	% of all items	in average per 1 issue
Dailies													
Rahva Hääl	266	–	45	45	90	34	30	54	20	9	17	6	2.8
Eesti Sõnumid	162	–	13	25	38	23	12.7	37	23	6.2	14	9	2.3
Päevaleht	104	–	12	14	26	25	8.7	15	14	2.5	11	11	1.8
Hommikul eht	136	–	13	19	32	24	10.7	41	30	6.8	8	6	1.3
Postimees	239	–	25	40	65	27	21.7	75	31	12.5	13	5	2.1
Estonija	85	–	10	19	29	34	9.7	20	24	4	7	8	1.4
Average for dailies	165	–	20	27	47	28	15.7	40	24	6.9	12	7	2.0
Yellos papers													
Post	130	–	21	17	38	29	12.7	37	28	6.2	16	12	2.7
Liivimaa Kroonika	4	–	1	–	1	25	1	1	25	1	–	–	–
Liivimaa Kuller	48	–	–	–	–	–	–	24	50	24	6	13	6
Local papers													
Õhtuleht	122	1	7	17	25	20	8.3	25	20	4.2	15	12	
Võru Teataja	29	–	7	13	20	69	10	1	3	0.3	–	–	in average per 1 issue
Sakala	5	–	1	1	2	40	1	2	40	0.7	–	–	2.5
Pärnu Postimees	26	–	7	12	19	73	6.3	5	19	1	–	–	–
Meie Maa	47	–	29	6	35	74	11.7	5	11	1.3	1	2	–
Weeklies													
Eesti Ekspress	50	–	–	7	7	14	7	20	40	20	4	8	–
Eesti Aeg	32	–	–	–	–	–	–	15	47	15	2	6	0.3
All together	1485	1	191	235	427			377			114		4
Average for all papers						29	11.2		25	5.7		8	2

Table 20. Volume of the materials related to the disaster

	<i>Number of issues observed</i>	<i>Number of materials</i>	<i>Total volume of materials (cm²)</i>	<i>Average volume per one issue (cm²)</i>	<i>Average volume per one material (cm²)</i>	<i>% of all volume in this group of news-papers</i>
Sept 28						
locals papers		1	460			
Sept 29						
dailies	6	118	29,501	4,917	250	12
yellows	3	22	3,640	1,213	165	8
locals	5	51	7,762	1,552	152	20
all together	14	191	40,903	2,922	214	9
Sept 30-Oct 2						
dailies	12	162	42,087	3,507	337	17
yellows	2	17	3,810	1,905	224	8
locals	8	49	8,520	1,065	174	22
weeklies	1	7	3,140	3,140	449	2
all together	23	235	57,557	2,502	245	12
Oct 3-Oct 9						
dailies	35	242	67,983	1,942	281	28
yellows	8	62	14,970	1,871	241	32
locals	21	38	5,861	279	154	15
weeklies	2	35	66,041	33,020	1,887	51
all together	66	377	154,854	2,346	411	34
Oct 10-Oct 10						
dailies	35	70	15,699	449	224	6
yellows	8	22	4,957	620	225	10
locals	21	16	4,165	198	260	11
weeklie	2	6	15,422	7,711	2,570	12
all together	66	114	40,243	610	353	9
Oct 17-Dec 31						
dailies	385	400	89,790	233	224	37
yellows	88	59	19,839	225	336	42
locals	231	74	12,609	55	170	32
weeklie	22	34	45,723	2,078	1,345	35
all together	726	567	167,961	231	296	36

Table 21. Materials related to the disaster in Estonian, Finnish and Swedish newspapers 28.09.–16.10.1994

	<i>All papers observes</i>			<i>Dailies</i>			<i>Yellows</i>			<i>Locals</i>	
	<i>Esonian</i>	<i>Finnish</i>	<i>Swedish</i>	<i>Estonian</i>	<i>Finnish</i>	<i>Swedish</i>	<i>Estonian</i>	<i>Finnish</i>	<i>Swedish</i>	<i>Estonian</i>	<i>Swedish</i>
Sept 28 number	1	29	22	–	–	3	–	29	19	1	–
Sept 29 number	191	198	212	118	147	70	22	51	76	51	
Sept 28–Sept 29 number	192	227	234	118	147	73	22	80	95	52	
% of all items	21	1	18	20	20	12	18	23	25	34	
Sept 28–Oct 2 number	427	499	659	281	343	252	39	156	225	101	
% of all items	47	46	50	47	46	43	32	45	59	65	
Oct 3–Oct 10 number	377	390	468	242	285	248	62	105	103	38	
% of all items	41	36	35	41	38	42	50	30	27	25	
Sept 10–Oct 16 number	114	205	202	70	116	86	22	89	54	16	
% of all items	12	19	15	12	16	15	18	25	14	10	
Sept 28–Oct 16 number	918	1094	1329	512	744	586	123	350	382	155	361
% of all items	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Table 22 Types of the disaster content in the Estonian and Finnish press (28.09–16.10)

	<i>Estonian (%)</i>					<i>Finnish (%)</i>	
	<i>all</i>	<i>dailies</i>	<i>yellows</i>	<i>locals</i>	<i>weeklies</i>		
Accident-as-event related content							
1-safety of the ferries	13	16	14	6	6		25
2-accident itself	18	19	12	12	27		10
3-causes of the accident	24	27	16	15	35		12
4-guilties	5	8	3	1			4
5-rescue work	13	13	24	4	13		16
Institutions-related content							
6-official investigation	22	26	21	11	13		14
	21	23	18	12	29		6
	20	23	18	13	23		3
9-cooperation	9	7	4	6	8		1
10-societal impact	8	8	5	1	17		1
Individuals-related content							
11-victims	32	34	34	31	21		19
12-grief, death	29	21	11	24	10		13
13-crisis work, psychology	15	14	13	22	15		5
14-relatives	10	8	14	7	17		4
15-fate of the wreck	7	9	7	5			7
16-ethical problems	3	4	1	–	2		2
Abstract content							
17-back	22	22	30	14	33		17
18-symbolic meaning, nature vs, technics, religious etc	13	11	16	8	28		1

**Table 23. Main theme of the materials related to the disaster Sept 28- Oct 16
(%of items)**

	<i>All papers</i>		<i>Dailies</i>		<i>Yellows</i>		<i>Locals</i>		<i>Weeklies</i>	
	%	rank	%	rank	%	rank	%	rank	%	rank
Victims	16	1.	16	1.	12	2.	21	1.	11	4.-5.
Official investigation	11	2.	13	2.	9	3.	8	5.	4	7.-12.
Grief, death	11	3.	12	3.	4	12.	15	2.	-	
Economic consequences	9	4.	10	4.	7	4.-8.	7	6.	13	2.-3.
Causes of the accident	8	5.	9	5.	6	9.-10.	9	4.	4	7.-12.
Background themes	7	6.	5	6.-7.	16	1.	4	7.-9.	7	6.
Psychological problems, crisis help	6	7.	4	8.	7	4.-8.	15	3.	4	7.-12.
Information service	5	8.	5	6.-7.	3	13.-15.	4	7.-9.	13	2.-3.
The accident itself	4	9.	3	13.	7	4.-8.	4	7.-9.	17	1.
Fate of the wreck	3	10.	4	9.	6	9.-10.	3	10.	-	
Rescue work	3	11.	3	12.	7	4.-8.	2	11.-13.	4	7.-12.
Safety of the ferries	3	12.	4	10.	5	11.	1	15.-16.	-	
Symbolic meaning of the catastrophe	3	13.	3	11.	2	1.-18.	2	11.-13.	4	7.-12.
Relatives	2	14.	2	14.	3	13.-15.	1	14.	4	7.-12.
Societal influence of the accident	2	15.	2	15.	2	16.-18.	1	15.-16.	11	4.-5.
Religious and mystical experience	1	16.	0.3	19.	7	4.-8.	2	11.-13.	-	
Guilt or guilties	1	17.	1	16.	2	16.-18.	-	-	-	
Cooperation between countries	1	18.	1	17.	-	-	-	-	-	
Nature, weather	0.4	19.-20.	0.2	20.	3	13.-15.	-	-	-	
Ethical problems	0.4	19.-20.	1	18.	-	-	-	-	2	13.

Table 24. Coverage of the catastrophe in different newspapers by topics 17.10.-31.12. (main or other essential theme, % of items)

	<i>All papers</i>		<i>Dailies</i>		<i>Yellows</i>		<i>Locals</i>		<i>Weeklies</i>	
	%	rank	%	rank	%	rank	%	rank	%	rank
Official investigation	34	1.	40	1.	14	9.-10.	27	1.	12	8.-10.
Economic consequences	25	2.	25	3.	20	4.-6.	20	4.	44	1.
Victims	24	3.	25	2.	31	1.	15	5.	9	11.-13.
Grief, death	20	4.	22	4.	17	7.-8.	24	2.	3	16.-18.
Background themes	20	5.	20	5.	27	2.	13	6.-7.	24	3.
Causes of the accident	17	6.	18	7.	20	4.-6.	13	6.-7.	29	2.
Fate of the wreck	16	7.	18	6.	3	16.-18.	21	3.	12	8.-10.
The accident itself	12	8.	14	8.	5	15.	6	11.-12.	15	5.-7.
Information service	11	9.	11	11.	20	4.-6.	6	11.-12.	15	5.-7.
Psychological problems, crisis help	11	10.-11.	10	12.	14	9.-10.	11	8.	9	11.-13.
Relatives	11	10.-11.	12	10.	10	13.-14.	10	9.	3	16.-18.
Safety of the ferries	10	12.	13	9.	10	13.-14.	1	17.-18.	6	14.-15.
Symbolic meaning of the catastrophe	9	13.	9	13.-14.	12	11.-12.	7	10.	9	11.-13
Cooperation between countries	8	14.	9	13.-14.	12	11.-12.	–		15	5.-7.
Rescue work	7	15.	6	15.	17	7.-8.	4	13.-15.	12	8.-10.
Religious and mystical experiences	6	16.	2	18.	24	3.	4	13.-15.	21	4.
Societal influence of the accident	4	17.	4	17.	3	16.-18.	1	17.-18.	6	14.-15.
Guilt or guilties	3	18.	4	16.	–		3	16.	–	
Nature, weather	1	19.	1	20.	3	16.-18.	4	13.-15.	–	
Ethical problems	1	20.	2	19.	–		–		3	16.-18.

Figure 14 Main functions of the materials in the newspapers during different periods after the disaster %

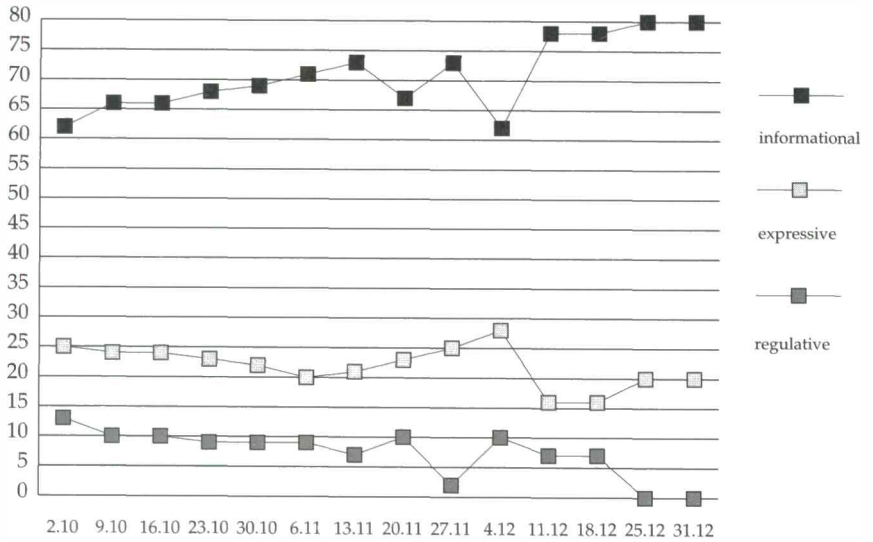


Figure 15 Main functions of the materials in the different types of newspapers in sept. 28 - Dec. 31 (%)

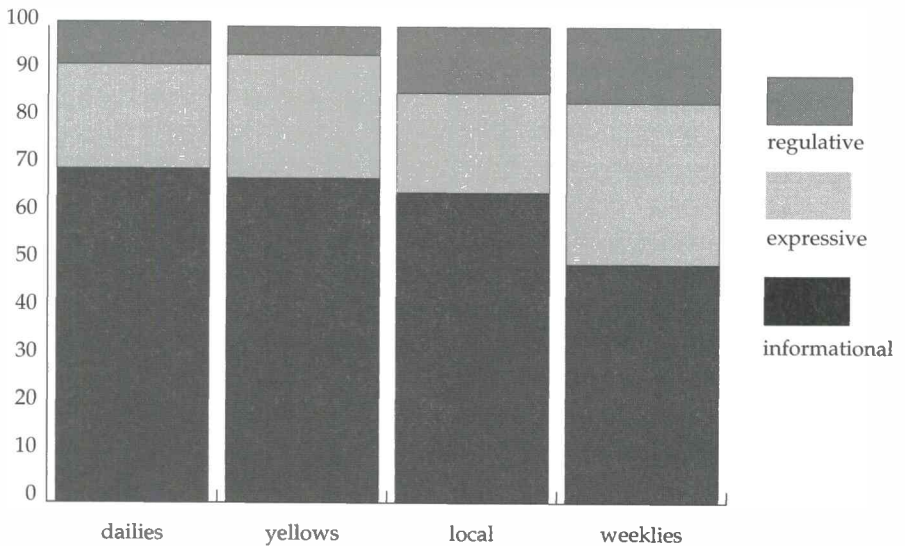


Figure 16

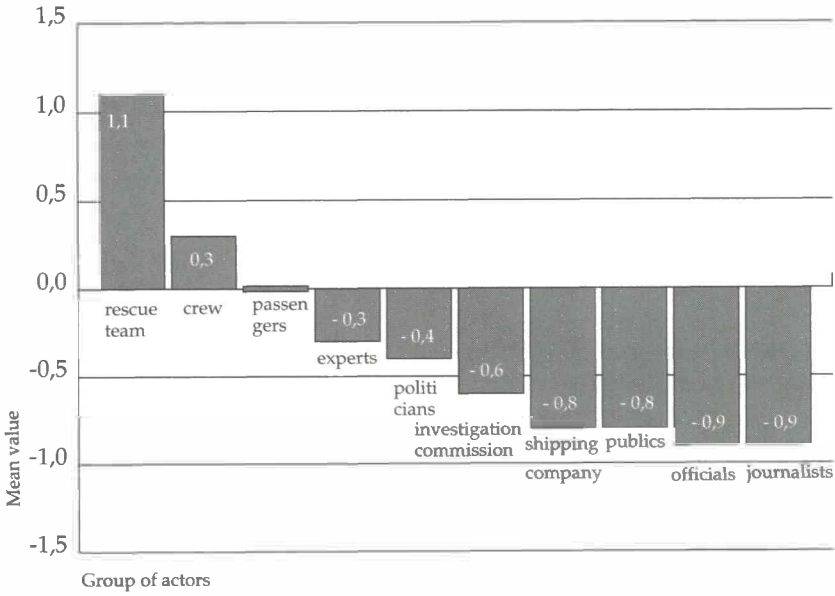
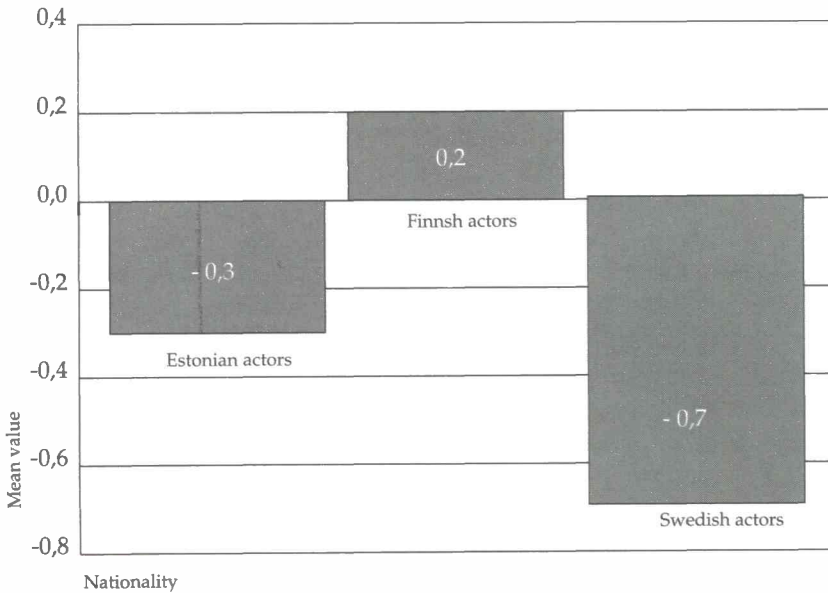


Figure 17 Evaluation of activities by actors of different nationalities (mean value of estimations)



APPENDIX II

Discourse on guilt in Estonian dailies

Motto: "It never occurred to me we would need to launch a propaganda war in defence of our seamen's honour and dignity."

(Premier Mart Laar, on 4 October 1994)

I

Rahva Hääl 29 September

Mr. Rolf Aspenberg, leader of the Swedish rescue team: "About a dozen Estonians have been taken on board the Finnish passenger liner. They were mostly members of the crew, which once again shows how ill-prepared the Estonians are to face critical situations." -

A passenger, an Estonian, critically appraised the crew's passivity. In his words, the crew had neither given the emergency alarm nor done much to save the passengers' lives.

H. Sillaste, the rescued member of the crew: At the moment the accident happened, water broke in through the bow door of the car deck, which was out of order and not properly closed. The bow door had not been properly closed.

Accusations in the Swedish press, reported by Ülo Ignats (Stockholm): Do those who have lived so long in the Eastern bloc at all have the competence to navigate? Was it perhaps the rooted Soviet-style negligence that caused the accident? A wide variety of human errors get reported. Analyses by scientists lead to the verdict: The crew are guilty because they failed to close the bow door, to pack the holes, waken the passengers, as well as fasten containers and lorries properly to prevent them from getting loose and penetrating the hull. Those guilty should be held responsible. Several evening papers gave a negative view of the Estonian crew's work.

Eesti Sõnumid 29 September

There is no confirmation of the allegations that the heavy vehicles on the car deck of the ferry had been set in motion due to the combined effect of the high winds, heavy seas and list.

Postimees 29 September

Yesterday morning, it was provisionally concluded that the shipwreck was caused by the 28 lorries on the heavy vehicle deck, which, having come loose, might have made a hole in the hull. The Estline employees, however, contended that all vehicles were always very carefully lashed down, especially after getting a storm warning. This excludes the possibility of vehicles having been set in motion on their own.

Andi Meister and the Estline representatives stressed that the crew were skilled seamen. "The company has no explanation to what happened," the press spokesperson of the Estline said. Mr. Kalk had not noticed any crew members on the deck.

As reported by the Swedish Radio, the Marine Authority of Sweden believe that one of the Estonia's bow doors had not been properly closed. Hendrik Sillaste declared in his interview to Finnish TV that he had seen water rush in through the bow door. He believed the door was out of order and not properly closed.

As reported by the Swedish Radio, the Swedish marine inspectors also disclosed that during the inspection of the ship on Tuesday they had drawn attention to the bad condition of the seals of the bow doors. The Swedish news agency quoted the inspectors, who had doubted the Estonia's navigability. Safety of navigation in the former Eastern bloc countries was severely criticized by the Seamen's Union of Sweden and the Chairman of the Swedish Association of Captains, Christer Lindvall.

"The [former] crew was replaced for reasons of economy," Lennart Johnsson, press secretary for the Swedish Seamen's Union, said. [A few years earlier, a crew consisting of Estonian nationals had been substituted for the Swedish one.] That put safety in jeopardy. At the moment of crisis, the crew were unable to communicate with the passengers. According to Walter Nilsson, a writer and expert of seafaring, bad weather conditions presented only a small risk for the Estonia. It is possible, though, that the cargo got loose, in which case, it must have been improperly lashed down.

Päevaleht 29 September

It has not yet been established whether displacement of badly fastened or altogether unfastened vehicles in heavy seas and ill-packed bow doors may have caused the accident. Reuters and ETA, with reference to the surviving crew member, Hendrik Sillaste, reported that at the moment of the accident water had broken in through the bow door which Sillaste thought was out of order and improperly closed.

Rahva Hääl 30 September

Kalle Muuli (editorial commentary): "Estline's sloppy work will send the whole of Estonia to the bottom." A Dutch lorry-driver said the crew of the Estonia had not duly heeded his request to fasten his heavily loaded vehicle with extra care.

The Editorial of Helsingin Sanomat made the wildest accusations. The outer bow door had not been properly closed and the lorries had been left unfastened. Suspicion: there was a fault in the locking system of the bow door which had been given a blind eye in the harbour. The Editorial of Iltalehti: Outrageous negligence. Water had had free entry to the car deck; although the marine inspectors had revealed shortcomings, the ship had been allowed out on stormy seas. On giant ferry boats, neither negligence

nor human error or series of mistakes should lead to catastrophes. Are Estonian safety measures adequate?

Eesti Sõnumid 30 September

Quoted Svenska Dagbladet: The Estonia's swift sinking may have been caused by cracks in her bow doors. These appear as a result of speeding in heavy seas.

Postimees 30 September

"Waves sweep over" (column by Allan Alaküla): The Western media take only moderate interest in the shipwreck. More than the shock of human loss, negligence, allegedly typical of a post-socialist country, gets coverage. The latter, they believe, was the cause of the shipwreck. "A ferry cannot sink without reason", the British quibble.

"Estonia's former captain holds the accident impossible" by Kaido Floren (Turin Sanomat): "I can't believe that such an accident was possible," Captain Håkan Karlsson said. In his view no predictable cause could have brought about the tragedy. The evacuation plans, too, in the event of any accidents imaginable were good. On principle, Karlsson believed, the only obstacle to quick evacuation could have been the crew's inadequacy.

Sten-Christer Forsberg, Vice-President of the Estline AB: Both the Estonia and her safety equipment met international standards. The crew were highly skilled.

Finns' versions of the causes of the accident given by Kaido Floren quoting Iltalehti: Was the crew trained well enough to face an accident like this? Could the crew's activity or inactivity altogether affect the course of an accident like this?

"It could not have happened, it cannot happen" by Märt Kivine: The prevailing belief in Finland is that the crew and captain of the Estonia may have caused the shipwreck. It has been directly asserted that the cargo had not been fastened properly, nor the bow doors closed tight. What could have prompted such negligence, it is asked. The Finnish Seamen's Union has stated that both the discipline and the working skills of the Estonian crew were inadequate. A survivor said that at the moment of crisis no action had been taken by the crew.

"Survivors' opinions" by Sulev Vedler

Anti Arak and Ain-Alar Juhanson maintained that the passengers had been informed belatedly. Still, the two sportsmen thought, the crew kept their heads. "At least those I met were real expert guys."

Reactions from abroad lay the blame for the shipwreck on the crew. The latter are believed to have been incompetent and, unprepared for such an emergency, they are believed to have lost their heads. On the other hand, both the Estline and other Estonian shipping companies and the Governmental Accident Investigation Commission contend that the crew was composed of the best seamen.

One of the reasons for panic was lack of information from the crew. An Estonian survivor remembers merely hearing "Emergency!" with no instructions to follow.

Päevaleht 30 September

"The Estonia will remain an obsession"(editorial):The accident was caused by Soviet-style negligence. Are people brought up in the Soviet Union altogether able to guarantee safe navigation? Pühapäevaleht 30 September

The crew were badly trained, the safety measures were inadequate and ill-exploited. The so-called East-European style of work.

Hommikuleht 30 September

"First survivors arrived in Estonia yesterday"Someone called Tarmo said: "There was panic, the crew did not give instructions."

ETA: "Estonia's last officer on watch did not observe anything suspicious on board" At around 1 o'clock he heard unusual pounding sounds. It was impossible to lower life-boats, as the list was increasing every minute. The crew did everything to save the passengers.

II

Rahva Hääl 1 October

BNS "Mr. Ants Luht, Captain of the Balanga Queen, refutes accusations": "The libel campaign launched against the Estonian seamen in Finnish and Swedish newspaper was instigated by competing shipping firms." Luht contends that the Estonian crew were well trained, and captains are required to take serious refresher courses every year.

Eesti Sõnumid 1 October

"Angle" (column by Raivo Palmaru): Information to the relatives of those on board and to the press was extremely ill-organised. And yet I would not subscribe to the claim that the accident was caused by either the inadequacy of the crew or bad technical condition of the ship. The vessel had recently undergone an inspection and its safety systems had been certified both in

Estonia and Sweden and met all the international standards. The speculations published until now in Sweden can largely be accounted for by the rivalry among shipping firms.

Eesti Sõnumid 3 October

"Sweden in mourning" by Eimar Rahumaa (Stockholm)In the heat of the fray blame is laid on the crew and its malpractice under emergency conditions. Walter Nilsson, writer and expert of seafaring, said, "I don't think an Estonian seaman is inferior to a Swedish one," adding, "But we can't expect them to have similar skills and morale."

Let us console ourselves with knowledge of the fact that to date the attitude has changed and people have started to realize how offensively inappropriate prejudiced appraisals like "negligence of low-paid Estonians" are, since there is not a single piece of evidence. Expressen appears to reveal a clear-cut tendency on part of the Swedes to lay the heavy burden of responsibility on the little apprentice, Estonia.

"Let's stick together and try to understand each other" by Mr. Peeter Veegen (master mariner): There is no difference in the qualification standards of Estonian and other countries' seamen. Let's spare the crew undue accusations and speculations.

Eesti Sõnumid 4 October

"Shipowners held back opinions" by Raivo Palmaru: "Neither heavy seas nor unfastened, loose vehicles could cause the separation of the Estonia's bow visor," said Sten-Christer Forsberg, technical director of Nordström & Thulin AB and Board member of the Estline. The Vice-Chairman of the Board of Estline AB and Vice-Director of Nordström & Thulin AB, Anders Berg, strongly disapproved of the statements made by representatives of Swedish trade unions, which doubt Estonian seamen's professional aptitude. Forsberg stated that the crew of the Estonia were well trained. Their aptitude had been repeatedly tested, and the Swedish partners of the shipping company have no complaints. Mr. Toivo Ninnas (Estonian Shipping Company): It is job competition that drives the Swedish trade unions to resort to unfair means.

Postimees 4 October

"Estonians to be employed on the Vironia" by Sulev Vedler: Doubts have been voiced in the Western press as to whether the crew of the Estonia were competent enough and ready to cope with accidents. Reportedly, the incompetence was due to the crew's youth and lack of experience as a consequence of frequent shifting of the personnel. T. Ninnas said that accusations and libel against the Estonian crew primarily demonstrate the dishonest means which the Swedish trade unions resort to in their job competition, being resentful of by the fact that an Estonian crew had been substituted for the Swedish one on the Estonia.

Päevaleht 4 October

The vehicles on the car deck were properly fastened. The closing of the ramp installations and the bow visor was electronically controlled. The closing or opening operations of the visor and the ramp were indicated by respective signalling lights on the bridge. Allegations that the engines had stopped well before the accident and the power supply was cut off, are not true (according to 3rd engineer Margus Treu). The crew employed were very well trained, they weren't worse than any other crew sailing the seas under other colours. Accusations raised against the crew of the Estonia are

related to the Swedish trade unions' job competition, Toivo Ninnas believes. The Estonia was technically in good order and the crew was good. Rahva Hääl 5 October

"Certain forces seek to profit from the shipwreck, Premier Mart Laar claims": "It had never occurred to me that we might need to launch a propaganda war in defence of our seamen's honour and dignity," Laar said at a press conference.

Eesti Sõnumid 5 October

"Statement made by the Estonian Seamen's Union in connection with the sinking of the Estonia":

We are convinced that the crew of the Estonia also proceeded to do their duty with high professional skills until the last moment and did everything within their power to save the ship and the passengers. It is depressing to learn that there are people who want to make use of the tragedy. Certain radio stations and organisations speculating around the causes of the accident cast doubt upon the Estonian sailors' seafaring capability. It stands to reason that foreign agencies who are afraid of competition take every chance to slander Estonian seamen. But the fact that our domestic media follow suit is embarrassing and painfully unjust.

Postimees 5 October

"Battles over the Estonia" (column by Vahur Kalmre): It could be expected that the crew and its performance would be considered as one of the possible causes of the tragedy. That was done both by Scandinavian officials and journalists, the same thought flashed through the US press. However, an important distinction was that whereas the US media spoke and wrote about the Estonia's crew, the Scandinavian ones at once stressed the fact that the crew was composed of Estonian nationals, adding, too, that Estonians used to be part and parcel of the former Soviet system and should not be permitted to sail European seas. The rest of Europe, let alone the USA, never allowed themselves such expressions.

Postimees 6 October

"Attack is the best defence" by Märt Kivine: Finnish media have concentrated on finding the culprit, not the causes. The leader of the Finnish Seamen's Union, Per-Erik Nelin: "Evidently it all happened because the Estonian crew was unskilled. Indeed, one cannot blame them for being inadequately trained." Martin Saanikangas, director of the Masa-Yards Shipyard: "Had the crew been Finnish, the Estonia would have reached the harbour." At the back of such allegations, we believe, is fear. It is feared that the catastrophe really occurred as an accident, and was not brought about by the Estonian crew's incompetence. In the latter case, Finnish ships, too, might be prone to suffer accidents. That, however, would both reduce the economic gain and the reliability of both institutions.

Päevaleht 6 October

According to one version, the accident was caused by speeding. Captain Jan-Tore Tornros of the Mariella ferryboat noted that while his boat was travelling at 10-12 knots, the Estonia overtook her travelling at around 15 knots. The Nordström & Thulin have put the breakdown of the visor of the wrecked ship down to the misjudgements of the earlier safety inspection.

Rahva Hääl 7 October

"Shipping firm seeks shelter in patriotism" (column by Kalle Muuli): Malevolent accusations aimed at Estonia. The Estline is trying to wash its hands of hundreds of deaths. The Estline does not equal Estonia. The shipping firm holds responsibility. It does not matter whether the accident was caused by faulty design of the boat or metal fatigue or negligence prompted by excessive self-confidence - the Estline is responsible. Minor failures accumulated. Evidently, neither could the passengers, whose alertness had been doped with sweet talk of safety, nor the crew suspect that deathly danger was lurking on a voyage which was advertised as absolutely safe.

From KAUPPALEHTI: The accident was a terrible blow to Estonians. It is not made easier by the fact that Finnish papers label Estonian seamen 'ryssas' and 'tiblas'¹. The seamen's unions of both Finland and Sweden took to flinging mud at their Estonian counterparts even before than the storm winds had subsided. The technical problems Estonian ships had were more formidable than the problems of the workforce. Why did the Estonia's crew fail to help the passengers more efficiently and sooner? Why did the passengers not know how to handle the life-saving devices in the right way?

Eesti Sõnumid 13 October

"Finnish and Swedish seamen's unions don't criticise Estonian sailors" by Enn Uus: Yesterday at a press conference the Secretary of the Northern Countries' Transport Workers' Federation, Borgthor Kjaernested, the inspector of the International Federation of Transport Workers, and the Secretary of the Finnish Seamen's Union declared that they had never reproached the Estonian seamen for their work.

Hommikuleht 13 October

From the trade unions's press conference: No claims have been raised against the Estonia's crew. There are a few opinions questioning the professional standards of their work.

¹ Derogatory for "Russians".

Rahva Hääl 22 October

BNS: "Estonia's sinking was not due to human error" Mr. Karppinen: By now the possibility that the visor could have been left open has been excluded. All the hydraulic locks of the visor were in a closed position right up to the moment of the accident. Stenström: Neither the captain nor the company can be held responsible, because we lack exact data about what sealoads at what speeds such a ship was designed to withstand.

III

Rahva Hääl 29 October

Andrew Linington, spokesman to the British Society of Naval Officers: The accident that happened to the Estonia is as infrequent a case as would be simultaneous failure of all the 4 engines of a plane. The ro-ro vessels are extremely safe.

Eesti Sõnumid 29 September

Johannes Johanson (Estline's Director): The vessel shouldn't have sunk. Juri Keek, a former captain: The storm wind alone couldn't have caused the shipwreck. Esa Saari, a Finnish marine inspector: It was an unexpected case. Such a wind shouldn't be a problem for a ship of this size.

Postimees 29 September

Johannes Johanson, Estline's Director, termed the shipwreck to be a mystery. He said that, all factors considered, the ship should have remained afloat even after a serious breakdown. "The Estonia should have withstood bad weather," said Walter Nilsson, a Swedish marine expert. "The ship was built to weather Baltic storms. And yet the tragedy happened in a storm which cannot be considered the worst of the year. Something must have happened on board," Nilsson said. "Estline thought the Estonia to be unsinkable" by Sulev Vedler: The wreck of the passenger ferry was a mystery, as far as theoretically the vessel should have been unsinkable, the executive director of the Estline asserted. He said that earlier calculations had suggested that tilting would not lead to sinking. The vessel should have remained afloat even if on its side, because of the watertight partition walls and doors which closed automatically in case of an accident. Nor should flooding by water of the car deck have brought about sinking, the vessel should only have sat somewhat deeper in water.

Päevaleht 29 September

Blast or collision - first versions for Estonia's sinking (Johannes Johanson, Estline's Director on the Estonian side, to Reuters.) According to Estline's representatives, the wreck may have been caused either by an explosion or by an underwater collision. Also, the fore of the ship, which proved to be too weak, could have been the cause. Several survivors

report that the front part of the ship was smashed. Officials believe that strong side waves may have broken loose Estonia's visor. Subsequently the waves smashed the bow ramp (the car deck door) letting water enter the ship. The Estonia developed a strong list, the engines stopped, in about 10 minutes the ship had keeled over.

Rahva Hääl 30 September

Raudsalu, Harbour Master at Muuga: Many people were certain that the Estonia was unsinkable. Should something happen, she would only keel over. Computations show that the ship would not have keeled over even if all the cars and trailers on board had shifted.

Eesti Sõnumid 30 September

"Tragedy on the Baltic shook the world" by Anneli Rõigas: "The International Herald Tribune": The storm could not have been a problem. The ship had sailed under worse weather conditions. An article in the IHT points out that in marine experts' view ferryboats like the Estonia have a most unsatisfactory design arrangement. "Because of their bad design, flooding of the car deck by even comparatively small amounts of water may cause loss of stability," the IHT concludes. Most commentaries doubted the safety of the car deck in such ships, the long decks having doors at both ends. Both "Liberation" of France, the "Guardian" of Britain and "De Telegraaf" of Holland question the safety of big transport ferries which can be destabilized by comparatively small amounts of water.

Postimees 30 September

"Possible causes of the Estonia's catastrophe": The latest version: an explosion or collision. J. Johanson: A collision or an explosion is considered a likely cause. The bow doors could not have caused the accident. The Estline AB Vice-President, Sten-Christer Forsberg: Both the Estonia herself and her safety equipment were in full accordance with the international standards.

Finns' versions reviewed by Kaido Floren (Iltalehti): The broken bow door is the main version. In the view of Finnish shipbuilders, no bow door which is in good working order can let in water even in a severe storm. And in case the bow door got broken in storm, it needs to be investigated whether the signalling equipment sensed it. If it did not, one needs to find out why.

"Survivor's opinions" by Sulev Vedler: Survivors think the fore of the Estonia broke off. "The bow was smashed," triathlete Anti Arak said. He alleged the front of the ship was open and it seemed as if it had been turned upside-down and broken off. Arak thought that the breaking off had happened due to the pressure from the waves which forced the bow door open, but it could also have been a technical fault.

Eesti Sõnumid 1 October

"Did a design fault prove fatal for the Estonia?" by Ester Shank: On ships like the Estonia, heavy seas pounding against it can open the visor and lift it. Prof. Heino Levald added that both the visor and seals of the Estonia may have been in good working order, but the load of the oncoming waves proved greater than the hull's power of resistance at the place where the plating had been cut through.

"Estonia remains indebted to Finland forever" by Anneli Rõigas: It is depressing and ludicrous to hear from the lips of some officials Soviet-style confirmations as if the Estonia had been one of the safest kinds of ships ever built. Her life-rafts did not meet international standards. They lacked supports for feet.

Eesti Sõnumid 4 October

Mr. Jaan Metsaveer, Director of the Institute of Mechanics, Tallinn Technical University, trained as a shipbuilding engineer: Evidently the accident was caused by the faulty design of the ship and the monopoly of the shipping line.

"Shipowners held back opinions" by Raivo Palmaru: The Technical Director of Nordström & Thulin AB and the Estline Board member, Sten-Christer Forsberg, said: The Estonia's bow visor was built to withstand ocean storms. Mr. Ninnas (Director of the Estonian Shipping Company): The ship met all the requirements.

Rahva Hääl 5 October

"The bow doors have never failed before," the builder of the Estonia contends. The shipyard will take no steps before the international investigation committee have issued their report on the causes of the shipwreck.

Postimees 5 October

Reuters-BNS "Estonia's Swedish owner says: There was a significant fault in the design of the bow of the ferry":

"There was an error of principle in the design arrangement of the Estonia," the Swedish owner of the Estonia, Executive Director of Nordström & Thulin, Ronald Bergman said. Bergman is sure that the ramp got damaged in heavy seas and let water flood the car deck. Accusations are due to rival firms who kept silent about the fact that on several occasions the bow doors of their ships had opened of their own accord and accidents had narrowly been avoided. First and foremost, those firms who have not disclosed that the bow ramps of their ships was liable to open of its their accord should be held responsible for the catastrophe, together with state bodies and ship classification societies.

The International Investigation Committee: the shipwreck was caused by separation of the bow visor from the hull; why it happened is not yet clear.

Rahva Hääl 6 October

"The photos made by robots are not clear and fail to reveal the details which could indicate the causes of the shipwreck," said Heino Jaakula, the department manager of the Water Transport Authority. The Estonia had been designed and built in compliance with all the requirements, but the Commission has no technical drawings of the ship at their disposal which could contribute to establishing the truth.

Päevaleht 6 October

Nordström & Thulin have put the breakdown of the bow visor down to the shortcomings in the safety inspection.

PL/BNS: "Estline's monopoly - legend or reality?" On 28 August 1989 an agreement was signed in Helsinki between the Transport Committee of the Estonian SSR and the Swedish shipping firm Nordström & Thulin to start a joint venture, the Estline. Clause Three of the agreement gave the Estline monopoly in ferry and passenger service in the 10 years following the time of starting the service.

Rahva Hääl 7 October

Sirje Kiin: The Swedish ferryboats have been viewed as one-hour hotels or buying paradises which are never upset by storms and where the names of passengers or customers have no importance whatsoever.

Rahva Hääl 8 October

"No terrorists were involved in the Estonia's wreck," claims Jüri Pihl, Director-General of the Security Police. The crew were observing regulations, and no charges can be brought against them.

Mr. Jaak Allik (editorial commentary): "The sea wasn't knee-deep this time": The confirmations of the ship having been in excellent technical condition and employing the best kind of a crew cannot refute the sad circumstance that she is presently lying on the bottom. Talks about a Russian submarine or bomb can serve as a consolation. The first engineer of the vessel had repeatedly raised the issue of the perilous nature of the Estonia. The shipping company was knowledgeably risking people's lives from day to day, having no plan of action for the occasion of sinking.

Päevaleht 8 October

"We'll go to Stockholm, we will" by Toomas Sildam The Swedish morning paper Dagens Nyheter quotes the captain of the Viroonia² (formerly Diana II): The owners have let the ship fall into disrepair. We were astonished at seeing a Swedish vessel in such a bad condition. The ship has many faults. The engine room is the worst.

2 The Ex-Diana II, a sistership of Estonia, was supposed to be added to the Estline fleet as Viroonia. After the disaster it was renamed Mare Baltica.

Päevaleht 18 October

Estonia's sinking still a riddle, the Investigation Commission confirms: The locking system of the bow visor failed. The welding of the lugs attached to the two side locks of the 55-ton visor failed. For unknown reasons, the bottom locking device was broken. One cannot exclude metal fatigue. Following failure of the locking devices the visor was forced open by waves and started to pound against the forward ramp. The hinges supporting the visor failed. Now only hydraulic actuators resisted. When, however, the heavy visor started to hammer against the bow ramp, the latter gave way and was torn open. The visor fell into the sea, water flooded the car deck through the gap and caused the ship to keel over.

Päevaleht 20 October

"There's something wrong in the Shipping Company" by Ülo Ignats (Stockholm) The Marine Authority and Inspection lack clear routines of reporting, and they are not concerned with problems of hulls, engines and power supply systems. The latter are the concern of classification societies, 5-6 of which are highly reputed, 3-4 are good, but 40 appear to be shady and corrupt.

Päevaleht 29 October

ETA "Swedish lawyers to bring charges against Estline management" Two renowned Swedish lawyers submitted a statement to the police in Stockholm, seeking investigation into the catastrophe, and accusing the Estline management of having caused a serious accident.

Rahva Hääl, Eesti Sõnumid 22 October

BNS: "Estonia's sinking was not caused by human error": According to Mr. Stenström, the catastrophe was brought about by the combined effect of faulty design and unusually high, 10-metre waves. Stenström: No blame can be laid either on the captain or the shipping company, as we lack exact data about what water loads at what speed the ship had been designed to withstand.

Päevaleht 22 November

"No time bomb or collision tore off Estonia's visor": The visor broke off, the ramp opened and seawater flooded the car deck. First, the hinges of the visor were broken, then the cylinders of the locking mechanisms, causing the visor to separate. The 55-ton visor fell against the 3-meters wide bulbous bow, damaging it. Neither collision nor explosion caused the opening of the ramp. The visor seems not have been strong enough (weak hinges). Mr. Hunt: The Commission hold differing opinions about the failure sequence of the ramp, which was broken by the visor falling onto it. The visor's breakdown was also caused by its beating back and forth. Was the metal of the visor in compliance with the design requirements?

BNS: "Leading Swedish experts conducting investigation of Estonia's visor arrive in Hanko": Järvis: The visor must have broken due to excessively high loading, or its weak design. On high seas the forces unsuspected by the designer, or the combined effect of the bad design and unusually high 10-metre waves could have contributed.

Eesti Sõnumid 2 December

"Estonia's catastrophe could have been avoided" by Raivo Palmaru: The damage done to the visor of the Diana II and that of the Estonia appears to be similar like two drops of water. The starboard hinge of the locking device was broken, the welding of the so-called Atlantic lock and the port hinge was torn apart. Behind the lugs, on the other side of the visor, there were sensors attached to the plating which were connected to the signaling device. As the lugs were broken on the outside, signal lamps on the bridge remained on, as if everything was absolutely normal. In the Diana II case the fact of the accident was never disclosed to the public and the damage was repaired. However, no conclusions were drawn, no lessons learnt. There is no doubt, experts believe, that for the Estonia the faulty design proved fatal. The classification societies which assessed the vessel's navigability were well aware of the flaws, however.

Päevaleht 5 december

BNS: Divers explore Estonia's bridge: No traces of damage on the bow visor point to an explosion. Weak locking devices of the visor. It is difficult to ascertain whether the cracks had appeared earlier or as a result of the storm and heavy seas. Faulty design. A ship should be able to resist water and remain afloat, even without a visor.

Postimees 7 December

BNS: Examination of Estonia's wreck brought no clarity: It has been confirmed that the Estonia's bow visor design was weak. Theoretically, it is impossible to guarantee that all attachment points would resist external loads equally. It is likely that any one of the visor attachment points came in contact with a heavier sea load than the others and failed. Subsequently the other points failed as well, Meister noted.

Päevaleht 7 December

"The design of the Estonia-like vessels is unstable," says Andi Meister: No traces of explosion were detected on the bow. The bow visor must have been opened by waves. At the moment of the accident the engines were switched to the fully backwards. The design was unstable. No traces of damage on the bow visor point to an explosion. The visor attachment details were weak. It is impossible to ascertain whether the cracks had appeared earlier or as a result of the storm and heavy seas. Faulty design. A ship should be able resist to water and remain afloat even without a visor.

Päevaleht 12 December

BNS/Reuters: "Estonia's bow visor attachment locks were open at the moment of the accident":

The two side locks and the bottom lock were in the closed position, whereas the manual reserve locks were open. The breaking points of the visor reveal that excessively large loads have ripped the lock attachment lugs, the visor hinges and the hydraulic lifting mechanisms apart. With one lock failing, a chain reaction developed, and the other locks failed as well. No damage to the bow visor suggests an explosion. Weak attachment details of the visor. It is impossible to ascertain whether the cracks had appeared earlier or as a result of the storm and heavy seas. Faulty design. A ship should be able to resist to water and remain afloat even without a visor.

Päevaleht 19 December

ETA Estonia's certificate for international voyages under investigation. In compliance with international regulations, vessels like the Estonia are certified for short international voyages only. The Estonia's bow ramp and visor were practically built together. That is why the ramp was torn open when the visor fell off.

Päevaleht 21 December

BNS: Location of Estonia's bow port violates international requirements: The international SOLAS Convention regulatory requirements were violated concerning both the distance between the bow port and collision bulkhead, and the arrangement of the port.

APPENDIX III

Coding Instruction for the Content Analysis

coding unit - article, story, news item

A - categories describing the item

A1: Channel

- 01 Estonian Television
- 02 Estonian Radio, programme 1
- 03 Estonian Radio, programme 2 (Raadio 2)
- 04 Kuku (Commercial radio)
- 05 Newspapers: Rahva Hääl
- 06 Eesti Sõnumid
- 07 Päevaleht
- 08 Hommikuleht
- 09 Postimees
- 10 Post
- 11 Estonija
- 12 Eesti Ekspress
- 13 Eesti Aeg
- 14 Liivimaa Kroonika
- 15 Liivimaa Kuller
- 16 Õhtuleht
- 17 Võru Teataja
- 18 Sakala
- 19 Pärnu Postimees
- 20 Meie Maa

A2: Date (month, day)

A3: Source

- 01 News agency Baltic News Service (BNS)
- 02 News agency ETA (Eesti Telegraafiagentuur)
- 03 Foreign news agency
- 04 Other foreign channels
- 05 Other Estonian channel
- 06 Estonian and foreign news agency
- 07 Own author, original
- 08 Own author + news agency or a foreign channel
- 09 Official announcement
- 10 Some other source

*A4: Type of the material (genre)

- 10 on TV and radio:
- 11 news
- 12 reportage
- 13 feature
- 14 interview

- 15 studio discussion
- 16 commentary
- 17 practical information
- 18 some other
- 20 in newspapers:
- 21 editorial
- 22 news
- 23 background article
- 24 feature
- 25 interview
- 26 commentary
- 27 letter to the editor
- 28 practical information
- 29 some other

**A5: status of the material

- 10 on TV, in a radio programme:
- 11 first news
- 12 headline-news
- 13 other news (not mentioned in the headlines)
- 14 the only item of the broadcast
- 15 some other

20 Newspapers:

- 21 editorial
- 22 illustrated front page story
- 23 other stories on the front page
- 24 Estonia special
- 25 an illustrated inner page story
- 26 some other inner page story
- 27 letter to the editor
- 28 story on the announcements' page
- 29 some other

**A6: Volume of the article (square centimetres) or duration of the broadcast item (seconds)

* category is the same as in the Finnish system of content analysis

** category is similar to the Finnish one but modified (e. g. some points added)

- B - categories describing the themes
(one main theme + all the other essential themes)
- *B 000: cannot be defined
- **B 010: the accident itself
 - B 011 - view from outside, signals, co-ordinates, time, etc.
 - B 012 - view from inside, systems
 - B 013 - behaviour of the crew
 - B 014 - behaviour of the passengers
- B 020: rescue work
 - B 021 - rescue organization
 - B 022 - rescue work at sea
 - B 023 - other themes connected with rescue work
- **B 030: causes of the accident
 - B 031 - natural causes (storm)
 - B 032 - construction of the ferry, technical equipment (open bow door)
 - B 033 - human error, mistakes made by the crew (cargo got loose, too high speed)
 - B 034 - shipping companies, management
 - B 035 - international register, standards
 - B 036 - terrorism, militaries
 - B 037 - post-socialist mentality
 - B 038 - capitalist mentality
 - B 039 - bad fortune, impossible or unknown reasons
- **B 040: guilt and those of guilty
 - B 041 - in the accident
 - B 042 - in the poor effectivity of rescue operations
 - B 043 - in the poor, slow or incorrect information
 - B 044 - in the mistreating of the victims/relatives
 - B 045 - in something else connected with the accident and rescue work
- **B 050: information service and public opinion
 - B 051 - information from domestic authorities
(lists of victims etc.)
 - B 052 - international information and public opinion
 - B 053 - other themes concerning information
- *B 060: debate about ethical norms in writing or speaking about the accident
- B 070: nature, climate, geography
- B 080: psychological problems
 - B 081 - psychology of the people suffered through the catastrophe
 - B 082 - psychological advice, therapy

- B 083 - behaviour in the extreme situation (during the catastrophe)
- B 084 - other psychological themes
- *B 090: social influence of the accident
 - B 091 - consequences to Estonian society and its national prestige
 - B 092 - consequences to Swedish society
 - B 093 - consequences to Finnish society
 - B 094 - consequences to the relations between Estonia and Sweden/Finland
 - B 095 - consequences to the relations between Estonia and other countries
 - B 096 - other influences in society
- **B 100: economic consequences
 - B 101 - to "Estline" shipping company
 - B 102 - to other companies
 - B 103 - to the traffic in the Baltic Sea and ferry traffic in general
 - B 104 - to the construction and registration of the ships
 - B 105 - to private persons
 - B 106 - other economic influences
- B 110: safety of the ferries
 - B 111 - safety of the structure, construction
 - B 112 - rescue equipment and facilities available for the passengers
 - B 113 - training of the crew, organization
 - B 114 - international standards and control
 - B 115 - other themes concerning safety
- *B 120: official investigation of the accident
 - B 121 - the aims and problems raised by the commission
 - B 122 - finding, searching and raising of the bow visor
 - B 123 - searching and inquiring of the wreck and objects from the ship
 - B 124 - juridical questions
 - B 125 - composition and management of the commission
 - B 126 - other institutions involved in the investigation
 - B 127 - other themes concerning the investigation
- **B 130: background themes
 - B 131 - boat accidents before and after the "Estonia" catastrophe
 - B 132 - history of the "Estonia" ferry, earlier travelling by the "Estonia"
 - B 133 - technology of the ship-building
 - B 134 - hypothermia and other psychological and medical questions

- B 135 - history of Estonia as a sailing nation
- B 136 - other background themes
- **B 140: victims of the accident (passengers and the crew of the "Estonia" ferry)
 - B 141 - number of victims, lists
 - B 142 - searching and identification of the victims
 - B 143 - experiences and condition of the survivors
 - B 144 - home-coming, meetings with relatives of the survivors
 - B 145 - disappeared, trapped in the ship, lost in the sea
 - B 146 - biographies of the victims, their life before the accident, events in the lives of the survivors after the accident
 - B 147 - communication between the survivors and the authorities
 - B 148 - other themes concerning the victims
- **B 150 relatives of the victims
 - B 151 - experiences and condition of the relatives immediately after the accident
 - B 152 - communication between relatives and the shipping company "Estline"
 - B 153 - communication between relatives and the authorities
 - B 154 - communication between relatives and insurance companies
 - B 155 - children
 - B 156 - memories, thoughts and feelings of the relatives after the accident
 - B 157 - other themes concerning relatives
- **B 160: crisis help in the analysis was often integrated with
 - B 060 - psychological problems)
 - B 161 - official organization of the crisis help, crisis centres, hospitals
 - B 162 - voluntary crisis help
 - B 163 - crisis help organized by the church
 - B 164 - international co-operation and experience
 - B 165 - humanitarian aid to the victims and their families
 - B 166 - other themes connected with the crisis help
- **B 170: death and grief
 - B 171 - death and grief in general
 - B 172 - official public ceremonies
 - B 173 - religious ceremonies
 - B 174 - public grief and condolences
 - B 175 - private grief, private funerals
 - B 176 - transport and sending of dead bodies from Finland to Estonia

- B 177 - other themes concerning death and grief
- B 180: symbolic, philosophical meaning of the catastrophe
- B 181 - conflict between man/ technique and nature
- B 182 - crisis of the welfare society
- B 183 - the "Estonia" = Estonia
- B 184 - fate and life - philosophy of sailors
- B 185 - moral and ethical lessons of the catastrophe
- B 186 - historical memory and meaning of the catastrophe
(comparison to the "Titanic" etc.)
- B 187 - religious interpretation of the meaning of the catastrophe
- B 188 - other lessons from the catastrophe
- B 189 - other metaphores and symbols connected with the catastrophe
- B 190 - religious, mystical experiences and mythologies connected with the accident
- B 191 - religious experiences and feelings of the victims or relatives during the accident
- B 192 - forecasts, omens, dreams, superstitious experiences before, during and after the catastrophe
- B 193 - mystical appearances or disappearances, unexplained, mystical events connected with the victims
- B 194 - other religious or mystical themes connected with the accident
- **B 200 co-operation or conflict between the agencies and the countries involved in the accident and the crisis
- B 201 - between institutions, agencies
- B 202 - between ships, teams, rescue organizations
- B 203 - between investigators
- B 204 - between journalists, the media and the authorities
- B 205 - between the crisis and aid organizations
- B 206 - between Estonia and Finland in general
- B 207 - between Estonia and Sweden in general
- B 208 - between Estonia and other nations in general
- B 209 - between Finland, Sweden and other nations in general

- B 210: the future of "Estline" shipping company
(in the analysis was often integrated with B 100)
- B 211 - fate of the "Estline" and its owners
- B 212 - the future of the sea traffic between Estonia and Sweden

- B 220: compensations and benefits
(in the analysis often integrated with B 100-
- economic consequences)

- B 221 - activities of the insurance companies
- B 222 - activities of the funds and charities
- B 223 - activities of the law firms
- B 224 - activities of the associations of the victims
- B 225 - sums and conditions for entitlement
- B 226 - other themes concerning compensations
- B 230: fate of the wreck
 - B 231 - possibilities for raising the wreck or dead bodies (technical, financial conditions etc.)
 - B 232 - protection of the wreck, "sea-grave"
 - B 233 - official decisions, positions, legislation
 - B 234 - opinions and emotions concerning the wreck and lifting of the dead bodies from the wreck
 - B 235 - other themes concerning fate of the wreck
- B 240: other themes in connection with the "Estonia" catastrophe

** C -categories describing actors
Actors or agencies are coded by 5 - number code as follows:

C _____/._____/._____

national (ethnic)	social	functional
qualification.	qualification	qualification

1) national qualification:

- 0 - not defined
- 1 - Estonian
- 2 - Swedish
- 3 - Finnish
- 4 - Estonian + Swedish
- 5 - Estonian + Finnish
- 6 - Estonian + Finnish + Swedish
- 7 - Estonian + some other
- 8 - some other (research etc.)
- 9 - some other mixed

2) social qualification:

- 000 - not defined
- 010 - passengers of the "Estonia" as a group
- 011 - 019 - one of the passengers (often mentioned)
- 020 - crew of the "Estonia"
- 021 - 029 - one of the members of the crew
- 030 - rescue team
- 040 - relatives
- 050 - members of the government, politicians

- 051 - president
 - 052 - prime-minister etc.
 - 060 - official commission for the investigation
 - 070 - police
 - 080 - administration, authorities, officials
 - 090 - shipping company, owners, shipping agencies
 - 100 - experts, scientists
 - 110 - the media, journalists
 - 120 - clergymen
 - 130 - voluntary groups, charities
 - 140 - trade unions
 - 150 - astrologists, forecasters
 - 160 - public opinion, people "from the street"
 - 170 - insurance, funds
 - 180 - lawyers
 - 190 - mixed public
 - 200 - others (who)
 - 210 - passengers who planned to be on board but were not
 - 220 - medical professionals, psychologists
- 3) functional qualification
- 1 - referred to as a source of information
 - 2 - performer, interviewer
 - 3 - actor in the story
 - 4 - actor + source or performer
- **D -categories describing emotional characteristics and dispositions of the author or performer
- D 0 - not defined
 - D 1 - neutral, clinical
 - D 2 - interrogative, contemplating
 - D 3 - aggressive, blaming, accusing
 - D 4 - pathetic, heroic
 - D 5 - fulfilled with sorrow, grief
 - D 6 - exaggerated, frightened
 - D 7 - pessimistic, resigned
 - D 8 - optimistic, supportive
 - D 9 - some other (which)
- *E - a category describing ethical problems
- E 0 - no ethical problems
 - E 1 - ethical problems need further qualitative analysis

- F - categories describing functions of the coverage
 - F 01 - news, descriptive information about recent events
 - F 02 - practical information, advice
 - F 03 - self-expression, emotional contacts
 - F 04 - drama, sensation
 - F 05 - psychotherapy, support for the people during the crisis
 - F 06 - mobilization, call for action
 - F 07 - public relations self-defence or blaming the others
 - F 08 - analysis, education
 - F 09 - cohesion, stressing common values
 - F 10 - public opinion, evaluation
 - F 11 - other (what)
- H - category of evaluative content
 - H 0 - there are no evaluations, completely neutral attitude
 - H 1 - clearly positive evaluation
 - H 2 - slightly positive
 - H 3 - positive/negative balanced
 - H 4 - slightly negative, critical
 - H 5 - absolutely negative, blaming

The code of evaluative content is used as a combination of characteristics of evaluation, actor and theme as follows:

H_____/_____. ____/____
 evaluation ethnic social theme
 qualification

SPFs SENASTE RAPPORTER

- 159 Sjöstedt, Gunnar: Som en saga... Lögnen som maktmedel: Sårbarhetsproblem och motåtgärder. Stockholm 1992.
- 160 Stütz, Göran: Opinion 92. Svenskarnas inställning till samhälle, omvärld och försvar hösten 1992. Stockholm 1992.
- 161 Alling-Ode, Bitte; Tubin, Eino: Falska kort? Bilden i dataåldern. Stockholm 1993.
- 162 Hadenius, Stig: Regementsdöden i medierna. Stockholm 1993.
- 163:1 Nohrstedt, Stig Arne & Tassew, Admassu: Communication and Crisis. An inventory of Current Research. Stockholm 1993.
- 163:2 Flodin, Bertil: Myndigheters kriskommunikation. En kunskapsöversikt. Stockholm 1993.
- 163:3 Jarlbro, Gunilla: Krisinformation ur ett medborgarperspektiv. En kunskapsöversikt. Stockholm 1993.
- 163:4 Nohrstedt, Stig Arne; Nordlund, Roland: Medier i kris. En forskningsöversikt över mediernas roll vid kriser. Stockholm 1993.
- 164 Malešič Marjan (red): The role of Mass Media in the Serbian-Croatian Conflict. Stockholm 1993.
- 165 Stütz, Göran: Opinion 93. En opinionsundersökning hösten 1993.
- 166 Stütz, Göran: Opinion 94. En opinionsundersökning hösten 1994.
- 167 Stütz, Göran: Opinion 95. En opinionsundersökning hösten 1995.

ESTONIA

- The disaster

in Estonian media

The sinking of the ferry Estonia, on the night of 28 September 1994, was a formidable tribulation for thousands of Estonians whose relatives or friends remained forever in the cold stormy waters of the Baltic Sea. At the same time, it was a national disaster not only because many lives were lost. It also dealt with a serious moral blow to the self-confidence of the newly independent country, which had not yet recovered from the bruises left by decades of Soviet occupation. For Estonians, the wreck of the Estonia was not only a human tragedy, but a national catastrophe as well. The beautiful white ferry which used to ply between Tallinn and Stockholm evoked memories of the days in September 1944, when many Estonians were forced to flee their homeland in small fishing boats across the Baltic Sea, and lives were likewise lost in the stormy sea. The news of the disaster brought back painful memories of past history.

Some of the questions discussed in this report are the following:

- the timing of the first communications about the disaster;
- the sources of information to the public;
- the activities of the officials and journalists in order to provide people with the information about the disaster;
- the main trends in the content of the media material about the disaster;
- the discourses about the causes and the responsibility;
- the ethical problems of the disasterrelated journalism concerning the reactions of the survivors and the victims' relatives;

Marju Lauristin and **Peeter Vihalemm** are professors at the University of Tartu, Department of Journalism.

Styrelsen för 
PSYKOLOGISKT FÖRSVAR

Box 2195 103 15 Stockholm

