

PAUL ARISTE 100

Academician and Professor Paul Ariste, a distinguished Estonian Finno-Ugric scholar, founder of *Linguistica Uralica* and its first editor-in-chief, was born on February 3 a century ago; he passed away on February 2 fifteen years ago.

Paul Ariste was born in the parish of Torma in eastern Estonia in the family of a blacksmith. Because his parents moved to Tallinn, in 1925 he finished a gymnasium variously named in history, which the Swedish king Gustavus Adolphus II had set up in 1631. Incidentally, Ferdinand Johann Wiedemann, who was born a century before Paul Ariste, had finished the same school. Paul Ariste's linguistic interests were revealed at an early age. In addition to the languages taught at school, he picked up some Yiddish from his classmates and Swedish from his neighbors. Besides, he took an interest in Esperanto and made his first acquaintance also with Livonian and Votic. His first piece of writing dealt with Livonians and was published in Cologne in 1921 in Esperanto. He wrote his next articles, which were published in various places, in Esperanto dealing with Livonian literature and the pronunciation, terminology, and promotion of Esperanto.

In 1925 Paul Ariste was enrolled at the University of Tartu and studied Estonian, Finnic languages, Uralic studies, folklore, and Germanic studies. He graduated from the University in 1929, working at the same time at the library of the Estonian National Museum and the Archives. By then he had become familiar with the languages of all the native ethnic groups of Estonia, including Latvian and Romany. In 1931 he earned a master's degree for his study of "Estonian-Swedish loanwords in the Estonian language". Beside studying the dialects of the contact area between Estonian and Estonian Swedish, this paper required a knowledge of Low German. The study was published in 1933,¹ and its level is superior to that of contemporary doctoral theses at many universities of the world. Later he revisited the study of loanwords a number of times, dealing with Low German loans in Estonian, including the older standard language, loans from Yiddish and Roma, Hebrew loans in the first Estonian translation of the Bible (1739), Estonian loans in Russian, and substrate words in Finnic. Paul Ariste was the last scholar to study Hiiumaa Swedish and Laiuse Gypsies. His monograph "Language Contacts"² summarizes his study of language contacts.

In 1933 Paul Ariste started work at the Estonian Language Archives of the University of Tartu. During this period he also taught phonetics and was trained in it in Helsinki and Hamburg.

¹ P. A r i s t e, *Eesti-rootsi laensõnad eesti keeles*, Tartu 1933 (ACUT B XXIX₃).

² P. A r i s t e, *Keelekontaktid. Eesti keele kontakte teiste keeltega*, Tallinn 1981 (Eesti NSV Teaduste Akadeemia Emakeele Seltsi toimetised 14).

In 1939 he earned a doctoral degree for his thesis "Speech sounds of Hiiu-maa dialects"³, where he described in detail the phonetic system of the Hiiu-maa dialects both from the synchronic and diachronic perspectives. Incidentally, he used the linguistic data to explain the settlement of various parts of Hiiu-maa, this one-time *insula deserta*, from the area in Saaremaa that had belonged to the Livonian branch of the Teutonic Order and the area that had once belonged to Saaremaa-Läänemaa (Oesel-Wiek) bishopric. Paul Ariste later also published the findings of those instrumental measurements that had not been included in the thesis.

During the German occupation Paul Ariste as an expert was able to spare Lithuanian Israelite Karaims from being sent to concentration camps.

In the autumn of 1944 Paul Ariste did not manage to leave Estonia. When the University of Tartu was reopened in the autumn of 1944, Paul Ariste was the only philologist with a doctoral degree who had not left and he was appointed Head of the Department of Estonian and Finno-Ugric Languages. Paul Ariste quickly organized the teaching of Estonian and Finno-Ugric languages at the University of Tartu. His main assistants were MAs Arnold Kask and Paula (Pauline) Palmeos who had worked as schoolteachers and Johannes Voldemar Veski, honorary doctor and Lecturer in Estonian who had retired in the meanwhile. There were backlashes, however, because F. D. Roosevelt and W. Churchill had sold the Baltic states to Stalin, following the example of A. Hitler and J. von Ribbentrop. In the spring of 1945 Paul Ariste and a number of other outstanding academics in the humanities were arrested by the Soviet occupiers. The NKVD torture chambers were almost lethal for Paul Ariste. Nevertheless, after an imprisonment of one year and one day he was allowed to resume his work at the University. Although he had lost his teeth, he had retained his keen mind, humanism, and optimism.

In the summer of 1947 he organizes a field trip to Ingermanland with two students in order to study the Votic language. In the summer of 1948 he went to Livõd rända (Livonian Coast) with five students to study Livonian. This summer started the tradition of annual student summer expeditions for the study of genetically related languages. Brighter students were allowed to join them already after their first year of study. The Soviet Union with its largely semi-literate population cared for higher education to such a degree that it paid for the students' travel costs and they even received daily allowances.

In 1949 Paul Ariste became Professor of Finno-Ugric Studies at the University of Tartu. In 1951 a Jewish friend was able to remove Paul Ariste's name from the list of the so-called bourgeois nationalists subject to repressions. The Finno-Ugric branch of the Department of the Estonian Language and Literature had become popular by that time. Moreover, in 1949–1955 students with language interest could choose only between Estonian and Russian philology. For a long time Paul Ariste took a personal interest in recruiting students for the Finno-Ugric branch, teaching introduction to linguistics to first-year students. In addition, for many years Paul Ariste taught comparative grammar of Finnic languages both to the Finno-Ugric and Estonian branches of the Department. Paul Ariste's choice of the teaching staff proved to be successful. Arnold Kask became a top expert in the history of Standard Estonian and became Professor of the Estonian language. Paula Palmeos, who taught Finnish and Hungarian

³ P. A r i s t e, Hiiu murrete häälikud, Tartu 1939 (ACUT B XLVII₁).

for many years, became an outstanding scholar in the Karelian language. Paul Ariste, whose research area was kaleidoscopic, studied thoroughly the Votic language and Votes, having had studied it already since the 1930s. The Votic theme yielded the Votic grammar (published in Estonian and in English),⁴ a series of books on Votic folklore and ethnology, and a large number of articles.

In 1954 Paul Ariste was elected Academician of the Estonian Academy of Sciences. In 1957 the Division of Finno-Ugric Languages was set up at the Institute of Language and Literature on Paul Ariste's initiative. In 1960 he passed the supervision of the latter to Valmen Hallap.

Paul Ariste was instrumental in explaining the development history of Finnic dialects. In contrast to Lauri Kettunen's claim published in 1938, in a collection of articles on the ethnic history of the Estonian people published in 1956 he showed on the basis of linguistic data that South Estonian is not the mixed dialect of Livonian and (North) Estonian and that Karelian is not the mixed dialect of Tavastian and Veps, but they are ancient tribal languages. Also, he gave to Ingrian the status of an independent language; previously it had been regarded as a group of remote Finnish dialects. He showed that Votic is a continuation of Estonian, having long been separated from the Estonian dialects by a state border. Paul Ariste had an interesting idea that the Tavastian dialect of Finnish developed on the basis of North Estonian.

Paul Ariste's dream was to prepare an Estonian expert for each Finno-Ugric language. Judging by the defended candidate theses in philology, the Soviet equivalents of PhDs, this dream became true with a single exception, which was Mansi. A number of Paul Ariste's students grew into outstanding scholars. Huno Rätsep modernized university teaching of the Estonian language in the 1960s, and his students are now instrumental in the study and teaching of contemporary Estonian. Valmen Hallap, an outstanding researcher of verb derivation in Moksha, actually supervised linguistics at the Institute of Language and Literature in the 1960s and the 1970s. Valdek Pall, a researcher of Erzya, initiated the study of Estonian place names. Georg Liiv set up the phonetics laboratory at the Institute of Language and Literature, which later developed into the Division of Computational Linguistics.

Paul Ariste was also instrumental in training linguists for Russia's autonomous Finno-Ugric republics. In the late 1930s almost the entire Finno-Ugric intellectual elite was murdered in Russia. Paul Ariste played a crucial role in training a new generation of linguists. Over 50 candidate theses were completed under his academic supervision; in addition, many of his students earned doctoral degrees (in the Soviet Union, as a rule, a doctoral thesis was an independent thesis that was completely different from a candidate thesis).

In 1965 the Institute of Language and Literature in Tallinn started to publish on Paul Ariste's initiative the journal "Советское финно-угроведение" (Soviet Finno-Ugric Studies), now "Linguistica Uralica" (the original title did not reflect Paul Ariste's wish). A peer-reviewed journal from its inception, it publishes contributions in English, French, German, or Russian and has grown its international authors. As its editor-in-chief, Paul Ariste carefully read through all of its articles.

"Linguistica Uralica" tries to follow the course set down by Paul Ariste.

T.-R. V.

⁴ P. A r i s t e, *Vadja keele grammatika*, Tartu 1948; P. A r i s t e, *A Grammar of the Votic Language*, Bloomington—The Hague (UAS 68).