



# (AN)ARCHIVE

CHILDHOOD, MEMORY, AND THE COLD WAR

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Mnemo ZIN (eds), *(An)Archive: Childhood, Memory, and Cold War*. Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0383>

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ISBN Paperback: 978–1-80511–185–6

ISBN Hardback: 978–1-80511–186–3

ISBN Digital (PDF): 978–1-80511–187–0

ISBN Digital eBook (EPUB): 978–1-80511–188–7

ISBN HTML: 978–1-80511–190–0

DOI: 10.11647/OBP.0383

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Cover design: Jeevanjot Kaur Nagpa

# Nokia<sup>1</sup>

Nelli Piattoeva

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*She is sitting on the trolley bus going home from the city center after walking or meeting her friends. She turned seventeen a few months before and she came home to Russia from Finland where she studies, to spend the school summer break with her parents. This summer she started living on her own and she bought herself a used mobile phone—a NOKIA. Its cover is dark violet with a barely visible black ornament. The phone has a short antenna and a very tiny, grey screen. She does not remember if this is the kind of color that she really wished for, but here it is, as the range of used phones on offer was probably not that wide. In any case this does not matter at all because she has a phone, which is the most expensive thing she has ever bought on her own, and this time she was not asking her parents for permission.*

*The trolleybus is packed, as always. She is standing next to many people traveling home from work to their apartments. She is carrying her mobile phone in her bag. She feels its presence all the time as the phone is heavier than anything else she has in that bag. There is no reason for her to carry the phone around: calling anyone from a Finnish phone number while visiting Russia, even if technically possible, would be way too expensive for her pocket. Someone next to her stands up to leave the trolleybus and she can finally sit down. She keeps the bag next to her, holding it tight, because a very precious thing lies in it undiscovered. No one around knows what a treasure she's carrying. Why not let them know? She seizes the moment, opens the bag, and takes the phone out, pretending that it just rang.*

*She presses the green 'answer button' and starts talking to an imagined interlocutor. It might be in Russian or Finnish, she does not remember anymore.*

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1 This is a childhood memory produced as part of the Reconnect/Recollect project discussed in the introduction to this book.

*She pretends to engage in a very casual, relaxed way, while being very worried that she would soon be discovered. She talks for a minute or less and then 'hangs up', putting the phone back into the bag. She is not looking around, pretending that for her, talking on the phone on public transport is a mundane matter, nothing to pay special attention to. But, she hopes so badly to be noticed: she comes from a better world, she does not belong here. She is just visiting, even though, the truth is, that she's on an old, packed trolleybus traveling home like anyone else.*