Algot Untola as a Teacher at Vintturi

Author **Algot Untola (1868–1918)** worked as a teacher at the Vintturi village school in Kaustinen in the early 20th century. He also became widely known under several pen names, including **Maiju Lassila**, **Irmari Rantamala**, and **Liisan-Antti**, under which he wrote witty and widely read newspaper columns for the newspaper *Kokkola*.

Untola was a distinctive figure even in appearance. He was described as a man of average height with a thick moustache and a small pointed beard. He was often seen striding between Vintturi and the church village of Kaustinen to collect his post, which included newspapers and letters.

In Vintturi, Untola is remembered above all as an energetic and dedicated teacher. He introduced new cultural activities by founding a local theatre group, which attracted many villagers. The rehearsals were intended to prepare a play for the village's spring evening celebration. The villagers held their teacher in high regard. He enthusiastically took part in community events, family celebrations and even large wedding festivities.

Untola's literary work also attracted considerable interest. He was known to spend his nights writing on his typewriter, and people in the village believed he was working on a new novel. At the same time, rumours spread that the novel's characters were based on people from Vintturi. His newspaper columns were already widely known and eagerly read.

There was also an air of mystery surrounding Untola. His wife and her two sons occasionally visited Vintturi, and rumours circulated that she was of Russian origin or spoke Russian. In fact, his wife, **Olga Jasinski**, was Finnish. In the political climate of the time, these rumours aroused suspicion, and a complaint was lodged against Untola with the school board. The villagers, however, stood by their teacher, regarding him as a hardworking educator, an inspiring mentor and a respected member of the community.

Before becoming a full-time writer, Untola was also active in politics as a travelling campaign speaker for the Finnish Party. His political speeches sometimes provoked strong reactions. On one occasion, a member of the audience interrupted him by shouting, *'You've been lying long enough already!'* The incident has lived on in local oral tradition. To his contemporaries, Untola was closely associated with the Finnish nationalist movement.

In 1918, in the aftermath of the Finnish Civil War, Untola was arrested and accused of sedition for articles he had written for the newspaper *Työmies*. In May 1918, Untola was transported as a prisoner to Suomenlinna, but he was killed during the journey after being shot and falling into the sea.

Despite his tragic death, Algot Untola left a lasting legacy in Finnish literature. His works, including *Tulitikkuja lainaamassa* (*Borrowing Matches*), *Ikiliikkuja* (*The Perpetual Motion Machine*), and *Luonnonlapsia* (*Children of Nature*), have remained popular for generations.

Several of his novels have been adapted for film, and his plays continue to be performed by both professional and amateur theatre companies.

This museum displays Algot Untola's handmade writing desk. The Vintturi Village House also preserves a collection of books donated by Untola. It was at this desk that he produced the literary works whose influence continues to this day.