



Fights against the Iron Curtain: Cultural Relations between Writers in Soviet Latvia and in Exile

E v a E G L Ā J A - K R I S T S O N E

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The paper deals with issues before the collapse of USSR when several archives in East European countries were opened and researchers started using the term “the new history after the Cold War”. It is considered that the best method of studying this new history is finding balance between propaganda of foreign and international policy that prevailed, and its psychological, cultural and ideological dimensions (K e n n e t h 2002, 107). It is evident that most wars have started for diplomatic and military reasons, accompanied by social and cultural outcomes. Similarly, the Cold War and the relations between Soviet Latvian writers and exile writers started at political and diplomatic levels and gradually acquired a significant social and cultural aspect. The division of the Cold War into periods is, first of all, political. In the framework of this research, it has become evident that cultural processes coincided with diplomatic, culture acted as the force that caused changes in public opinion.

The following chronology and periods are proposed for analysis:

1946–1953 – The First Cold War or the Stalin era

1953–1969 – The Era of reciprocal antagonism¹

1969–1979 – Détente

1979–1985 – The Second Cold War

1985–1991 – Finale

The First Cold War was that period when, due to post-war political struggles and a lack of diplomatic contacts, all links with the dominating culture were destroyed (although several writers were politicians and took high positions in Soviet Republics). The most characteristic feature of this period is an attempt to repatriate as many citizens to the USSR as possible. Publishing of exile writers' books in Latvia was an effort to promote repatriation, e.g., *Homeland Calling* (Dzimtene sauc) published at the Latvian National Publishing House in 1947²,

¹ Irreconcilable contradiction; a totality of irreconcilable, incommensurable contradictions.

² Among those, who signed the petitions of repatriation, were cultural and social workers, including writers Aleksandrs Čaks, Ernests Birznieks-Upītis, Anna Sakse, Elina Zālīte, Mirdza Bendrupe, etc.

1948 and 1949. On 12 March, 1947, the Radio Committee of the Latvian SSR in Riga started broadcasting “special programmes for Latvians abroad” twice a week where repatriates and those who invited their relatives or co-workers to return to homeland gave their voice for repatriation. Since results were insignificant this campaign was stopped at the beginning of the 1950s. Stalin’s death marks the beginning of a new period.

The following period, marked by an interchanging rise and fall of antagonism, shows instability and irreconcilable contradictions in relations between the main political players, so cultural relations became important in the early 1960s. In the 1950s and onward, Latvian exiles were relentless anti-communists. Latvia’s occupation and struggles for its independence were widely discussed and described. At the same time, exile writers were closely observing processes in the culture and literature of Latvia, publishing works or fragments in periodicals and providing commentaries on processes in literature. The Committee for Return to Homeland, set up in 1955 in the Soviet zone, East Berlin, kept inviting emigrants to return to the Soviet Union. A newspaper under the same title was published in Russian and translated into several languages, including Latvian. The relations between the USSR and the US, the USSR and Germany seemed to be incompatible, sometimes masked obstinacy or mistakes, and all that made any cooperation impossible. One side criticised the political regime of the other in resolutions, publications, public speeches, the other refused to establish contacts – such were cultural relations between writers in Soviet Latvia and in exile. Since 1958 it was allowed to mention literature from the other side of the Iron Curtain. However, it was a mere tactics of the Central Committee, the State Committee for Cultural Relations Abroad and local communists. The Committee for Cultural Relations with Compatriots Abroad (CCR) was set up and started establishing contacts with Latvian writers in exile, organising their visits to Latvia and writers from the both sides got a chance to meet.

Détente, period of easing Cold War tension, left a significant impact on cultural relations. The term marks removal of tension between the USSR and the US in the 1970s, a thaw in the middle of the Cold War, when a series of negotiations between the political leaders of the both superpowers started and resulted in signing agreements. In 1975, on the initiative of the USSR, the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe was held in Helsinki. It was attended by 33 Heads of State or Government, plus the leaders of the US and Canada who signed the Declaration of Helsinki. All of them were led by different motives. The summit in Helsinki was Leonid Brezhnev’s idea, hoping that the signed agreement will substitute the peace pact which was never signed after World War II and will help to legalize occupation of the Baltic states.³ It was time when Latvia, like other Soviet

³ As indicated by Uldis Grava, former President of the World Federation of Free Latvians (WFFL), “the main requirement of the Soviet Union was to accept the “immunity of the existing borders”. Western political leaders were ready to comply with this principle, because in the so called third basket of the conference promises about bigger freedom of movement, especially to journalists, and facilitation of family reunions and other human rights princi-

Republics, felt concern from the side of the US. Magazine *America*, influential media during the Cold War,⁴ became available although was sold at some strictly controlled newsstands in closed institutions in Riga or subscribed by “politically educated and ideologically stable persons” (S t r o d s 2011, 277). Exchange visits of exile writers to Latvia and Soviet Latvian writers were organised on a regular basis.

Détente ended in 1979, when the Soviet Army launched an attack in Afghanistan, Western countries strictly disapproved that and boycotted the 1980 Summer Olympic Games in Moscow. The Second Cold War is the term used by historians and marks the era when tension and conflicts started again and the super-states started strengthening their military powers. Under détente, cultural relations flourished and became more personal and two-sided in Latvia. Publication of Velta Toma’s collection of poems *Bread from Home (Maize no mājām, 1980)* in Latvia is an example of this time, the book was sold at bookstores. It was a new tactics of the CCR compared to that of the 1960s when books of exile writers were removed from bookstore shelves.

The finale phase, 1985–1991, is marked by political liberalisation, Glasnost, the Mikhail Gorbachev era, Perestroika, appearance of some elements of capitalism in the economy. The relations between exile writers and Soviet Latvian writers became more regular and stable, relaxed, caused no discussions in mass media as it used to be earlier. The World Writers’ Congresses of Latvian Writers held in 1989 and 1990 are a logical outcome of this period.

Cultural competition and its importance: the global context

A particular feature of the Cold War is use of culture (both popular and elite) for communication and manipulation purposes in order to achieve political goals planned, managed and controlled by special units on the both sides. Cultural

ples were included. Only Baltic exiles, living in various countries of residence outside the occupied Baltic States, stood against the Helsinki Declaration. Threat to the Baltic self-determination was clear – along with signing the Declaration, the Baltic States would be forever incorporated in the Soviet Union with the immunity of borders and a denial to restore their independence. The threat of the Helsinki Conference united Latvian, Lithuanian and Estonian exile communities and activated the operation of the central organisations”. Uldis Grava. *Baltijas valstu pašnoteikšanās tiesības atgriežas Helsinku nolīguma 30 gadu atcerē. Diena, Nr.176 (2005, 30.jūl.), 2.lpp.*

⁴ *America* (“Америка” – in Russian) (1944–1952, 1956 – the end of the Cold War) – a magazine published by the USA National Department in Russian during the Cold War and distributed in the USSR. The aim was to inform Soviet citizens about the life in America. *America* was distinctive for its high-quality paper, bright print and many photographs. The magazine was characterised as “polite propaganda”. It was very popular and people were queuing after it. Soviet intellectuals held heated discussions over it. Later it was published under the title *America Illustrated*. The USA government was of the opinion that the magazine was a valuable contribution to a better understanding of the American life in the Soviet Union, and it was an efficient tool of Soviet propaganda.

competition, which is a significant part of the Cold War, encompasses cultural relations between the opposing sides, i.e. the USSR and Western countries. An opinion prevailed in the Latvian information space that the Soviet Union initiated Soviet-Western cultural relations. However, facts show that it was the initiative of the West during the Cold War. Such example is writer Guntis Zariņš, who lived in the UK and collaborated with the British special units, and his trips to Latvia in the 1960s. It was understandable that the exile leadership and most of the public did not approve cultural relations as a method of actions against the USSR. Therefore, the development of British-American-Soviet cultural relations and their outcomes should be briefly overviewed.⁵

Nikita Khrushchev in his secret speech made at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party in 1956 proposed new policy, the so-called “peaceful co-existence”, the aim of which was to promote contacts with the West. Cultural exchanges between the US and the USSR to great extent were initiated by Dwight David Eisenhower as the so-called human exchanges the aim of which was to help two nations to understand each other better. Such relations were impossible under Stalin but the situation changed under Khrushchev. In 1958 an agreement between the US and the USSR regarding cultural, technological and educational exchanges was signed. Cultural exchange agreements were to be renewed every few years. In the 1960s negotiations regarding this exchange started, relations became complicated and tense although the both sides claimed that they were acting with the best intentions meanwhile the other side did not show interest and good will. Despite that were cultural exchanges lasted till the end of the 1970s, when President Jimmy Carter reacted to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Contacts renewed during the second term of Ronald Reagan’s presidency, particularly after the Geneva Summit in November 1985. Later new problems arose when several Soviet artists escaped to the West during their tour and the Soviet side recalled planned programmes. When cultural relations with the USSR are mentioned in the West, many remember Soviet dancers, symphony orchestra musicians, ice skaters, circus artists who became popular in the West. However, cultural relations is something more exhibitions, films, books, what is most important than is human relations.

Contacts with the Latvian exile

The US initially used Latvian political refugees for anti-Soviet propaganda and information collection purposes (A p s i t i s 1994, 35). Some Latvian organisations in exile collaborated with the CIA, in its spying campaigns in the late 1940s-

⁵ Yale Richmond, one of the USA Information Agency officers, who worked in Moscow and managed and administered cultural exchange visits, offered his observations on the collapse of the Soviet Union, emphasising that a significant factor was the impact of Western ideas on Soviet people, thus, the end of the Cold War and the collapse of Communism is the result of Soviet contacts and exchanges with the West and America for more than 35 years.

early 1950s. Their aim was to facilitate internal resistance in the occupied Baltic States. In general, relations were not supported by exile organisations since an opinion prevailed that it was Soviet propaganda, meanwhile the US, intentionally or unintentionally, promoted cultural exchange policy and encouraged Latvian exiles to send letters, for example, to the US authority asking to organise Soviet art exhibitions in Washington and include works of Latvian, Lithuanian and Estonian artists so as if implying that the Baltic States were a legal part of the USSR. That was contrary to the US government position - to disapprove incorporation of the three states into the USSR. In the course of time the US started giving up their anti-communist position, considering that the Communists were idealists, who were striving for social equality but sometimes failed, and that was supported by the left-wing academics and politicians. A good example is Ilgvars Spilners, head of the board of the American-Latvian Association, who sent a letter to William Pierce Rogers, Foreign Affairs Minister of the US, in 1972, where he expressed protest against the Soviet magazine *Soviet Life*, distributed, approved and supported by the government in the framework of cultural exchanges, which published an article on the Baltic States in a November issue trying to give a false insight into the Baltic States, whether they were a legal part of the Soviet Union (*Rd* (anonymous) 1972, 4). Spilners wanted to know if the US protested against the violations of the cultural exchange agreement and what their plans were to avoid such things in the future. He also wanted to know whether the US knew about similar articles published in the magazine *America* about the life and culture in Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania and Ukraine in the US. He got no reply until the end of the year.

However, in 1976 Jimmy Carter (presidential candidate, Gerald R. Ford was President at that time) replied to Spilners, head of the board of World Federation of Free Latvians (WFFL), who wondered whether support in the form of credits and loans facilitated Soviet expansion in the Baltic states and should be ceased, saying: *I share your care about Latvian, Estonian and Lithuanian nations. In our business and diplomatic affairs with the Soviet Union I will use as efficient means as possible to strengthen those, who are oppressed. I will also try to achieve more liberal exchange of information and ideas. According to my conviction, in the last few years our government has not been successful with the Soviet Union in business affairs and has not paid enough attention to the people behind the Iron Curtain. (...) I would like to turn détente into a two-way street* (Laiks 1976, 1).

In 1977 the article *FBI Warns about Cultural Informants* was published in exile periodicals. The article drew attention to a public warning of the FBI director Clarence M. Kelley in Washington who claimed that: *Communist spies in the USA are willing to discover not only national and military, but also industrial secrets. The FBI advised scientists and industrial workers to be careful in order not to become victims or paid collaborators in spying activities against the USA. A spy could be not only any official representative of the Communist block in this country (their number had increased by 50% during the last years) but also industrial or*

cultural workers from the countries behind the Iron Curtain, whose visits now have doubled (underlined by author) (V a n a g s 1977, 11).

It is very important that cultural competition during the Cold War accompanied cultural relations between the sides, i.e. between the USSR and Western countries. It may be concluded that cultural relations and exchanges were successful from the Western point of view because, thanks to exchange visits, a considerable part of the USSR communist nomenclature lost their inner motivation to fight against the West and moved away from the aims, ideology and practices of the Communist regime. In this context, it is important to refer to Richmond's conclusion about the main gain: people on the both sides became able to see differences between a fact and fiction and to understand what was really happening. There are grounds to conclude that the outcomes of cultural relations between Latvians in exile and Soviet Latvians were similar.

Latvian Committee for Cultural Relations with Compatriots Abroad

Cultural relations were in the centre of attention of the special units on the both sides and relations between Latvians in exile and Soviet Latvians in particular. Refugees from the Baltic states, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, were known as firm anti-communists in their countries of origin and in the West, they were skilled enough to achieve considerable influence in the centres of the Western power therefore it was in the interests of the USSR to neutralise their anti-Soviet position. Repatriation was the first and not very successful attempt. For that reason the Soviet Union started establishing cultural relations between local and exile (in the Soviet understanding – emigrant) writers, artists, actors, directors, critics, etc. In the course of time the exile community gained strength and Soviet methods had to be more artful in establishing cultural relations with Latvians in exile. In this part of the paper, the history and structure of the CCR as well as its activities, outcomes, impact on the exile community will be discussed.

The CCR was set up for political purposes and on a big scale. On the one hand, the USSR was urging the US government to sign agreements at a state level but, on the other hand, it was trying to bypass the US government and build contacts with individuals, groups and even trade unions in the US (Z a k e 2008, 71).

The activities of the CCR to great extent were related to its aim to prove that there was no united Latvian culture; there was one culture in exile, bourgeois, nationalistic, restricted, poor, out-dated and inefficient, and another in Soviet Latvia, much better, socialist and state-supported. In most cases and from a broader perspective the efforts of the CCR to form an opinion that Latvian identity in exile would disappear without cultural contacts encouraged by the Soviets were quite successful. One of the methods the CCR used was to depict exile guests as spies and agents. It is evident in propaganda articles of the daily *Dzimtenes Bals* (The Voice of Homeland) and reports of the Tourism Department, where visitors from abroad were portrayed as pathetic and morally disorganised, who were looking for negative aspects of the Soviet life meanwhile Soviet citizens were happy and

contented. Another method was to promote friendly cooperation with the CCR, be its guests and, consequently, potential recruits of the KGB.⁶ Most of cultural relations were built through communication, and, first of all, correspondence. Since the late 1960s the CCR had a very extensive network of correspondence with all countries where exiles had settled down, as the foundation *Tēvzeme* and the Literature and Music Museum evidence. The CCR officials used to send letters of various styles and various involvements to make an impact on the activities of the exile community and form its opinion. While looking through correspondence between Latvians in exile and in Soviet Latvia it is especially noticeable that more letters used to come from the exile side.

After 1964 the CCR started offering exile representatives (writers Velta Toma, Olafs Stumbrs, Valdis Krāslavietis, Mārtiņš Zīverts, Ruta Spīrsa, etc.) to cover their travelling costs in part, its special guests to cover travelling costs in part and accommodation costs in full. Such approach towards the favoured was one of the tactics of the CCR - to get exiles to trust it. Writers, who showed interest in, wanted to familiarize themselves with, looked with favour on cultural processes in Latvia or ironically looked upon the exile community and its problems got such offers. An emotional stability, vulnerability of a person was also important and taken into account. Such persons who met the criteria of the CCR were offered privileges in Soviet Latvia although they accepted them carefully and/or with pride.

Analysing how the CCR trips arranged abroad for Latvians, several aspects should be noted. Firstly, cultural trips were organised in the framework of the USSR-USA or USSR-Canada cultural exchange. At times they remained unknown in exile, no meetings with Latvians in exile were organised. Only in the 1970s the first visits of Latvian cultural workers with the aim to meet compatriots were organised.

The impact of the activities of the CCR on the exile community was twofold. Firstly, a deep discord arose at all levels in the exile community: in families, church parishes, Latvian organisations at a city or state level, global Latvian organisations, etc. On the one hand, the aim of the KGB to “split the exile” was achieved, on the other hand, exile organisations and individuals were motivated to more actively involve and exchange ideas. Secondly, and what is most important, direct contacts between Soviet and exile writers, artists and cultural workers were built. Although these contacts were supervised by the KGB of the USSR, the exile culture had influence on cultural processes in Latvia. So we see that a rather united exile community was split by the USA-USSR friendship and the impact of the activities of the CCR on the exile community increased. It is also clear that the development of cultural relations was more relevant and complicated for Latvians in exile than for the rest of American society.

⁶ Several exile Latvians of the youngest generation in Europe were recruited (Gundars Pone, Andrejs Urdze, Valdis Āboliņš, Ojārs Rozītis and Mārtiņš Būmanis), not only supported close connections with Soviet Latvia, but also promoted Marxist – Leninist ideology. The CCR authority evaluated that as a fruitful outcome of their work in their reports.

The main Latvian organisations in exile, e.g., World Federation of Free Latvians, American Latvian Association, Latvian Association in Australia and New Zealand, *Daugavas Vanagi*, etc., were of an opinion that cultural relations were a dangerous trap for the West and criticized Latvian exiles involved in cultural relations, although were convinced that such relations were inevitable. As political scientist Atis Lejiņš states, the exile played “the role of the mouse”, whereas the KGB and the CCR – “the role of the cat”. The exile leadership and most of exiles were of the same opinion. The mentioned organisations passed a resolution that cooperation with the CCR as well as visits to occupied Latvia were not desirable and those, who were on the board of the exile organisation, must resign before going to Latvia. Their political goal was to restore Latvia’s independence *de facto*. In order not to put Latvia’s *de jure* status under threat, the above mentioned leading exile organisations consistently defended the opinion that relations with the official representatives of the Latvian SSR and the CCR should be built on confrontation. Only in 1989, during the National Revival Movement, the resolution was amended.

The idea of the united Latvian culture

Contrary to conservative policy advocates, the opposite side encouraged cultural relations and communication and emphasised positive aspects. Writer Lalita Muižniece wrote: *...to my mind, our nation is too small so that we could separate art from propaganda and not to be able to identify poets and artists, whose art is powerful* (M u i ž n i e c e 1996, 34).

It is characteristic that many professional exile writers did not completely agree with the position of the exile political leadership and most of the exile community and continued building contacts with their colleagues in homeland. No doubts, they had no illusions that these contacts were not supervised by the KGB but gave priority to national interests and understood that such relations were necessary. Some got involved in the activities of the CCR on a regular basis (Velta Toma, Valdis Krāslavietis, Olafs Stumbrs), others occasionally (Gunars Saliņš, Valentīns Pelēcis), others warned their colleagues that correspondence, books, meetings were controlled by the KGB (Anšlavs Eglītis, Gunars Janovskis).

During the Cold War the opinions of Soviet Latvian writers about contemporary Latvian literature, writers, their participation or refusal to participate in cultural relations varied and depended on their political ideas. There was ideological confrontation between those, who were in favour and against cultural relations with exile. Political self-determination also had an impact on how their work was ranked on, their creative path. Personal motivation was also important. Some got involved in the activities of the CCR because they needed new experiences, knowledge, others from curiosity, for others it was an opportunity to go abroad, still for others, e.g., prose writer Guntis Zariņš and poetess Velta Toma, it was their mission, purpose of life.

Publications, receptions, correspondence were one form of cultural relations but long-lasting friendships, intellectual and creative relations were built on direct, personal contacts. The issue caused disagreement in the exile community. On the basis of that the CCR assessed relations as successful or problematic. There are stories about revived memories, new experiences, beautiful moments, sentiments and impressions from visits. These stories are of a social character, describe communication problems, evaluate the role of the CCR.

Visits were *to* and *from* Latvia. People from all over the world used to come to homeland, meanwhile the most often visited countries by Latvians were the USA, Canada and Sweden. Visitors of the both groups encountered problems characteristic for the Iron Curtain period, i.e. getting a visa from the official institutions of the USSR and going through the customs. They also had to weigh the benefits and fuss, take into account criticism, risk, own public image. Alongside with emotional factors, reminiscences of the past, there were rational, political factors, although less evident in relations among writers. Visitors used to go to the National Song Festival, celebrate Midsummer Night, these events were important, grand, well-organised, purposeful, an opportunity to meet relatives, friends, colleagues. Guest writers (not all) used to present their poetry to the members of the CCR, the Writers Association, stay at the Writers House in Jūrmala, enjoyed privileges granted by the CCR. Although led by sentiments for their homeland they were not be left without the supervision of the CCR.

In articles, letters on visits to Latvia in the 1960s-1970s, a metaphor about the Trojan horse appears. Exiles were often referred to as the Trojan horses who bring “the air of freedom and democracy”. The CCR, other official institutions had the aim to draw them in, instil Soviet ideology which would be disseminated in their countries of exile. Poets, however, were not quite suitable for the role of the Trojan horse. The CCR was interested in ordinary tourists, but mainly in well-known and popular figures in the exile community as they would talk to the community about their visits, give interviews, publish articles. It is likely that poets (like other regular guests of the CCR) felt favoured, sweetened both in Latvia (theatre, cinema, concerts visits, official dinners, etc.) and America (newest books, other publications from Latvia on a regular basis).

In the 1960s the USSR authority took a decision to demonstrate a multi-national nature of the empire and involve representatives of the Republics in cultural exchange programmes. Some purposefully selected Latvian writers, artists, scientists were granted permissions to travel under close supervision of the political forces from Moscow. These cultural and scientific exchange programmes were a political instrument to control absolutely everything: who should be sent, where to, what he/she will be allowed to do, how it will be accepted by the hosting side. As the activities of the CCR show, outgoing and incoming visitors were treated alike. It is interesting that the Soviet side did not use outgoing visitors to facilitate information exchange, it was an award granted to those writers and artists, who remained loyal to the Soviet regime. As for exiles, other factors should

be taken into account: popularity, quality of presenting the interests of the exile community.

The purpose of such visits should be examined from various angles. From the point of view of the KGB and the CCR, their purpose was to study the exile community and split it, facilitate a generation gap, supplement the database with new information and informers, demonstrate cultural achievements of Soviet Latvia. The purpose of these visits was discussed in the exile community, which was against welcoming guests from Soviet Latvia, organising events for them. From the point of view of exile writers, attending to guests, organising events for them, hosting was an opportunity to compare their understanding of Latvia, its culture and literature with reality, evaluate the activities and ideas of outstanding Latvian writers. From the point of view of youth, who listened to stories of their parents and grandparents about the ideal and lost homeland, it was an opportunity to meet really creative personalities from Latvia. From the point of view of Soviet Latvian writers, it was an opportunity to familiarise themselves and build closer relations with the exile community and intellectuals, get access to unavailable and banned information on the national history, culture, modern world, present own creative works a new audience abroad.⁷

The added value of exchanges

Until the start of the National Revival Movement, only one opinion about a need and purpose of cultural relations existed in Latvia, and it was that of the Committee for Cultural Relations with Compatriots Abroad (CCR). Results were described in the annual reports of the CCR. Each unit of the CCCR wrote reports on achievements and problems. The CCR provided opinion, highlighted negative features of exile culture in press, on radio. However, the real purpose of the CCR remained secret, known only for highest rank officials and did not reach the public.

More information on the activities of the CCR in Latvia became known after the collapse of the USSR. Only in the late 1990s, Indulis Zālīte, head of the Centre for Documentation of the Consequences of Totalitarianism, published an article about the importance of the CCR. People who were involved in the activities of the CCR rarely expressed their opinion about the aims of the CCR, cultural exchanges, own participation in operations or gave interviews.

Secret information on the CRR should be disclosed cooperating with creative organisations, cultural figures, who were aware of the ideological aims of the CCR still under the Soviet regime. Many of them were of an opinion that relations

⁷ Alongside with this national, emotional and patriotic justification, seemingly prosaic, but psychologically grounded factors must be taken into account. For example, gain on the both sides of the Iron Curtain and the aspect of an individual as a consumer. Of course, there was a big difference between what was taken home from visits to Latvia (amber, linen, pottery, etc.) and what was sent/brought from abroad by Latvians (clothing, food, bijouterie).

with the exile were an opportunity to unite Latvian intellectuals and expand the Latvian cultural milieu. In the opinion of many Latvian writers, contacts with the exile, though supervised and initiated by the KGB of the USSR, was “a hole in the fence”⁸ and, as Imants Ziedonis put it, “enriched the national thought”.

Contacts with the exile culture encouraged quite many Latvian writers and made influence on them. Zigmunds Skujiņš, while writing his best work, novel “Gulta ar zelta kāju” (*The Bed with a Golden Leg*, 1984), provided a vast panorama of Latvian history and shared impressions and observations from his visit of writer Gunars Janovskis in the UK. Z. Skujiņš supported contacts writing about his friendship with Gunars Janovskis: *Both Gunars Janovskis and me, other Latvian writers, represent one literature – Latvian literature – that has been divided by force. Perhaps literature, like, for example, brain, cannot normally function when it loses part of it. I am sure that Latvian literature needs new ideas, world-outlook that comes from the other side of the fence. Only senseless, alienated, selfish people may evaluate relations as a personal benefit* (S k u j i ņ š 2005, 244).

Epilogue

It is a paradox but no cultural relations would have been built if the exile political leadership had been against them. As for the question what facilitated the restoration of Latvia’s independence, whether it was a strong position or relations, the answer is both. The first enabled to sustain *de jure* status of Latvia, the US policy against Latvia’s incorporation into the Soviet Union, the second provided conditions to combine the activities of brave dissidents and the Latvian cultural elite, exile writers.

“A hole in the Iron Curtain” (Zālīte www) caused a domino effect in both camps of the exile, that of those who were for and against cultural relations, and made an impact on Latvian intellectuals and the nation in general. Latvian intellectuals got an opportunity to expand the cultural milieu, enter the Western world, access information kept on the other side of the Iron Curtain. It was creative intellectuals who contributed to the collapse of the USSR, the ideological and political system of the Soviet regime, formulated a new national and democratic ideology. Meetings of the Creative Workers’ Union (June, 1988), the Popular Front of Latvia (October, 1988) evidence that Latvian intellectuals took an active part in the socio-political life of Latvia.

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⁸ Metaphor invented by Zigmunds Skujiņš speaking about his relationship with Latvian exile writer Gunars Janovskis.

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Veržiantis pro geležinē uždangā: kultūriniai ryšiai tarp rašytojų sovietų Latvijoje ir tremtyje

S a n t r a u k a

Pagrindinēs sąvokos: *Šaltasis karas, Latvijos išeivija, sovietų Latvija, Kultūrinių ryšių su tautiečiais užsienyje komitetas.*

Ypatingas Šaltojo karo požymis – manipuliavimas kultūriniais ryšiais, kuriuos abi pusės planavo, valdė ir kontroliavo, siekdamos savo tikslų. Nagrinėjant santykius tarp nesutaikomų pusių, t. y. TSSR ir Vakarų šalių, daugiausia dėmesio skiriama kultūriniam ryšiams tarp latvių išeivijoje ir sovietų Latvijoje. Kultūrinių ryšių su tautiečiais užsienyje komiteto Latvijoje (KRTUK), kaip ir kitose sovietų respublikose, veiklos tikslas buvo įrodyti, kad bendra Latvijos kultūra neegzistuoja, išeivijos kultūra yra buržuazinė, nacionalistinė, atsilikusi, nevykėliška, o sovietų Latvijos – pažangesnė, socialistinė, remiama valstybės. Vertinant KRTUK veiklos įtaką išeivijai, būtina paminėti du dalykus: pirma, pavyko supriešinti išeivijos bendruomenę visais lygiais: tiek šeimos, tiek religinės bendruomenės, tiek vietinių, valstybinių ir tarptautinių Latvijos organizacijų. Viena vertus, KGB pasiekė tikslą – suskaldyti išeiviją, kita vertus, tai paskatino žmones ir organizacijas aktyviau plėtoti ryšius ir keistis idėjomis; antra, kas yra ypač svarbu, rašytojai, menininkai ir kultūros darbuotojai užmezgė tiesioginius tarpusavio ryšius. Nors šiuos ryšius ir kontroliavo KGB, išeivijos kultūra turėjo įtakos kultūriniam procesams Latvijoje. Paradoksas, tačiau kultūrinių ryšių nebūtų pavykę užmegzti, jei tam būtų prieštaravusi išeivijos vadovybė. Pirmieji geležinės uždangos griuvimo ženklai sukėlė domino efektą abiejose išeivijos stovyklose pusėse, tarp palaikiusiųjų ir pasisakiusiųjų prieš kultūrinius ryšius, ir turėjo įtakos Latvijos inteligentijai ir visai tautai.

Eva Eglāja-Kristsons

Fights against the Iron Curtain: Cultural Relations between Writers in Soviet Latvia and in Exile

S u m m a r y

Keywords: *the Cold War, Latvian exile, Soviet Latvia, Committee for Cultural Relations with Compatriots Abroad.*

A particular feature of the Cold War is use of culture for communication and manipulation purposes in order to achieve political aims, planned, managed and controlled by special units on the both sides. The paper focuses on the relations between the opposing sides, i.e. the USSR and Western countries, emphasizes and analyzes cultural relations between Latvians in exile and in Soviet Latvia. The activities of the Committee for Cultural Relations with Compatriots Abroad (CCR) in Latvia (as well as in other Soviet republics) to great extent were related to its aim to prove that no united Latvian culture exists; one culture, in exile, is bourgeois, nationalistic, restricted, poor, out-dated and inefficient, another, in Soviet Latvia, is much better, socialist and state-supported. Assessing the impact of the activities of the CCR on the exile community, two important factors must be mentioned. Firstly, a deep discord arose at all levels of the exile community: in families, church parishes, Latvian organisations at a city or state level, global Latvian organisations, etc. Thus, on the one hand, the aim of the KGB to “split the exile” was achieved, yet, on the other hand, exile organisations and individuals got a push to more actively involve and exchange ideas. Secondly, and what was most important, direct contacts between Latvian and exile writers, artists and cultural workers were built. Although these contacts were supervised by the KGB of the USSR, the exile culture had influence on cultural processes in Latvia. It is a paradox, but no cultural relations would have been established if the exile political leadership had been against them. “A hole in the Iron Curtain” caused a domino effect in both camps of the exile, that of those who were for and against cultural relations, and made an impact on Latvian intellectuals and the nation in general.

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