



Contacts and Activities of the Latvia's and Lithuania's Roerich Societies in the "Theosophical Anti-Soviet Underground" in the 1940s: Based on the Materials of Latvian SSR MGB Case

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Against the background of rapid development of human mental processes and ability studies in the last quarter of the 19th century, Europe and the United States experienced a new boom of public interest in mysticism and occult. The Russian occultist Helena Blavatsky (1831–1891) played a major role in this area. Born in a well-to-do family with aristocratic roots – H. Blavatsky's cousin was one of Russia's prominent statesmen, Count Sergei Witte (1849–1915) – after many years of travel she founded the Theosophical Society (Greek: *theos*-god(s) + *sophia*-wisdom) in 1875 in the United States and became known all over the world due to her works "Isis Unveiled" (1877) and "The Secret Doctrine" (1888). To be more specific, H. Blavatsky's teaching formulated in these works was a system of religiously ethical beliefs, emphasizing the knowledge left by ancient Eastern civilizations.

The ideas of another Russian artist and oriental researcher Nicholas Roerich (1874–1947) closely resonated with the teachings of Theosophy. Arriving in the United States with his family in 1920, N. Roerich held several exhibitions of his paintings there, which provided financial resources that in the mid-1920s he could embark on expeditions to the East: India, Tibet, and Mongolia. As a result of his observations, N. Roerich developed his own teaching of Agni Yoga or Living Ethics harmonious with the theosophical ideas, focusing on human culture ("Peace through Culture") and preservation of cultural values (Roerich Pact).

It is not surprising that in the horror-stricken community after the First World War, both theosophical and N. Roerich's ideas found followers, and the societies of the adherents of these teachings were founded in several countries. Latvia and Lithuania were no exception, and here the adherents of these ideas united in their

Roerich Societies or, officially, in Roerich Museum Friends' Societies¹ in the 1930s. The main goal of these societies was culturally educational, providing the members with opportunity to form their understanding of the texts of teachings in joint discussions and to popularize their ideas within the society.

After the occupation of the Baltic States in 1940, the activities of Roerich societies were suspended and the societies were liquidated. After surviving the first year of Soviet occupation, during the Nazi occupation, the former like-minded people began to resume contacts and continued to maintain them after the war and the second Soviet occupation. It is understandable that these contacts should have become known to the Soviet security authorities, and in 1949, as a result of an investigation carried out by the Ministry for State Security of the Latvian SSR (LSSR MGB), fourteen people were convicted of belonging to the "Theosophical Anti-Soviet Underground" in Latvia.

The article aims to discuss the formation and development of cooperation between the Latvian and Lithuanian Roerich societies, to reveal a very specific form of resistance, which can be conditionally described as an intellectual resistance. It was a resistance without any specific political content and tasks and was equally aimed against both the Soviet and Nazi occupation regimes as a threat to intellectual freedom. That justifies the significance of the research as little attention has been paid to this specific form of resistance in previous studies. Another goal of the research is to reveal and show the main qualities that united these intellectual resistance personalities in order to confirm the assumption that, more likely, there were no random people among them.

The main research method used in the research is the method of content analysis, which gives the opportunity to critically evaluate and compare the testimonies of accused people and data from other sources. One limitation should be taken into consideration: as the research is mainly based on sources and literature published in Latvia, a larger part in the study is dedicated to the Latvian Roerich Society and its personalities.

Sources and literature used

The main source used in the study is the materials of the investigation case of the Ministry for State Security of the Latvian SSR, which is kept in the Latvian State Archives (*LVA*). The case file covers five volumes, which are supplemented with two more volumes of the so-called "Surveillance case". As the efforts of the Latvian Roerich Society went beyond Latvia, the case file also contains the transcripts of interrogation records of the accused in Lithuania and Moscow, Russia. One of the most serious research problems, in this case, is factual contradictions or obvious inaccuracies in the testimonies of the accused persons. Therefore, in those episodes, where there are differences in description of events, other versions are

¹ In this case it is meant the Roerich Museum in New York, USA, which was founded in 1923 and became the first N. Roerich Museum.

indicated in the study as well. Besides, it is also necessary to take into consideration the obvious political context of investigation, which requires a critical assessment of the testimonies of the accused.²

The list of literature dedicated to the activities of the Latvian Roerich Society and its most prominent members is quite extensive, but its subject matter is fragmented. Among the most important works here should be mentioned the published diary of the head of the Latvian Roerich Society Rihards Rudzītis (1898–1960), which allows tracing the development of relations between the Latvian and Lithuanian Roerich societies in chronological succession (R u d z ī t ī s 2003). What makes this diary interesting are the various personal observations, but at the same time, they require a critical view of the author's inevitable subjectivity. Another important work is the "Golden Book" published in 1938 (ZG 1938), which gives an overview of both the development of the Latvian Roerich Society and the first joint meeting of the Baltic Roerich Societies in Riga in October 1937.

Several studies about the Latvian Roerich Society belong to R. Rudzītis' daughter Gunta. In 1984, her research on correspondence between Nicholas Roerich and his adherents in Latvia was published (R u d z ī t e 1984). Another study by the same author was dedicated to the books, albums and postcards published by the Latvian Roerich Society, many of them earned recognition outside Latvia as well (R u d z ī t e 2000). The memories of R. Rudzītis' wife Ella about the repressions experienced by the family during the Soviet time (R u d z ī t e 1990) are more personal. Finally, in 2014, a more detailed biographical description about the head of Latvian Roerich Society R. Rudzītis was published (R u d z ī t e 2014). One more author, who investigated the activities of theosophists and Roerich societies in the Baltic States, is Anita Stašulāne, Professor of History of Religions at Daugavpils University. She underlines Latvia's leading role in spreading both theosophical and N. Roerich's ideas in the Baltic States in the 1920s and 1930s, emphasizing that Riga became not only the publishing centre of Theosophical literature in the Baltic region, but also the centre of Theosophical writing (S t a š u l ā n e 2014). In turn, the question of the position of Latvian Roerich Society in the USSR ideological expansion plans in Latvia in 1939 is taken into considered in the study of Heinrihs Strods (S t r o d s 2007).

Among the studies dedicated to the Lithuanian Roerich Society, the work of Rimantas Vanagas should be mentioned (V a n a g a s 1998). The separate study is dedicated to one of the members of the Lithuanian Roerich Society the artist Stasys Vaitkus (1907–1989) (M a t u l y t ė 2013). In addition, a general overview of the

² As one of the expressive testimonies can be noted the affirmation mentioned in the motivation on decision for the arrest of Bruno Jākobsons that "being hostile to the Soviet Union", he had joined the Theosophical Society in 1937, see: J ā k o b s o n s 1949a, 158. As another vivid example can be noted Haralds Lūkins' interrogation protocol in June 1949, in which he testified that "our Theosophical Society had conducted its activities to popularizing Roerich's teachings, that is, in a spirit of hatred against Soviet rule", see: L ū k i n s 1949a, 83.

formation and activities of the Lithuanian Roerich Society is provided by Olga Davidova's publication "Light's cell" (D a v i d o v a 2000) and web resource of the Lithuanian Roerich Society ('*Lietuvos Rericho draugija*').

Separately mention should be made of the studies devoted to the theoretical aspects of understanding the resistance movement which in the case of the Baltic States are different in their specifics. Ādolfs Šilde's study on the resistance movement in Latvia (Š i l d e 1985) deserves special attention. In this study he describes in more detail the various aspects of resistance, highlighting three forms of resistance: armed, passive and spiritual resistance. According to him, the principle element of spiritual resistance has been defined by the Italian writer Ignazio Silone (1900–1978), who claimed that "a man can remain free, if he preserves the will to be free" (ibid, 52).

Activities of Latvian and Lithuanian Roerich societies during the years of independence

There is historical paradox that both H. Blavatsky and N. Roerich grew up in the Russian environment, but gained world recognition in America. Thereof the United States became not only the centre of their teachings' repositories, but also a "fashion" determinant for followers of the ideas of H. Blavatsky and N. Roerich in the world. According to historically grown tradition, in the US and several other countries there was a division between the followers of H. Blavatsky's and N. Roerich's ideas in the 1920s and 1930s: Theosophical societies existed separately and Roerich Museum Friends' Societies were organized separately. The experience of Latvia and Lithuania differed significantly in this respect, as here the adherents of the ideas of H. Blavatsky and N. Roerich were united under the "roof" of one organization.³

The first Roerich Society in the Baltic States was founded in Latvia, and there were two preconditions for it. First of all, N. Roerich himself had kinship ties with Latvia: his ancestors – although there are different versions of their origin – lived in the Province of Courland at least since the 18th century (S i l ā r s 2005). Nicholas' father Konstantin Roerich (1837–1900) moved to St. Petersburg in the 1860s and opened a notary's office there, however, every summer his family visited Latvia. However, N. Roerich's activity had one more connection with Latvia: N. Roerich, after receiving the news of the change of power in Russia in 1917 in Finnish Karelia, decided not to return to Russia and arrived in London via Scandinavia in 1919. There he had an unexpected meeting with Vladimir Shibaev (1898–1975), free listener of university and resident of Riga (A n n e n k o 2008). This acquaintance will take on a new meaning later, when in preparation for the trip to India, N. Roerich will offer V. Shibaev to become his scientific secretary,

³ Therefore, in the International Theosophical Year Book in 1937, neither Latvia nor Lithuania was mentioned as countries where Theosophical Societies exist, see: YB1936.

and their paths will go together.⁴ But at that time, in the early 1920s, with the help of V. Shibaev, who had returned to Riga, a group of like-minded people began to form here, who were fascinated with Eastern philosophy and N. Roerich's ideas.

One of the most active and prominent members of this group was the physician homeopath Felix Lūkins (1875–1934). During many trips abroad, he acquainted with a wide variety of treatments later used in his medical practice, including, for example, iridodiagnosis, i.e., diagnostic method by the iris. After V. Shibaev left for India in 1928, F. Lūkins took over the leadership of this group of like-minded people, and in 1930, the Latvian Roerich Society or, officially, Roerich Museum Friends' Society in Latvia was registered.⁵ Among the more visible members of the society, along with F. Lūkins, can be mentioned the writer and translator Rihards Rudzītis (1898–1960),⁶ the merchant Klements (Klementas) Vaičūlenas (1881–1940), who was also one of the society's biggest financiers, and the writer and former tsarist army officer Alexander Klizovsky (1874–1942) (Lūkins 1949c, 94). At this time, a collection of paintings of the society began to form, which was significantly supplemented in 1931 with twelve N. Roerich's paintings received from author himself. Furthermore, the society began correspondence with N. Roerich (Rudzītis 1984) and related societies in other countries, including Georges Chklaver (1897–1970), head of the Roerich Museum Friends' Society in France and Zinaida (Zina, Sina) Lichtmann-Fosdick (1889–1983), representative of several organizations related to N. Roerich's name in the USA (Draudziņa 1949, 35). In total, the society had about 60 members (ibid, 34), according to another version, about one hundred members (Lūkins 1949a, 80).

It can be assumed that the first contacts between followers of ancient Eastern philosophy in Latvia and Lithuania took place already in the early 1920s, when N. Roerich asked V. Shibaev to help Nikolai Kordashevsky (1877–1945), Lithuanian landowner and Colonel, to found a group in Lithuania (Staišulāne 2014, 140). The Lithuanian Roerich Society was founded in 1935 in Kaunas. Initiator of its establishment, partly encouraged by F. Lūkins, was the Russian-born doctor and theosophist Nadezhda Serafiniene (1876–1959). As early as 1934, she began publishing a magazine "Dvasios šviesa" ("The light of the Spirit") dedicated to the occult. Although according to many Lithuanians the most respected candidate for the position of the head of the new society was a researcher of Eastern philosophy and the Executive Secretary of the editorial

⁴ According to one version, it remained hidden from the public that the "scientific secretary" was at the same time an agent of the All-Russian Extraordinary Commission (VChK), and therefore N. Roerich's further route will prove to be closely connected with interests of VChK – both by supporting or, on the contrary, hindering his various intentions and by controlling his searching.

⁵ In 1939, the society re-registered its statute, changing its name to the Roerich Museum Society (Rudzītis 2003, 1938 05 04, 1938 11 23).

⁶ After the death of F. Lūkins, Kārlis Stūre took over the management of the society for a short time, and he was replaced in this position by R. Rudzītis in 1936.

board of Lithuanian Encyclopaedia Bronius Vaitiekūnas (1902–1986), he did not even join the society, and N. Serafiniene became its first leader. Difficulties in the operation of society were caused by the fact that N. Serafiniene lived in Skuodas, which was far from Kaunas, therefore in 1936, with the acceptance of N. Roerich, as a new head of the society was chosen music teacher and former opera soloist Julija Dvarionaitė-Montvydienė (1893–1947). Among the members of the society could be mentioned Birutė Valušytė (1912–1977), a typist at the Land Bank, whose brother, the Lithuanian Army Colonel, was married to Antanas Smetona's daughter (J a l o v e c k a s 1949a), artist Petras Tarabilda (1905–1977) and his wife, also artist Domicėlė Tarabildienė (1912–1985). At the end of the 1930s, the society had 30–40 members (ibid).

The first major meeting of the Baltic States Roerich Societies' representatives took place in October 1937, when, in line with the 50th anniversary of N. Roerich's creative activity, celebrations were held in Riga, during which Roerich Museum was opened in the premises of the society at 21a-7 Elizabetes Street. According to Katrīna Draudziņa (1882–1969), deputy chairman of the Latvian Roerich Society, in the 1949 investigation, the museum's collection included paintings of mystical content, of which 42 were painted by N. Roerich, ten were by his son Svyatoslav Roerich (1904–1993) and more than 30 were by Latvian, Lithuanian and Estonian artists (D r a u d z i ņ a 1949, 34). The celebrations were accompanied by meeting of the Roerich Societies of the Baltic States that sometimes referred as the Congress. The meeting, which took place in October 10–11, was attended by delegates from Latvia and Lithuania and a representative of the Estonian interested group, delegate from the Estonian Cultural Foundation artist Johannes Greenberg (1887–1951). Latvia was represented at the meeting by R. Rudzītis, son of F. Lūkins and, like his father, doctor Haralds Lūkins (1906–1991) and others, Lithuania – by J. Dvarionaitė-Montvydienė, P. Tarabilda, N. Serafiniene and others.

Another meeting of the Latvian and Lithuanian Roerich Societies' representatives took place in Kaunas at the end of 1930s, but its date differs in various testimonies: H. Lūkins referred this meeting to 1937 (L ū k i n s 1949c, 94), while Vladas Jaloveckas in his 1949 testimony mentioned 1939 and characterized it like a small congress (J a l o v e c k a s 1949b, 130).⁷

Latvian Roerich Society and the issue of the Soviet "fifth column": 1940

The occupation of the Baltic States in 1940 became fatal to the existence of Roerich societies: in both Latvia and Lithuania the societies were liquidated by order of the new government, their literature was banned as anti-Soviet and

⁷ This contradiction can be resolved, using R. Rudzītis' diary (R u d z ī t i s 2003), in which two meetings are noted: on May 15–17, 1937, four representatives of Latvian Roerich Society had visited Lithuanian friends for the purpose of acquaintance, while in 1939 representatives of the Latvian and Lithuanian Roerich Societies participated at the Congress of Baltic Peoples' Cooperation, opened in Kaunas at June 9 (BZ 1939 06 13).

“ideologically harmful” (I n d i c t m e n t 1949, 204), and the paintings of the Latvian Roerich Society museum’s collection were transferred to the Riga city museum. However, in Latvia’s case this seemingly clear conflict between the Roerich Society and the Soviet authority contradicted to the rapid career of the society’s former secretary H. Lūkins in 1940: already on the tenth day after the occupation – on June 27 – H. Lūkins became the editor-in-chief of the newspaper “Jaunākās Ziņas” (“The Latest News”),⁸ and a month later, in the elections held on July 14-15, 1940, he was elected a deputy of the Latvian People’s Saeima (later it was renamed –the Supreme Council of the LSSR) (B u š e v i c s 1940),⁹ becoming co-responsible for the destruction of independent Latvia. These are the facts that cannot be ignored and which both among researchers in Latvia (*LI* 2001, 133–134) and among Latvian post-war emigrants have given rise to judgments about H. Lūkins and the whole Roerich Society as the Soviet “fifth column” in Latvia (L i e p i ņ š 1977; 2011a).¹⁰In order to clarify this complex issue, it is necessary to carefully weigh the evidence from different sources.

In 1949 investigation, H. Lūkins testified that his contacts with the USSR diplomatic mission began in 1939, when he visited the mission several times to ask for permission to enter the USSR on behalf of N. Roerich (L ū k i n s 1949d, 140). In the same way H. Lūkins also tried to find out the possibility to publish in the USSR the work written by the son of N. Roerich in the linguistics of Eastern peoples and to distribute the books of N. Roerich in the USSR. Everything ended without positive results, but it was probably thanks to them that the Soviets came with the idea of using the Roerich Society to spread their ideology and the “workers’ state” image. As it is noted in study of the USSR’s ideological efforts in Latvia (S t r o d s 2007), to show their welcoming, the USSR authorities decided in September 1939 to donate several books and albums to Latvian Roerich Society and to organize an exhibition of photographs of Soviet life at the Roerich Museum. In the context of these facts, it is clear that the USSR used Latvian Roerich Society to advance its interests, and this also explains H. Lūkins’ rapid career in 1940. But there is one question that remains disputable: Did H. Lūkins himself and the Roerich Society behind him understand that they were being exploited? Some researchers give positive answer (L i e p i ņ š 2011b), believing that H. Lūkins probably misunderstood this himself. However, in drawing such conclusion, an

⁸ According to H. Lūkins, in the 1949 investigation, he held this position for about three months, after which he was dismissed from it as a non-partisan, see: L ū k i n s 1949d, 141.

⁹ As H. Lūkins testified in 1949, after his election he received congratulatory telegram from Helena Roerich (1879–1955), N. Roerich’s wife, see: L ū k i n s 1949b.

¹⁰ As another argument is mentioned here the long delay in re-registering the statutes of society (they were submitted in May 1938, but registered only in February 1939); the reason for this delay was the opinion of the Latvian Political Police that society is “politically unreliable”, which was based, among other things, on judgment that society’s some members sympathize to communist ideas (R u d z ī t i s 2003, 1938 11 23, 1939 02 04).

important aspect should be taken into consideration. Immediately after the law on the closure of Latvian Roerich Society was published in the press in 1940, H. Lūkins, according to the 1949 investigation, personally addressed to Mikhail Vetrov (1909–1980), the first secretary of the USSR's diplomatic mission in Latvia to clarify the situation. M. Vetrov explained that the actions of the Soviet authorities are correct. In H. Lūkins' words, that answer caused his resentment for the unjust decision of the Soviet authorities (L ū k i n s 1949a, 84). This H. Lūkins' action in 1940 did not look like the reaction of a conscious former traitor, who is looking for his "thirty pieces of silver"; it is rather the reaction of a man disappointed and deceived in his fancies, who in the honours that had shown to him a year earlier, naively saw expressions of friendship rather than a cool calculation. And it was confirmed by H. Lūkins' further actions: immediately after the news of the liquidation of the Society and the ban on theosophical literature, he and his colleagues, trying to save the literature in the Society's shop and warehouse from destruction, secretly exported it by trucks to the residences of several members of the Society (D r a u d z i ņ a 1949, 36–37; L ū k i n s 1949c, 102).

Contacts of former members of the Latvian and Lithuanian Roerich Societies and theosophists during the Nazi and Soviet occupation: 1941–1949

The order of the Soviet authorities to liquidate the Roerich Society in both Latvia and Lithuania forced many of their members to opt out from further activities.¹¹ In turn, others, who had survived the first year of Soviet occupation, were ready to resume activities and previous contacts with like-minded people. However, conditions for continuing the activity changed dramatically: the new Nazi occupation regime established in 1941 also prevented the resumption of the legal activity of the Societies, so all further activities of former Roerich Societies' members were illegal. Lithuanians turned out to be more active in this situation. With N. Serafiniene's relocation to Vilnius in 1941, two groups of theosophists – in Kaunas and Vilnius – formed in Lithuania, who kept in touch with each other (V a l u š y t ė 1949, 136–137). Lithuanians also took the initiative in restoring relations between Latvian and Lithuanian like-minded people, and in 1942 V. Jaloveckas and B. Valušytė came to Riga on their own initiative to discuss further cooperation opportunities (J a l o v e c k a s 1949b, 130; D r a u d z i ņ a 1949, 38). According to K. Draudziņa, in the same year another meeting took place in Riga, when J. Montvydienė came here with her sister¹² to discuss about work under the conditions of the Nazi occupation (D r a u d z i ņ a 1949, 39). The third and last meeting during the Nazi occupation took place in 1944, when B. Valušytė, educator Antanas Dapkus and architect Steponas Stulginskis (1908–1995) visited

¹¹ From Soviet repression suffered also the members of Latvian Roerich Society A. Klizovky and Teodors Būcens (1869–1942), who both died in Soviet camps.

¹² In one of his interrogations in 1949, H. Lūkins mentioned that J. Montvydienė's sister was Regina Dvarionaitė, the Russian language teacher at Kaunas Art Institute, see: L ū k i n s 1949c, 97.

Riga again (Valušytė 1949, 137). The contribution of the Latvian side to these contacts was the transfer of theosophical literature and the reproductions of N. Roerich's paintings to Lithuanians. Judging by the evidence given in the investigation in 1949, no wider activity in Latvia was resumed at that time. However, an event took place which, at least temporarily, restored justice: when it was revealed that the nationalized N. Roerich's paintings had not been evacuated, but left in the city museum, in the early 1943 the former leaders of the Society applied to authority with request to return these paintings to the society members. In response, forty-six paintings by N. Roerich and S. Roerich were returned to representatives of the society, which immediately were hidden at one of the society member's house (Draudziņa 1949, 37; Lūkins 1949c, 100–101).

More extensive activity was developed after the end of the war, which was probably explained by the hope that the Soviet regime's policies after the war would be more moderate and less repressive. A new trait that appeared at this time became contacts through society's member, organist and composer Nikolaj Kachalov with like-minded people in Moscow, Russia. This was confirmed already by the first post-war visit, when K. Draudziņa went to Moscow in 1946, where she met Olga Gerakova, a relative of N. Kachalov, and handed over Theosophical literature (Draudziņa 1949, 39).

At the beginning of 1947, Lithuanian representatives B. Valušytė, at that time the head of publishing house editorial office of encyclopaedias, dictionaries and scientific literature of the Lithuanian SSR, S. Stulginskis, Dean of the Faculty of Architecture of Kaunas State University, and V. Jaloveckas, at that time Director of Theatre in Kaunas,¹³ went to Leningrad. The purpose of this trip was to buy both N. Roerich's paintings and books on art and philosophy. As a result, they managed to buy four N. Roerich's paintings from several private collectors, paying a total (including books) of 29 thousand roubles (Stulginskis 1949, 133–134). On the way back from Leningrad they visited like-minded people in Riga (Valušytė 1949, 137). The second visit of Lithuanians to Riga in August 1947 deserves particular attention, when a range of events started that ended with unpleasant disagreements.

In August 1947, B. Valušytė, physician Donata Danutė Stukaitė (1924–2012) and S. Stulginskis visited Riga. The main reason of the visit was the health of J. Montvydienė, former head of the Lithuanian Roerich Society. Therefore, R. Rudzītis and H. Lūkins, who was a doctor and who could advise J. Montvydienė, went to Kaunas together with Lithuanians (ibid). During this visit, the possible successor of J. Montvydienė's work B. Vaitiekūnas, at that time the Director of the publishing house of encyclopaedias, dictionaries and scientific literature of

¹³ There are different versions of the particular theatre, which was directed by V. Jaloveckas: S. Stulginskis indicated in the 1949 investigation that V. Jaloveckas at that time was the Director of Kaunas Dramatic Theatre (Stulginskis 1949, 134), while M. Matulytė in her study mentions that he was the Director of the State Opera and Ballet Theatre (Matulytė 2013, 20).

the Lithuanian SSR, was introduced to both Latvians. After the conversation, H. Lūkins strongly opposed to the choice of Lithuanians and openly expressed his negative assessments in a letter sent to J. Montvydienė after returning from Kaunas (L ū k i n s 1949c, 98). Some indications suggest that probably the main reason for H. Lūkins' antipathy was B. Vaitiekūnas' arrogant position. This personal conflict became the cause of disagreements between Latvian and Lithuanian like-minded people as well. To overcome these disagreements, a "large" delegation of Lithuanians arrived in Latvia in February 1948. Lithuanian delegation, consisting of B. Valušytė, V. Jaloveckas, Vladas Sipavičius (Sipaitis) (1904–1992), at that time stage director of Kaunas Dramatic Theatre, R. Dvarionaitė and S. Stulginskis, brought a letter, signed by all comrades of Vilnius and Kaunas, in which Lithuanians expressed their full confidence in B. Vaitiekūnas. B. Valušytė, who was the author of the letter's text, admitted that the purpose of the letter was to rehabilitate B. Vaitiekūnas in the eyes of Riga's members and to call for further joint action (V a l u š y t ė 1949, 138). According to H. Lūkins, at joint meeting in K. Draudziņa's apartment, Lithuanian delegation invited him to apologize, because he had unreasonably insulted B. Vaitiekūnas, calling him selfish. Several Latvians, including H. Lūkins, gave speeches in response, after which he left the meeting without apology. In search for reconciliation, V. Jaloveckas visited H. Lūkins in his apartment after the meeting, and as a result of a longer conversation, H. Lūkins wrote a letter on behalf of B. Vaitiekūnas, in which he expressed his apology and gave the letter to V. Jaloveckas for delivery to the addressee (L ū k i n s 1949c, 98). Thus, at least formally, this conflict was resolved.

At the same time, contacts with Moscow theosophists continued as well, although, mostly these contacts were limited to the transportation of literature from Riga by N. Kachalov. As the partner, by his words, was a group of Moscow theosophists, whose more prominent representatives were Grigorij Viskunov, Olga Butkevich and Zinaida Gagina (K a c h a l o v 1948, 121–124).

The meetings of like-minded people, which took place in smaller groups (from 6 till 10 people) at the residences of these groups leaders (J ā k o b s o n s 1949b) also continued throughout this time (K a l n s 1949a, 46). These meetings discussed not only the ideas of N. Roerich and the Theosophical teaching, but also general socio-political issues; the views expressed by the accused on these issues were described in investigation file as "slander of the Soviet system". A vivid illustration here was Vladimir Priselkov's judgments on the collective farm system made in 1947: according to V. Priselkov, "collective farms will soon be introduced in Latvia, and we will witness how peasants will be forced to join collective farms" (K a c h a l o v 1948, 120). At the time, in 1949, when the investigation took place, this prediction sounded prophetic.

The investigation of the case and accusation of “Theosophical Anti-Soviet Underground”

The reason for initiating an investigation of the activities of the “Theosophical anti-Soviet underground”, judging according to case materials, N. Kachalov, the transporter of theosophical literature, was arrested in Moscow in March 1948 (K a c h a l o v 1948, 113). Immediately after that, the first arrests took place, including the arrest of R. Rudzītis, the head of former Latvian Roerich Society. However, one year was left until the investigation and the mass arrests, and one can only guess about the reasons of this break.¹⁴

What is remarkable and deserves special attention in the investigation, initiated by the Ministry for State Security of the Latvian SSR on June 1, 1949, is the fact that in the case the Roerich Society and its activities were not mentioned, but instead the designations “Theosophical society”, “Theosophical society of artist N. Roerich” or “anti-Soviet Theosophical society” were frequently used.

In total, fourteen persons were charged in the case (in Lithuania, there were 18 defendants in a similar case). Out of these 14 individuals, there were eight women; by nationality, nine of the accused were Latvians and five Russians, while by age in most cases they were 40–50 years old. The professional occupations of the accused were different: their list included two doctors K. Draudziņa and H. Lūkins, the sculptor ElzaŠvalbe-Matvejeva (1903–2004), the actress Leontīne Andermane (1907–1996), a laboratory assistant at the Zoo Ella Rudzītis (1900–1993), and V. Priselkov, the head of the Grain Department of the Ministry of Agriculture of the Latvian SSR. However, there are other interesting facts. If in some cases the professional education of these people seems surprising, for example, dentist K. Draudziņa, after graduating from the dental school in Riga in 1906, had a four-month internship in Leipzig, Germany (D r a u d z i ņ a 1949, 33), then in other cases their social origin seems surprising. For example, Lyudmila Sletova was the descendant of the *Utyruko-Zapol'skij* (Утыруко-Запольский) noble family near Kharkiv (S l e t o v a 1949, 199).

When reviewing the biographies of the accused, two episodes deserve special attention. K. Draudziņa, who was accused as the head of “Theosophical Anti-Soviet Underground”, still in her youth in 1909 was expelled from Liepāja to Oryol, Russia, for contacts with the members of the Social Democratic Party that held illegal meetings in her dental office (D r a u d z i ņ a 1949, 33–34). The second episode concerned the doctor H. Lūkins: as investigation clarified, in June 1941, during the first Soviet mass deportations, H. Lūkins, a deputy of the Supreme Council of the LSSR, had been hiding an acquaintance in his apartment for a few days from repressions of Soviet authority (L ū k i n s 1949d, 143–144). Both of

¹⁴ It is interesting that R. Rudzītis was tried not only a year earlier, but also separately from his headed “Theosophical anti-Soviet underground” in Latvia. Various explanations can be found for this, however, as long as the investigation case materials against him are not available it is only a conjecture.

these episodes allow drawing significant conclusion, namely that the actions of these people were not guided by their political sympathies or career ladder, but by unselfish humanitarian reasons and opposition to any manifestation of political repression.

The content of the accusation could be assessed from two sides. The part of accusation which concerned the continuation of illegal activities of the prohibited society was understandable, at least from a legal point of view. However, at the same time the indictment contained allegations that were contradictory and absurd from both a legal and a factual point of view. Such were all statements about the activities of Latvian Roerich Society until 1940, i.e. during the period of independent Latvia State, designating it as counter-revolutionary society that had acted in the interests of bourgeois states (by the latter was meant relations with related organizations outside Latvia) (I n d i c t m e n t 1949, 203–204). A separate episode of accusation was the material damage caused to the Soviet state in the amount of 300 thousand roubles, when, after closure of the Roerich Society in 1940, the members of society hid paintings and books which were valued for the said price (L ū k i n s 1949e). If in the case of paintings, the specific view of Soviet jurisprudence, which considered paintings donated to the society or purchased by members themselves to be state property, is more surprising, then, with regard to books it seemed absurd to calculate material damage for the Soviet state about "ideologically harmful" anti-Soviet literature. However, the largest absurdity was the ideological wording of the indictment, starting with the finding that the Museum set up by the society was named "after the well-known Theosophist-White émigrés Nicholas Roerich, who fled to America" (I n d i c t m e n t 1949, 203).

An unexpected and significant for further progress of the case was the information that appeared in investigation materials at the end of October 1949 that one of the accused – Arvīds Kalns, the lecturer at the Public University and the Soviets Construction' School at the Council of Ministers of the Latvian SSR – was recruited in 1946 as an MGB secret informant with the nickname "Solncev" for to use his connections to find a former SD employee (K a l n s 1949b). The characteristic of the secret informant "Solncev", sent by MGB, promoted to look at this "discovery" in a different light: even MGB was forced to recognize that A. Kalns had gone to recruitment reluctantly and agreed only after a long conversation, but already in December 1947 he was excluded from the agents' network for inaction (K a l n s 1949c). The investigation was especially interested in the fact why A. Kalns did not report anything about his activities in the "theosophical underground": A. Kalns explained that he is a convinced theosophist and reporting on his part would be a betrayal (K a l n s 1949b). This had nothing to do with the case under investigation, but MGB feared for the possibility that the public might learn about some special working methods of the Soviet repressive system; therefore, the Deputy Minister of State Security of the Latvian SSR, Colonel Viktor Kozin, referred the case to a Special Council at the Ministry of State Security of the USSR in Moscow (K o z i n 1949).

The verdict in the case of Latvia's "Theosophical anti-Soviet underground" was made at a session of the Special Council at the Ministry of State Security of the USSR on December 24, 1949 (a notable choice of date, which can hardly be considered accidental). All fourteen defendants received a conviction verdict, and the term of the sentence provided for only two options – ten (K. Draudziņa and ten more accused) or 25 (H. Lūkins and two more accused) years in a corrective-labour camp with confiscation of property (*I n d i c t m e n t* 1949, 218–219). What was special in this case was the fact that all convicts were also assigned a concrete camp for serving a sentence, for example, for K. Draudziņa was assigned a camp *Mineral'nyj* (Минеральный) at Inta, Komi Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR), and for H. Lūkins – a camp *Rechnoj* (Речной) at Vorkuta, Komi ASSR (*Y e r s h o v* 1950).

The convicts' fate was relieved by the political changes that took place in the USSR: in May 1955, the Central Committee for the Review of Criminal Cases released some convicts and for others reduced their sentences, but in 1956, by decisions of various court instances, all convicts were released, also setting the return of confiscated property to owners.¹⁵

Conclusions

The contacts and cooperation of the Latvian and Lithuanian Roerich societies during the years of Soviet and Nazi occupation are only one and a small chapter in the overall story of events of this period, and there is no reason to exaggerate its significance. Just as there is no reason to idealize the members of these societies: in his diary R. Rudzītis often writes about intrigues, resentments and lust for power that appeared from time to time among both Latvian and Lithuanian like-minded people. At the same time, however, this is a very special chapter, which shows that, among other forms and manifestations of resistance, there was another one: intellectual resistance. Its main specific features were following the broader, universal human values and, simultaneously, its 'apoliticism', not by choosing the "better" of the two occupying regimes, but by opposing the efforts of any political authority to restrict human freedoms and rights, and firstly – the freedom of thought. As formulated by a former head of Latvian Roerich Society R. Rudzītis in the early 1948: "Communists poison human souls. They force to study Marxism-Leninism. This teaching is foreign to the people. Let's take me. I am also forced to study communist teaching. I am its opponent. The ideas of communism are foreign to me" (*K a c h a l o v* 1948, 120).

¹⁵ For example, on September 29, 1956, the Court Collegium on Criminal Cases of the Supreme Court of the USSR, considering the protest of the USSR Prosecutor General against the 1949 judgment in the case of H. Lūkins, decided to annul the judgment due to lack of evidence, release H. Lūkins from detention and return confiscated from him property, see: *G r i n b e r g* 1956.

In this case some parallels are interesting. Almost simultaneously with the investigation case of Latvia's "Theosophical anti-Soviet underground", in 1950–1951, the LSSR MGB opened an investigation case of the so-called "French group" – informal group of people (one of its more prominent participants was the artist KurtsFridrihsons (1911–1991)) who, since 1946, held like-minded evenings to discuss French literature and culture in general. The fact that both above mentioned groups of intellectuals – "Theosophical anti-Soviet underground" and "French group" – evolved their activities in the late 1940s testifies that it was in the first years of Soviet "one-way thinking" when intellectuals, who had grown up in the years of an independent state, sharply felt restrictions on intellectual freedom, and through the like-minded evenings they sought to preserve that freedom. The later resistance of intellectuals in the 1960s–1980s fundamentally changed: there was already a protest inside it. This later resistance lost its "pure intellectualism" and 'apoliticism' and acquired certain political content.

According to the author of this study, it should be recognized that at the level of the entire nation, this intellectual resistance did not play a significant role – it was rather the resistance of an individual or a narrow group of like-minded people, which can be partially explained as a "flight" from the existing political reality. At the same time, however, it would be difficult to deny the role of this resistance as a certain moral reference point that affirms the values of humanity and intellectual freedom.

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Uldis Krēslinis

Latvijos ir Lietuvos Rericho draugijų kontaktai ir teosofinio antisovietinio judėjimo veikla 1940-aisiais: remiantis Latvijos TSR MGB bylos medžiaga

S a n t r a u k a

Pagrindinės sąvokos: *Latvija, Lietuva, N. Rericho muziejaus draugų draugija, teosofinis antisovietinis judėjimas, Latvijos TSR valstybės saugumo ministerija, intelektualinis pasipriešinimas.*

1949 m. birželio 1 d. Latvijos TSR valstybės saugumo ministerija (LTSR MGB) iškėlė bylą, kuri per penkis mėnesius iki 1949 m. spalio 29 d. išaugo į kaltinimus keturiolikai asmenų priklausymu teosofiniam antisovietiniam judėjimui. Kaltinamieji buvo 1940 m. tarybų valdžios likviduotos Latvijos Rericho draugijos nariai, tęsę savo veiklą nelegaliai nacistų ir antrosios sovietų okupacijos metu. Ypatingas dėmesys MGB bylos tyrime buvo skiriamas teosofinio antisovietinio judėjimo kontaktams už Latvijos ribų, tarp jų ir JAV bei Rusijoje. Tačiau ypač artimi ryšiai nuo 1930-ųjų suvienijo N. Rericho idėjų pasekėjus Latvijoje su bendraminčiais Lietuvoje: pogrindyje tęsė susitikimus ir bendradarbiavo iki 1940-ųjų pabaigos.

Ši MGB baudžiamoji byla buvo nagrinėjama beveik tuo pačiu metu, kai Lietuvoje vyko panašus kaltinamasis procesas, apimantis 18 asmenų bylos tyrimą, – paremtas kaltinimais garsiems Latvijos ir Lietuvos intelektualams dėl teosofinės literatūros platinimo ir pastangų išsaugoti kultūros vertybes. Tai buvo ryškus tarybinio režimo politikos slopinti bet kias intelektualines laisvės išraiškas pavyzdys. Baudžiamasis procesas ir byla pademonstravo, kad visuomenės pasipriešinimo formos represinei valdžios politikai buvo įvairios, tarp jų ir intelektualios. Pagrindiniai intelektualinio pasipriešinimo tikslai – siekis universalesnių žmogiškųjų vertybių ir apolizmas, ne pasirenkant „geresnį“ iš dviejų okupacinių režimų, o priešinantis bet kokioms politinės valdžios pastangoms riboti žmogaus laisvės ir teises, pirmiausia – minties laisvę. Akivaizdu, kad nacionaliniu lygmeniu šis pasipriešinimas neatliko reikšmingo vaidmens – tai buvo atskirų asmenybių ar nedidelės bendraminčių grupės pasipriešinimas, kurį iš dalies galima suprasti ir kaip bėgimą nuo esamos politinės tikrovės. Tačiau vertinant pagal teismo nuosprendžius ir paskirtas bausmes, šis intelektualinis pasipriešinimas režimo akyse buvo ne mažiau pavojingas nei ginkluota opozicija.

Uldis Krēslinš

Contacts and Activities of the Latvia's and Lithuania's Roerich Societies in the "Theosophical Anti-Soviet Underground" in the 1940s: Based on the Materials of Latvian SSR MGB Case

S u m m a r y

Keywords: *Latvia, Lithuania, Roerich Museum Friends' Society, "Theosophical anti-Soviet underground", Ministry for State Security of the Latvian SSR, intellectual resistance.*

On June 1, 1949, the Ministry for State Security of the Latvian SSR (LSSR MGB) initiated an investigation case, which within five months until October 29, 1949, grew into an accusation against fourteen persons for belonging to the "Theosophical anti-Soviet underground". The members of the Latvian Roerich Society were accused and dissolved by the Soviet authority in 1940. However, they continued their activities illegally during the Nazi occupation and later the second Soviet occupation. MGB investigation paid special attention to the contacts of the "Theosophical anti-Soviet underground" outside Latvia, including the USA and Russia. However, especially close contacts since the 1930s united the followers of Nicholas Roerich's ideas in Latvia with like-minded people in Lithuania. They continued their meetings and cooperation in the second half of the 1940s.

This investigation case – almost simultaneously by similar charge the investigation against 18 persons happened in Lithuania – blaming prominent Latvian and Lithuanian intellectuals of distributing theosophical literature and of trying to preserve cultural values, was a vivid illustration of the Soviet regime policy to suppress any expressions of intellectual freedom. At the same time, this investigation case showed that the forms of society's resistance to the repressive policy of authority were various, and among other forms and manifestations of resistance, there was another one: intellectual resistance. Its main specific features were following the broader, universal human values and, simultaneously, its 'apoliticism', not by choosing the "better" of the two occupying regimes, but by opposing the efforts of any political authority to restrict human freedoms and rights, and firstly – the freedom of thought. It is clear that at the level of whole nation, this intellectual resistance did not play a significant role – it was the resistance of an individual or narrow group of like-minded people, which can be partly explained as an "escape" from the existing political reality. However, judging by the sentences handed down by the court, this intellectual resistance in the eyes of the regime was not less dangerous as armed opposition.

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