

OFFICIALLY NON-EXISTENT: STORAGE AND USE OF BANNED LITERATURE IN THE SOVIET LATVIA IN THE 1970s–1980s

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In the Soviet Latvia (1940–1941, 1944–1990), as in other Communist-occupied countries, alongside with officially allowed media circulated alternative sources of information – forbidden and secret publications, works of cultural and intellectual movements sharply criticized or concealed by the Soviet power, etc. This paper considers storage and use of books and periodicals, published in the independent Republic of Latvia (1918–1940) and forbidden during the Soviet period. Legally this literature was accessible only at three major research libraries of the Latvian SSR to researchers and specialists with special permissions. Other professional and social groups could reach it illegally – at secret storage places of different libraries, black book markets as well as home libraries. Along with publications in the press, the archive of the central censorship body (the Main Literature Board of the Latvian SSR) and library documents, interviews with librarians and historians are used in the research.

KEY WORDS: *Soviet censorship, alternative culture, restricted collections, reading of prohibited literature, black book market, the Latvian literature.*

INTRODUCTION

In the Soviet Latvia, like in the other countries where the Communist regime established its rule, there co-existed two cultures: the official – approved by censorship authorities and appropriate in respect of the canons of power ideology – and informal or alternative – not regulated by the power, which was often in opposition to the prevailing ideology and official cultural approaches. The latter included prohibited and secret information, so-called “samizdat” and “tamizdat” literature, manifestations of literature, art, and music not recognized or silently dismissed by the power, which circulated in the informal communication, semi- private, and private sphere. Up to 1986, the

official or accepted by the power media environment provided very little information on literary and intellectual heritage from the independent Republic of Latvia (1918–1940) with exception of freely available few authors loyal to the Communist regime (even their creative work was often re-created under the new power requirements).

Quite a few great writers were even not mentioned, and masterpieces of their writing could only be accessed at the repositories of forbidden literature established at libraries (special departments for legally restricted books, hereinafter – restricted collections) after obtaining a special permit or circulated in the informal cultural sphere.

Circulation of the unofficial culture still remains not a widely explored subject. A number of studies and articles devoted to this subject are focused primarily on life and heritage of the Russian metropolitan intellectuals (artists, poets, and musicians).¹ The alternative culture of the Soviet Latvia is dealt with only in one collection of articles² as well as catalogue of art exhibition³, and, like in Russia, these publications focus on the life of creative intelligentsia during the occupation period. However, research on the Latvian people persecuted for anti-Soviet agitation (which included dissemination of restricted and secret information) shows that the unofficial culture was circulating not only in the circles of intelligentsia but also in many other social strata, including workers, craftsmen, engineers and technical workers, educators and cultural workers.⁴ The aim of this study is to evaluate the availability and use of books and press at the libraries, published in the independent Latvia as well as outside their walls in 1970s–1980s. Hypothetically, the publications issued in the Republic of Latvia (hereinafter – LR) could have had an important role in strengthening the resistance to the Communist occupation regime as they maintained an interest in the history of independent state, its achievements in education, culture, science, and thereby the desire to regain the lost statehood that could be turned into reality in 1990.

The study is based on the analysis of documents and other materials corresponding to thematic framework. Comprehensive information about restricted collections was found in the documentation of the main censorship authority of the Latvian SSR – the Main Literature Board of LSSR (hereinafter – MLB)⁵, as well in archival materials of the National Library of Latvia (hereinafter – NLL)⁶ and the Academic Library of the University of Latvia (hereinafter – AL UL)⁷. Because of the lack of information on the illegal circulation of forbidden publications in official documents and published memoirs books, the main method for data acquisition was semi-structured interviews with librarians of the NLL.

Librarians constitute a particular professional group that at the same time had an access to the approved and forbidden literature (hypothetically – to a greater extent than many other Latvian residents). The Soviet power considered librarians as “ideological frontline representatives” who were entrusted to build, organize and propagate the collections of Soviet literature in libraries. They also carried out discreet tasks, namely selected literature “harmful” to the regime from the open collections, and those books were transferred to waste paper or to the restricted collections.

Specialists of the major research libraries (including NLL) belonged to the superior 2nd category of readers who had access to the entire library holdings according to their professional needs, and could receive literature from the restricted collection. They could also use other publications of limited access (for example, printed works for internal use) that were kept in the general holdings, however, included only in the service catalogues or catalogues of obsolete literature, and for these reasons available exceptionally to the privileged readers (researchers and specialists).

Thus, these librarians can provide vivid evidence of how official and unofficial culture influenced the worldview and values of the individuals who lived under the Communist occupation regime. Among the ten librarians interviewed, there were two employees of the restricted collection of the State

1 For example, FEDULOV, Aleksandr. *Neoficial'naja kul'tura v SSSR vo vtoroj polovine 60-h – 80-h godah XX veka* [The unofficial culture in the Soviet Union during the second half of the 60s – 80s of the XX century]. Jelista, 2010 [accessed 30 January 2017]. Access through Internet: <<http://www.dissercat.com/content/neofitsialnaya-kultura-v-sssr-vo-vtoroi-polovine-60-kh-80-kh-godakh-xx-veka#ixzz4VuoMye7U>>; VENCLOVA, Tomas. Moskva 60-h: Interv'yu. *Inostrannaja literatura*, 2015, no. 3, p. 250–264.

2 *Nenocenzētie: alternatīvā kultūra Latvijā, XX gs. 60-tie un 70-tie gadi* [Uncensored: alternative culture in Latvia, the 60s and 70s of the XX century]. Rīga, 2010. 315 p.

3 *Nonkonformisms grafikā, 1944–1990* [Nonconformism in Latvian Graphic Art 1944–1990]. [Rīga, 2011]. 96 p.

4 ZELMENIS, Gints. Valsts drošības komiteja un divdesmitā gadsimta astoņdesmito gadu politiskās represijas okupētajā Latvijā: izpētes iespējas [The

KGB and Political Repressions in Occupied Latvia within the Eighties of XX Century: Perspectives of Research]. In *Totalitārisma sabiedrības kontrole un represijas: dokumentu izpēte un tās metodoloģija*. Rīga, 2015, p. 72–115 [accessed 30 January 2017]. Access through Internet: http://www.lu.lv/fileadmin/user_upload/lu_portal/projekti/vdkkomisija/VDKkomisija_raksti_1sejums_Totalitarisma-sabiedrības-kontrole-un-represijas_2016-03-30marts.pdf.

5 Main Board for the protection of state secrets in the press under the Council of Ministers of the Latvian SSR (Latvijas PSR Ministru padomes Galvenā pārvalde valsts noslēpumu aizsardzībai presē). National Archives of Latvia, State Archives of Latvia (LNA, LVA), Collection (Coll.) 917.

6 The materials about the restricted collection are gathered in a separate stock in the NLL (NLL, RXA 324, 1941–1990).

7 Part of the documents is stored at the Misiņš library of the AL UL.

Library of the Latvian SSR (the name of the National Library of Latvia during the Soviet occupation). In order to compare librarians' and readers' experiences, interviews with two historians who belonged to the teaching staff of the Faculty of History and Philosophy at the State University of Latvia (hereinafter – SUL) in 1970s-1980s were recorded.

PUBLICATIONS OF THE INDEPENDENT LR IN THE LISTS OF BANNED LITERATURE

Immediately after the restoration of the Communist regime in the autumn of 1944, the authorities started the identification of “harmful” publications and their removal from circulation. Already at the end of 1944, the “List No.1 of books and brochures removable out of circulation” (“No apgrozības izņemamo grāmatu un brošūru saraksts Nr. 1”) was issued in 700 copies.⁸ In total, during the first decade of occupation (1944–1954), nine lists of book and brochures removable out of circulation were issued in Latvia (not including single orders), which in total comprised more than 300 pages. The lists included almost all the literature of LR: research in humanities and social sciences, religious and theological works, occult literature, legal and political editions, statistical data and accountancy documentation, reference books, manuals, material of non-governmental organizations (including the Scouts, the paramilitary organization of Guards), textbooks in literature, language, history, tourist guides and geographical descriptions (part of which became top secret literature), fiction and all the press. A large quantity of them were different small printed items – from labels to posters of events, mostly the programs, adverts, and other material in relation to the celebrations held in the LR. Any printed material was also taken out of circulation if such dates as the 18th of November (the Day of Proclamation of the Independence of Latvia), the 15th of May (Kārlis Ulmanis established non-parliamentary authoritarian rule in Latvia) were mentioned, and if the Latvian national anthem or the red-white-red flag of Latvia – the symbol of statehood – were presented.⁹

Lists of the forbidden books and brochures included dozens of authors whose works had to be completely removed. Among them were repressed writers, religious workers, military officers (for example, those of Ernests Braštinš (1892–1941), the leader of Dievturi (Pre-Christian revivalism movement) and explorer of hillforts, the poet Leonīds Breikšs (1908–1942), the writer and commander of the Latvian army Aleksandrs Grīns (1895–1941), the general of the army Kārlis Goppers (1876–1941) and other famous individuals), and also *émigré*

writers who were prominent during the independence period of LR for their active public, political, journalistic activities (the general of the Latvian army Rūdolfis Bangerskis (1878–1958), the journalist Alfrēds Ceihners (1899–1987), the literary historian Zenta Mauriņa (1897–1978) and her spouse Konstantīns Raudive (1909–1974), and the other individuals). Even the popular literature books were forbidden: in the very first list, more than 120 authors were included, and all the literary work of many writers had to be removed completely. The biggest number of “harmful” books belonged to a well-known German author of sentimental novels Hedwig Courths-Mahler (1867–1950) whose 98 books were withdrawn from circulation, including two books in Russian.¹⁰

The withdrawn publications from mass libraries (the name of public libraries in the Soviet years) were sent to waste paper sites or furnaces. The number of destroyed publications is not precisely quantifiable because the documentation of the LSSR MLB and libraries provide contradictory data. According to the annual reports of MLB, in the first decade (1944–1954) 2.6 million publications were removed from libraries and bookstores¹¹, among them more than 359,000 units were transferred to the Latvian research libraries, which were allowed to keep the banned publications having a restricted number of copies (two copies, one of which was to be circulated, and the other preserved in the collection).¹²

BANNED LITERATURE IN LATVIAN RESEARCH LIBRARIES

Restricted collections were a sort of “library in a library”, stored in a separate reading room, with windows barred by the storage premises, sewn together and stamped by the MLB inventory books, delivery documentation files, separate catalogues, and index cards (at an early stage used only by the employees of the department, later they could be accessed by readers according to their specific and relevant topic), and very restricted accessibility. At the beginning, access to the literature at restricted collection was possible only with permits from the headquarters of institutions representing

8 Rīga, 1944. 181 p.

9 ĻISICINA, Anna. Interviewed by Jana Dreimane. National Library of Latvia, 02.05.2016.

10 *No apgrozības izņemamo grāmatu un brošūru saraksts Nr. 1* [List No. 1 of books and brochures removable out of circulation], p. 75–78.

11 Data from: *Annual reports of the MLB of*

LSSR, 1944–1954. National Archives of Latvia, State Archives of Latvia (LNA, LVA), Collection (Coll.) 917, Inventory (Inv.) 1 a, File (F) 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 11.

12 Data from annual report of the MLB of LSSR in 1954. LNA, LVA, Coll. 917, Inv. 1 a, F. 11, p. 32, 34, 36.

readers, the State security authorities (People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD), later the State Security Committee, hereinafter used as the Russian abbreviation – KGB) or the Central Committee of the Latvian Communist Party (LCP CC), or the LSSR MLB for the reasons of research or investigation. In the permits, research topic and the necessary literature were precisely indicated. Up to 1988, in special cases, taking literature from the special collections outside the library premises were allowed only to the officials from the security authorities¹³, MLB, Propaganda and Agitation Department of the LCP CC or the Council of Ministers.

After Stalin's death, in Nikita Khrushchev's time (1953–1964) the access to the restricted collections and at the same publications issued during the independence period of Latvia was made easier: an application sealed and signed by the head of the researcher's organization, precisely stating the research theme and the necessary sources, sufficed. In Khrushchev's time, the second half of 1950s, all the earlier published nine lists of banned literature were revised to identify and return politically neutral literature to generally accessible collections. Publication of works of some writers from the LR period whose creative work had been concealed, like Jānis Jaunsudrabiņš (1877–1962) and Kārlis Skalbe (1879–1945), was renewed, although a significant part of their creative writings was still kept hidden. In 1961, a new list containing the publications with "political defects" that could no way be approved (3100 of titles) was issued; it comprised a third of all revised material.¹⁴ It is not precisely known how many printed works from LR were transferred to the general collection, as only two orders regarding exclusion of books from obsolete edition lists have survived.¹⁵ In all likelihood, most of the apolitical literature including fiction, folklore collections, religious and theological writings, publishing catalogues and reference books were withdrawn from the restricted collections and transferred to the general collection¹⁶, there was no information about them in the general readers' catalogues. In the State Library of LSSR (hereinafter – SL), the descriptions of these publications were placed in the catalogue of the so called obsolete literature (stamped with the letter "y"), which was kept separately from public catalogues and was accessible only to the first and second category readers (researchers and specialists, including librarians and bibliographers) having a bibliographer's permit. This literature was also borrowed for reading at home. The librarian Lilija Limane mentioned that on several occasions she had lent the popular novel "Gone With the Wind" (Vējiem līdzi) by American author Margaret Mitchell (1900–1949) for her friends and acquaint-

tances It was translated into Latvian by Valdemārs Kārklīņš (1906–1964) and published in 1938 and 1940 by “Grāmatu Draugs”.¹⁷ The book has been frayed, obviously from frequent reading.¹⁸ Unofficial reproduction of “obsolete” literature could raise the KGB interest in the person placing the order of the copy. For example, SL bibliographer remembers copying an article about hypnosis from the encyclopaedia “Dzīves māksla” (Art of life)¹⁹, which in 1970s was kept in a generally available collection but information about it was located in the catalogue of obsolete literature. Already on the same day she was interrogated by a KGB officer who wanted to know the details regarding the further use of the copy, because on one of the covers of a book in question was a youth portrait of the Italian dictator, founder of Fascism Benito Mussolini (1883–1945), which she had not even noticed.²⁰

As the Communist regime became more liberal, the use of the restricted collections became broader: all adequately formatted applications were accepted, the former politically convicted people were permitted to read the banned literature. In 1974, there were 409 visitors to the SL restricted collection, and in 1985 the number rose to 1023 visitors.²¹ Almost half of the visitors were staff of the higher education institutions and research institutes of the Latvian SSR as well as students of the senior years of their studies, mostly historians. Frequent visitors of the restricted collection were employees of the SL, Fundamental Library of the Academy of Sciences of the Latvian SSR (nowadays – the Academic Library of the University of Latvia, hereinafter – the AS FL) as well as

13 For example, Andris Nadziņš, the Major of KGB on 13 January 1983 for the purposes of criminal investigation received the book of Azerbaijani emigrant writer Essad Bej (1905–1942) “Stalin” (Рига: Филинь, 1932) [*Reader application of A. Nadziņš to V. Eņģele, the Head of restricted collection of SL, dated 13 January 1983*]. LNB, RGRF, A 324, no. 46, p. 1.

14 *Annual reports of the MLB of LSSR in 1961*. LNA, LVA, Coll. 917, Inv. 1a, F. 26, p. 15.

15 Latvijas PSR “Glavlita” priekšnieka pavēle Nr. 31 Rīgā, 1956.g. 29. jūnijā [The chief order no. 58 of the MLB of Latvian SSR on June 29, 1959]. [5] lpp; *List of literature, inspected for return to the general available collection of the library: on order №. 58 of MLB of LSSR, September 30, 1969*. LNB, RGRF, A 324, no. 87.

16 *Inventory book of the restricted collection of LSSR*

SL, 30.12.1954–21.09.1960. LNB, RGRF, A 324, no. 83. 199 p.

17 The first edition: Mičela, Margerita. *Vējiem līdzī*. Rīga: Grāmatu Draugs, 1938. 2 Vol.

18 LIMANE, Lilija. Interviewed by Jana Dreimane [audiorecord]. National Library of Latvia, 02.05.2016.

19 *Dzīves māksla*: praktisku padomu enciklopēdija visām dzīves nozarēm [Art of life: practical advices for all spheres of life]. Rīga: Grāmatu Draugs, 1932.

20 GASIŅA, Dace. Interviewed by Jana Dreimane [audiorecord]. National Library of Latvia, 18.05.2016.

21 Annual report of Department of specially kept literature of SL of LSSR in 1985. LNB, RGRF, A 324, no. 5.

staff of museums.²² In 1985, employees of the SL visited the restricted collection of their library 54 times, mostly demanding actual foreign serials related to various art areas; only in 18 cases publications of LR stored at the restricted collection were read. They were used by bibliographers of the Department of Letonika, who collected information for retrospective bibliography, and also researchers of the Latvian book history from the Rare Books and Manuscripts Department. Officials of the LSSR Ministry of the Interior, the KGB, showed little interest in literature stored at the restricted collection. Among the readers, there was only one KGB officer who during a year visited the reading room of the restricted collection, and required the publications from the period of independent Latvia, including the biographical dictionary “Es viņu pazīstu” (I know him) (Rīga, 1939). The other officials from the security authorities read books on the eastern martial arts that had come out abroad at that time. Analysis of the reader applications shows that half of visitors (more than 500) required mostly periodicals and reference books of the independent Latvia. The most popular were the daily newspapers in Latvian and Russian: “Jaunākās Ziņas” (1920–1940), “Brīvā Zeme” (1920–1940), and also “Сегодня” (1919–1940).

The readers had access only to the titles and editions necessary for their research or bibliographic work, and until the second half of the 1980s it was obligatory to precisely indicate the required publications in reader applications. At an early stage of the occupation, readers of the restricted collections were even forced to show to the employees of the reading room their compendia, which could include “harmful” information.²³ Since 1952, this humiliating rule had no longer been valid. Nevertheless, it was still applied in the 1980s to the users of secret collections in the archive system.²⁴ In the reading room of the restricted collection of SL, there was no collection of reference books, which means that the possibility of potentially dangerous discoveries was reduced to a minimum. Nonetheless, part of catalogue or card file, which was necessary for bibliographical work, could be lent out to librarians in the reading room of restricted collection.²⁵

However, it is necessary to admit that personal relations played an important role in the strictly regulated world of secret information. For instance, Head of the largest in the Latvian SSR restricted collection – that of AS FL – Riva Joffe (Bluhm, 1916–2010) gave out publications not mentioned in the reader application or top secret literature to trustworthy readers without any special permits required for it²⁶. R. Joffe offered to the trustworthy writers and scientists ‘harmful’ publications from non-inventory stocks for supplementing their personal libraries, and lent books for reading at home, which

was forbidden. Unfortunately, due to this liberal attitude she was forced to quit the job, even if it was already 1973. Another person to be interviewed was Vija Daukšte, at that time historian and Assistant Professor of the University of Latvia (currently – Head of the Lettonica and Baltic Centre at NLL). She also emphasized a liberal atmosphere at the restricted collection of the SUL, historians were not deprived of any publication even if it was not mentioned in the reader application.²⁷

ALTERNATIVE SOURCES FOR THE ACQUISITION OF BANNED LITERATURE

Already from the beginning of the Soviet occupation librarians managed to save a small part of the banned literature despite the risk of becoming politically unreliable, get dismissed from work or even accused of a criminal offence (several librarians were sentenced for storing anti-Soviet literature). One of the ways to save the books was to write off the “harmful” books as lost during the war. In the first years of the occupation more than 11 000 items were written off under this pretext in Riga mass library system²⁸. This way of saving books was also used later. For example, the 5th Library of the City in Riga (founded in 1924) in 1949 presented the annual report, in which 2397 books and 301 brochures were reported as missing, while in the 9th Library of the City (founded in 1926) as many as 5862 books were reported as missing books.²⁹ Despite the changes in library administration where the previous

22 *Registration journal of loaned out literature from restricted collection, August 1983 – November 1985*. LNB, RGRF, A 324, no. 46, 158 p.

23 Instrukcija ob osobyh fondah periodicheskikh i neperiodicheskikh izdanij pri bibliotekah SSSR 25. oktjabrja 1938 goda [The instruction on special collections of periodicals and non-periodical publications by libraries of USSR on October 25, 1938]. *Daugava*, 2001, no. 3 (227), p. 133–136.

24 DAUKŠTS, Bonifācījs. Interviewed by Jana Dreimane [audiorecord]. National Library of Latvia, 18.05.2016.

25 GASIŅA Dace. Interviewed by Jana Dreimane [audiorecord]. National Library of Latvia, 18.05.2016.

26 KLEBĀ, Jana. *Okupācijas varas cenzūras*

darbība Latvijas Akadēmiskajā bibliotēkā: maģistra darbs [Censorship of the occupation power in the Academic Library of Latvia: Master thesis], Rīga: Latvijas Universitāte, 2007, p. 51. See also: LIEPIŅŠ, Jānis. Mani piedzīvojumi speciālfondā [Adventures in the special collection of Misiņš Library]. *Latvija Amerikā*, 1998, no. 44, p. 6, 15.

27 DAUKŠTE, Vija. Interviewed by Jana Dreimane [audiorecord]. National Library of Latvia, 3.05.2016.

28 Annual report on Riga mass libraries in 1949. LNA, LVA, Coll. 1363, Inv. 1, F. 31, p. 73.

29 *Application to comrade [Alfons] Antons, chairman of Executive Committee of the Soviet of Working People's Deputies of Molotov district in Riga*. LNA, LVA. Coll. 1583, Inv.1, F. 33, p. 26–27.

library managers were substituted by persons loyal to the Soviet power³⁰, and routine MLB inspections, there were several storage places of the “harmful” literature in Riga mass library system, from which works of even completely banned authors were lent out for reading at home not only to librarians but also to trustworthy readers. For example, at the 17th Library of the City in Āgenskalns district of Riga (founded in 1947) even in 1970s and early 1980s there existed a kind of small collection of the publications issued in the LR at the very corner “cover up” with the magazine stacks, from where both librarians and readers could take home and read banned books.³¹

It is possible that the idea of such a corner at the library belonged to the first director of the 17th Library, writer Alfrēds Goba (1889–1972)³² who as early as in the period of Nazi occupation (1941–1944), being the director of the 3rd Library of the City in Riga, had overtaken books issued during Lithuanian press ban period (1864–1904) from a burned-out Lithuanian Catholic Church; ordered to tear out pages with articles on the literature history from the literary and popular magazine “Atpūta” (1924–1940) that were prohibited and had to be brought to paper mills.³³ The interviewed librarians told that in 1970s the prohibited publications from the independent LR period were also stored at the 2nd library and 10th library of Riga³⁴ but more comprehensive information is still needed. In some cases librarians took the banned books home and placed the books in the hidden row of the bookshelves, and only the closest kin were informed about it.³⁵

Independent Latvia’s editions were also saved in many private libraries. Their storage conditions were determined by the experience of the owners and their relations with the Soviet power. In the families with repressed persons, or who felt threatened, this literature was placed in the basement or the attic. But in many cases they were kept openly on the shelves of personal libraries.³⁶ Among the press which was officially permitted to be only kept at the restricted collection, was one of the most popular magazines “Atpūta” or “Sējējs”³⁷, different reference books, but mostly fiction. Even the dwellers of communal apartments had such practice of storing books.³⁸ In the 1970s–1980s, this literature was free to read not only within the family, including children, but lent to friends and neighbors.³⁹ Librarians remember that the “old” books had attracted their attention already in the childhood due to the excellent design and the print quality in comparison to the mostly greyish and unpleasing book production of the Soviet Latvia.⁴⁰ Personal libraries in the Soviet era were those few places where the choice of reading material was free from the dictate and control of the power contrary to the mass or research libraries.

A personal library could have been complemented with publications from the period of LR – they were on sale both on legal markets and illegal or so called black book-markets. The writer Zigmunds Skujiņš remembers that shortly after the second Soviet occupation the assets remaining without owners included the banned books, could be sold at the Zvirgzdu Sala market.⁴¹ After it was closed in February 1950, the book buying and selling continued in other markets, for instance Riga Central market and Čiekurkalns Market. Both the press articles and librarians' memories highlighted two illegal book sales points in Riga in the 1970s and 1980s – at Šmerlis (Biķernieki Forest) and Babīte (Beberbeķi Forest); it should be noted that particular marketing places were constantly changed. Usually the market was held once a month, and the exact time when it would happen was told by word of mouth.

30 In 1948–1951 directors and librarians of the thirteen mass libraries of Riga were dismissed from office as politically and professionally inappropriate. [Report to comrade [Kārlis] Reke, vice-chairman of Executive Committee of the Soviet of Working People's Deputies of Molotov district in Riga on 11 July 1951]. LNA, LVA, Coll. 1583, Inv. 1, F. 43, p. 58.

31 VILKA, Aira. Interviewed by Jana Dreimane [audiorecord]. National Library of Latvia, 11.05.2016; KOPŠTĀLE, Dina. Interviewed by Jana Dreimane. National Library of Latvia, 24.01.2017.

32 Worked in Riga library system from 1937 to 1948, and later suffered repressions under the Communist regime. ZANDERS, Viesturs. Grāmatnieki no Sēlijas: Jānis Kriškāns un Alfrēds Goba [Book history and publishing experts from Selonia: Jānis Kriškāns and Alfrēds Goba]. *Es daru tā*, 1999, no. 12, p. 21.

33 SODUMS, Dzintars. *Savai valstij audzināts* [Brought up for his Country]. Rīga, 1993, p. 228, 232; *No apgrozības izņemamo grāmatu un brošūru saraksts № 7* [List No. 7 of books and brochures removable out of circulation]. Rīga, 1949, p. 1.

34 BEIJERE, Inta. Interviewed by Jana Dreimane [audiorecord]. National Library of Latvia, 18.01.2017.

35 ANDIŅŠ, L. Starp lapām, ko nekrāso rudens:

[interview with Velta Jankēvica, the librarian of Abava Local Municipality Library in Talsu District]. *Lauku Avīze*, 1994, no. 91, 17.11.1994, p. 25. And also Aija Frišenfelde, the librarian of NLL, told that her grandmother Otilija Bumbule, the former director of Snēpele Library took home some banned books published in LR. FRIŠENFELDE, Aija. Interviewed by Jana Dreimane. National Library of Latvia, 22.12.2016.

36 GASIŅA, Dace. Interviewed by Jana Dreimane [audiorecord]. National Library of Latvia, 18.05.2016.

37 This publication and many other publications of 1930s were preserved by Marta Priedite (1920–2003), the grandmother of author of the study, and kept in her book shelf.

38 VILKA, Aira. Interviewed by Jana Dreimane [audiorecord]. National Library of Latvia, 11.05.2016.

39 ZĀLĪTE, Māra. Tas ir ļoti vienkārši. Un daudz sarežģītāk [It is very simple. And more difficult]. *Karogs*, 1994, no. 1, p. 218–219.

40 VILKA, Aira. Interviewed by Jana Dreimane [audiorecord]. National Library of Latvia, 11.05.2016.

41 SKUJIŅŠ, Zigmunds. Sarunas ar jāņtārpiņiem: (no bezmiega melnrakstiem) [Conversations with Fireflies: from insomnia drafts]. Rīga, 1992, p. 111–112.

According to the librarian Anna Mauliņa, practically all literature issued in the LR was on sale.⁴² Her words were confirmed by the politician Aleksandrs Kiršteins, who in the 1970s was a frequent visitor of both black book markets in Riga. He pointed out that besides a large number of encyclopaedic publications he bought masterpieces of the Latvian publishing house “Zelta Ābele” (1935–1940; 1941–1944 in Latvia).⁴³ The above mentioned markets were also a place of meeting for second-hand booksellers and exchange of publications. Those markets were well-attended, and as the journalist Aida Prēdele told, “crowds” of people kept walking.⁴⁴ Lawyer Jānis Lagzdiņš indicates: “At that time collecting and reading of banned books was a triple delight. First, any forbidden fruit is particularly tasty and desirable. Second, it was all about the romance of half secrecy in Pierīga forests, where we purchased books.”⁴⁵ Taking into account the risk, price of that kind of goods was high (one magazine could be sold for 5–7 roubles) so few could buy more than one book or magazine. Often market visitors returned home empty-handed.

Books were sold, bought and exchanged also in the network of personal communication where the necessary information regarding demand and supply was obtained from friends and acquaintances. Sometimes the environment seemed so secure that one could become less alert and get into the field of the KGB vision. This happened to the book collector Maldonis Salaks (1940–1989) who used to boast to his friends of some special acquisitions. In the 1980s, he had managed to obtain a collection of several thousand copies of books from time of the LR, but one night he was arrested and his book collection was partially confiscated.⁴⁶ However, no lawsuit was filed against M. Salaks because of the lack of evidence of his involvement in anti-Soviet literature dissemination.⁴⁷

It is not possible to say precisely how popular the literature of LR was in the occupied Latvia. In the research by the LSSR SL (1984–1986) it was found that neither librarians nor readers were knowledgeable about the so called pre-Soviet literature and knew only those authors whose creative periods referred to the end of the 19th century or the beginning of the 20th century (Jānis Jaunsudrabiņš, Aspazija (1865–1943), Jānis Ezeriņš (1891–1924), Vilis Plūdons (1874–1940) etc.).⁴⁸ It is possible that respondents did not dare mention writers of whose status in the Communist regime they were not convinced. However, the earlier sociological research clearly showed correlation between the offer of new books and the people’s interest in the respective authors. The authors of the Soviet period were the most popular (Ojārs Vāciētis (1933–1983), Imants Ziedonis (1933–2013), R. Ezera (1930–2002), Z. Skujiņš etc.). For the viability of literature, preservation of manuscripts and publications

(provided by librarians, museum staff and other enthusiasts) is not enough; it needs constant circulation in the society, promoted by school-based education programmes, mass media and book-market offer.

The first appeals to publish authors kept back by the Soviet power appeared only in 1986.⁴⁹ In September 1987, the Commission for reviewing lists of the banned books was established, and it started with the evaluation of the most demanded literature – periodicals and books published in independent Latvia.⁵⁰ Unfortunately, the Commission consisted mostly of censors: its head was an official from MLB, the others were restricted collections' employees, consequently, each banned publication was subjected to deep scrutiny, thus avoiding removal of the signature stamp that marked larger publication groups – on the opposite as it was in Estonia. Only in 1989 by the order of the LSSR MLB all the literature of LR was started to return to the generally available collection, and it proceeded until 1994.

All persons interviewed in this study admitted that they had access to publications issued during the period of independent LR at the restricted collections or home libraries. Reading of such literature did not result in anti-Soviet activities, however, the people who were engaged in it were conscious of the antidemocratic and unfair character of regime, they also secretly listened to the

42 MAULIŅA, Anna. Librarians – readers of forbidden literature: [unpublished material], received on July 29, 2015.

43 KIRŠTEINS, Aleksandrs. Revīzija grāmatplauktā nepieciešama ik pēc desmit gadiem [Check out of the bookshelf is necessary every ten years]. *Lauku Avīze*, no. 101, 1995, p. 25

44 Condemning description of the black market: PRĒDELE, Aida. Tukšuma kolekcionāri [Collectors of emptiness]. *Padomju Jaunatne*, 1983, no. 153, p. 3.

45 LAGZDIŅŠ, Jānis. Dzejas lasīšanai vajag dvēseles mieru [For reading of poetry peace of mind is necessary]. *Lauku Avīze*, 1996, no. 49, p. 20.

46 MAULIŅA, Anna. Librarians – readers of forbidden literature: [unpublished material]. Received on July 29, 2015.

47 Described with pseudonym Maldonis Saliņš in: MAULIŅŠ, Jānis. *Garīgā pagrīde*: romāns [Intellectual underground: novel]. Rīga, 1994, p. 132–139.

48 PURIŅA Antra. Bibliotekāra lasīšanas intereses

[Reading interests of librarian]. In *Bibliotekārs un lasītājs*: tematisks rakstu krājums [Librarian and Reader: thematic collection of articles]. Rīga, 1991, p. 31–32.

49 The first issue of literary magazine “Karogs” in 1986 included story “Akacis” [The pool in a marsh] by Latvian writer Ādolfs Erss (1885–1945) with two widely essays on him. Ā.Erss was repressed by the Soviet power in 1944. Part of his works was banned, the information about him in the media – a very incomplete and biased. See: BĒRSONS, Ilgonis. Mantojuma apgūšanā pienākusi kārta Ādolfam Ersam [In acquiring of heritage the turn came for Ādolfs Erss]. *Karogs*, 1986, no. 1, p. 148–155; VĒJĀNS, Andris. Latgales tēlotājs [The painter of Latgale]. *Ibidem*, p. 156–167.

50 *Information on the revision of publications, which are stored in libraries' restricted collections of the Latvian SSR, January 11, 1988*. LNA, LVA, Coll. 917, Inv. 1-a, F. 212, p. 20.

Western radio stations “Voice of America”, “Free Europe” and read legally or illegally available contemporary foreign publications. Reading of the literature published during the period of independent LR, in particular the creative works of Z. Mauriņa and K. Raudive reinforced the understanding that there are universal human values that Soviet ideology is unable to substitute.⁵¹

Conclusion

Circulation of the prohibited literature including publications of independent LR showed that despite the most stringent censorship and repression system, no power can fully control the amorphous and multifaceted space of information. In any case, there were people – even if they were outwardly loyal to the regime – who ignored the rules dictated by the power. In circumstances of the Communist regime, the individual access to information as well as to the other social benefits depended not so much on the regulations in force as on the individual interest and personal relations (including “blat”, which meant the system of informal agreements, exchanges of services and connections). In this context, it is obvious that in-depth studies regarding transferring of the prohibited literature by the networks of black markets and personal communication are still needed, and it concerns not only Latvia but also the other former Soviet republics. It would be desirable to explore reading practices in the Soviet period encompassing not only the metropolitan intellectuals and cultural sphere workers, but also the provincial population.

In the 1970s–1980s, restricted collections of the research libraries underwent processes where they developed into repositories (archives) of rare publications, and the permit to read could be granted to almost every professional belonging to art sphere, qualified specialist or an upper class student – it was enough to submit an appropriate request. Publications of the independent LR, especially periodicals, were in the highest demand by readers of restricted collections.

Officially banned literature was preserved at many private libraries, where it was freely used. For those who did not have access to the restricted collections, home libraries were the only chance to get undistorted information about the cultural heritage of the LR. Individual acquisition, storage and use of literature issued during the period of the independent LR was not as risky as in the Stalinist period unless it was reproduced and distributed to a wider circle of people. However, it is necessary to note that the number of copies of these publications was considerably reduced as they were destroyed in masse in the first decade of the occupation.

The first task of libraries after the abolition of censorship was to provide resources, enabling to bridge the knowledge “gap” experienced by the public at large. It became possible to issue the most valuable and interesting books anew. It was more difficult to provide access to the LR periodicals, most of which were stored at restricted collections until the statehood was recovered; nevertheless, they were extensively read. The situation soon changed as a large-scale digitization was started at NLL in 1999 implementing the project “Heritage 1: Preservation of Latvian periodicals (1822–1940)” (“Mantojums — 1: Latvijas periodisko izdevumu (1822–1940) saglabāšana”). Although part of the LR publications have already been included in the National Digital library (<http://www.lnb.lv/lv/digitala-biblioteka>), many publications are still waiting in the queue, and some books and newspapers, despite the additional acquisition, are rarities even at largest research libraries of Latvia.

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Santrauka

Tarybų Latvijoje (1940–1941, 1944–1990), kaip ir kitose komunistų okupuotose šalyse, kartu su oficialiai leidžiama žiniasklaida buvo platinami alternatyvūs informacijos šaltiniai, tokie kaip draudžiami ir slapti leidiniai, kultūros ir intelektualinio judėjimo atstovų darbai, kuriuos Sovietų valdžia aštriai kritikavo arba slėpė nuo visuomenės. Straipsnyje nagrinėjami literatūros, išleistos nepriklausomos Latvijos Respublikos laikotarpiu (1918–1940) ir uždraustos sovietmečiu, laikymo ir skaitymo aspektai.

Nepaisant pirmuoju okupacijos dešimtmečiu (1944–1954) vykdyto nepriklausomos Latvijos literatūros kūrinių bibliocido (literatūros kūrinių išėmimas iš apyvartos, jų naikinimas dideliais kiekiais, tik riboto kiekvieno uždrausto leidinio egzempliorių skaičiaus laikymas didžiausiose mokslinėse bibliotekose), laikui bėgant prieiga prie šio laikotarpio spausdintinių darbų tapo lengvesnė. XX amžiaus 8–9-ajame dešimtmetyje mokslininkams ir kvalifikuotiems specialistams buvo leidžiama gana laisvai naudotis knygomis ir periodiniais leidiniais, kurie saugomi trijose mokslinėse bibliotekose ir buvo vertinami kaip pasenę. Kiti šia literatūra besidomintys asmenys galėjo jos įsigyti Rygos legaliose ir nelegaliose knygų prekyvietėse. Vis dėlto šių knygų kaina buvo gerokai didesnė nei vidutinė sovietinių knygų kaina. Kai kurie spaudiniai ar net ištisos kolekcijos buvo saugomos namų bibliotekose ir masinėse bibliotekose (taip sovietmečiu buvo vadinamos viešosios bibliotekos). Deja, dėl visiško ir dalinio daugelio autorių draudimo ir šališko politinių, ekonominių ir literatūros procesų Tarybų Latvijoje interpretavimo, kurį pateikė sovietų istorikai, didžioji visuomenės dalis negalėjo susidaryti tinkamo supratimo apie gyvenimą nepriklausomoje Latvijos valstybėje. Žinomi tik keli autoriai, kurių kūrybinis darbas prasidėjo antroje XIX amžiaus pusėje–XX amžiaus pradžioje arba kurių kūriniai buvo leidžiami sovietmečiu. Siekiant įveikti šį žinių atotrūkį, XX amžiaus 9-ojo dešimtmečio pabaigoje Latvijoje prasidėjus Nepriklausomybės sąjūdžiui, bibliotekos dėjo pastangų papildyti savo fondus šio laikotarpio literatūra. Vis dėlto iniciatyvas stabdė ribotas išlikusių egzempliorių skaičius – tai buvo ypač aktualu turint galvoje periodinius leidinius, plačiai skaitytus sovietmečiu. Šią problemą iš dalies padeda spręsti didelio masto Latvijos kultūros paveldo skaitmeninimo procesas, prasidėjęs 1999 m. kartu su projektu „Paveldas 1: Latvijos periodinių leidinių išsaugojimas“.

REIKŠMINIAI ŽODŽIAI: sovietinė cenzūra, alternatyvioji kultūra, ribotos kolekcijos, draudžiamos literatūros skaitymas, juodoji knygų rinka, Latvijos literatūra.

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