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On the role of translated literature in constructing the "new Soviet person": Anglophone fiction in Soviet Latvia of the 1940s

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Abstract

In Latvia, the Soviet regime played a crucial role in the transformation of people's values. Latvians had to be moulded into "New Soviet People" - educated, hardworking, collectivistic, patriotic, loyal to the Communist Party and superior to any other human in the world. A "New Soviet Person" had to be ready to oppose all the threats of capitalism and eventually conquer the world. The research aim is to examine the ways Soviet officials tended to employ literature from ideologically opposite countries to implant 'appropriate' socialist values into society. On the example of British and American fiction presented in the public space of Latvia in the 1940s, the process of constructing a "Soviet identity" is considered. Soviet Latvia periodicals of the 1940s were used as a main data-collecting instrument revealing policies and practices of society moral education carried out by the regime ideologists.

Keywords: Latvia, Soviet ideology, 'new Soviet person', Anglophone literature, the press

Introduction

In the 1940s, Latvia experienced several acts of occupation. In the summer of 1940, Soviets occupied the territory of Latvia and another republic of the USSR - The Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic was proclaimed; then, from 1941 to 1945 during World War Two (WW II), Latvia was occupied by Nazi Germany, but in 1944/45 the process of Soviet reoccupation was carried out, and the status of the Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic was restored. Soviet power came along with the process of Sovietisation of Latvia: large scale reforms in numerous public sectors were initiated, a political system based on the model of Soviets (workers' councils) was imposed, and Latvians were supposed to adopt and accept a way of life,

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mentality, and culture modelled after the Soviet Union - they had to become "New Soviet People". Established as another republic of the Soviet Union, Latvia was immediately exposed to the process of constructing a 'Soviet identity'. "Over the decades and in all corners of the realm, the Soviet state devoted immense resources and efforts to manipulating (and occasionally effectively creating) the manifold identities of the Soviet population" (Bassin and Kelly, 2012, p. 6-7). The local authorities followed the policy of the Bolshevik party undertaken in Russia after the October Revolution in 1917:

> The New Soviet Man was a medium through which the new party leaders attempted to extirpate old societal norms, which were lingering from the former regime, and replace them with a holistically Communistic society ruled by a national consensus and devoid of any individualism that may cause dissention. The party utilized several different means and operated through multifarious mediums to achieve this unification of social consciousness; some of these methods of transformation like propaganda or education guided under Communist values were directly implemented in social sectors to achieve immediate results, [..] (Savage, 2011).

To further the complicated process of forming a new type of person, the authorities put in action a mechanism of moral education of the society actively involving different spheres of culture. "The strategy of the party's policies was to implant the notion that the New Soviet Man was the best man" (Savage, 2011). An attempt was made to instil into the minds of the people an idea that Proletariat culture was the supreme culture. It was postulated in Soviet art, music, cinematography, theatre, and literature. The Bolshevik views of culture with their goal "to remake society and in the process remake humanity" (Kenez and Sheperd, 1998, p. 23) were constantly expressed and promoted: "People had to be made to understand the correctness of Bolshevik views; they had to become workers and fighters for the socialist cause. The primary means for achieving these goals were education, enlightenment, and culture" (Kenez and Sheperd, 1998, p. 23).

The present article considers the ways of involving foreign literature into the process of constructing a "New Soviet Person" in Latvia of the 1940s. The cultural and socio-political situation in Soviet Latvia was subordinated to the governmental position in Moscow - the metropolis of the USSR. But at the same time, Latvia, along with Lithuania and Estonia, due to their specific geopolitical positioning, represented quite a unique and distinct segment of the USSR, as compared to other republics of the Soviet Union (for example, the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic or the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic): the Baltic states had experienced a period of independency of their states and they were located the furthest to the West, hence being the western borderland of the USSR. As the Latvian literary scholar and professor Maija Burima points out:

> After the annexation of the Baltic states by the Soviet Union, the Baltic states were supposed to become a part of the imperial narrative of the Soviet empire. The Baltic states, just recently independent states with strong links to western and northern Europe, were now to be rethought as parts of the Soviet sphere (Burima, 2018a, p. 66).

Having been geopolitically included in the Soviet Union, Latvia was also to enter its cultural space, so that Latvians would not associate themselves with Western Europe. Hence in the public space of the occupied Latvia a lot of criticism was disseminated when writing about Western Europe and the USA. By various means an idea was postulated that a 'New Soviet Person' could have nothing in common with a Western European person, as they differed greatly. Much effort was made to inculcate the Soviet, to impose a 'Soviet identity' on the people of the newly formed republic. The more interesting it is to explore how Anglophone literature that represented the culture of the Western world hostile to the Soviet ideology was employed to transfer the ideals of the Communist Party and to propagate the concept of the 'New Soviet Person' in public.

In the present article, the scientific focus is on the ways Soviet officials employed Western literature to manipulate the public opinion in order to ensure the Sovietisation of society. The research question is how political and ideological factors have affected patterns of representing translated Anglophone fiction in society during the 1940s. The main assumption is that in the Stalin era (for Latvia meaning the years between 1940-1941 and 1944/45-1953) every attempt was made to reduce, if not to reject any foreign influence on society resulting in a manipulative and strictly controlled process of introducing and, what is more important in the framework of the present research, presenting and interpreting British and American literature. To answer the research question, the following aspects are explored and considered: the role of literature in the Soviet system, its complete dependence on the state politics; the situation of Anglophone literature in the Stalin-era Latvia; the role assigned to translated British and American fiction in constructing a 'Soviet identity'.

1. Methodology

The multiple processes of identity formation have become the subject of scientific interest in many disciplines with a strong accent on an interdisciplinary approach. The very notion of identity is enigmatic and as a result identity studies which have "become of key significance to the social sciences and humanities the world over" (Elliott, 2011, p. xiii) encounter a set of unsolved problems and perplexing questions including tricky moments in the already existing approaches to identity studies: frequent confusion between the terms *identity, self* and

subjectivity; a tendency to take a sociologically shallow or reductive view of identity; insufficient regard paid to the complex ways in which identity-politics and institutional politics interweave (Elliott, 2011, p. xiv). Within the framework of the present article, the focus is on some aspects of changing national identity caused by certain socio-political and cultural processes, namely, the initial years of Soviet occupation and the process of Sovietisation in Latvia. In this regard, writings devoted to the issue of Soviet identities are of great importance. The inculcation of 'a highly integrative Soviet culture' (Bassin and Kelly, 2012, p. 3) experienced by Latvians during the Soviet occupation has caused transformations of certain social and ethnic structures the consequences of which are still felt in present-day Latvia. The concept of the 'New Soviet Person' is inextricably linked with the issue of national identity and its specific status in the Soviet Union. As Bassin and Kelly outline: "Of the many ambivalences and contradictions woven into the fabric of Soviet civilization, nothing was more ambivalent and contradictory than the question of national identity" (2012, p. 3). People had to adopt "a sort of dual identity that was inscribed in their internal passports": on one level as Soviet citizens but more especially as members of a specific nationality who belonged to a particular national territory" (Bassin and Kelly, 2012, p. 4). From her primary school years (1982-1985), the author of the present study remembers how conspicuously an idea of two homelands was propagated; she was regularly reminded that when it came to Latvia the lexeme *homeland* (in Latvian *dzimtene*) had to be written in lowercase but when it came to the Soviet Union - in uppercase (in Latvian *Dzimtene*).

It also seems relevant to consider the issue of constructing the 'New Soviet Person' in Latvia from the perspective of postcolonialism, and more specifically from the perspective of Baltic postcolonialism as the Soviet period in the Baltic states can be characterized as a colonial situation, wherein colonial strategies were deployed. So, one might say that the 'occupation' of the Baltic states by a foreign power (the Soviet Union) was followed by the gradual institution of a colonial matrix of power (Annus, 2018, p. 2). As the Estonian writer and literary scholar Epp Annus puts it:

> Through a close look into the Soviet-era Baltic states and into the earlier uses of postcolonial terminology, I propose that the Soviet invasions of the Baltic states could most aptly be described as occupations; however, the initial occupation was followed by an establishment of a colonial rule (Annus, 2019, p. 21).

The impact of colonization on national identity is examined focusing on translation policy carried out by the Soviet power. In the present paper, the focus is mostly on external structures (text selection, interpretation, facts) being an indivisible part of the translation policy. Basing on culture-historical approach, this research is a call to examine the ways the translated literature was manipulatively presented and represented in the public space of Soviet Latvia of the 1940s aimed at

being included in the narrative of constructing a 'New Soviet Person'. To carry out the research, the Latvian press and socio-political journalism of the 1940s were studied. "Soviet newspapers and magazines served as a beneficial platform for establishing a close interrelation between literature and state politics helping the local authorities to implement important tasks set by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union [..]" (Badina, 2020, p. 63). In the paper the periodicals, official instruments of the Soviet power, were the main research source: the monthly of the Writers' Union *Karogs* 'The Flag', the official daily of information and propaganda of the Latvian SSR *Cīņa* 'The Struggle', as well as other Soviet-era newspapers: *Padomju Jaunatne* 'The Soviet Youth', *Padomju Students* 'The Soviet Student', and *Padomju Latvija* 'The Soviet Latvia'.

To quantify and analyse the presence, meanings and relationships of words, themes, and concepts referring to the Anglophone authors and literature in Soviet Latvia, a content analysis was conducted. Approaches of research strategy and analysis and evaluation were applied: the online Latvian Library resources and services were used, namely, the National Digital Library of Latvia and Periodicals, for simultaneous searches of the main master catalogue and databases. For the analysis the following search units were set: the words and the stems of the words 'English'/ 'America/n'/ 'British'/ 'Translation' / 'Foreign'/ 'Literature' in Latvian and the names of the authors translated in the 1940s (e.g., Steinbeck, Cronin, Priestley, etc.). The search units were filtered by the set 'Periodicals of the Latvian SSR' and the dates '1940-1949'. The search results were studied and analysed. Based on the collected data the qualitative research was carried out.

2. Literature and state politics

To expedite the process of Sovietisation of the Latvian nation, almost immediately after the Soviet occupation, in October 1940, "the USSR developed in Latvia a system of culture surveillance of Latvian SSR including a tool for controlling literary processes - Soviet Latvian Writers' Union" (Burima, 2018b, p. 555). One of the most important tasks of the Union was "to fight against all kinds of reactionary ideological influences" (Burima, 2018b, p. 555) which in the 1940s were mostly represented by the Western culture. The translator section was founded and "decided at their meetings what works would be translated from foreign languages of the Western and other countries in the world, assessing whether they do not contain banned topics and lexis inappropriate for Soviet people" (Burima, 2018b, p. 556). It was expected and even demanded that literature published in the Soviet Union would propagate the positive sides of socialistic system and/or criticise highly negative aspects of the imperialistic/capitalistic system. Contemporary authors were set a clear task - to honour the socialist way of living and/or to abase the capitalist one. Hence literature was dependent on politics; in fact, the authorities defined and controlled all spheres of human life including culture:

> The C[entral]C[ommittee] of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) has indicated that in our country in their creative work literature and art should be guided by what forms the basis of the life of the Soviet state - by its policy (Cīņa, 1947, p. 3)[1].

The Latvian historian Gints Zelmenis notes that new institutions of controlling culture were established which were renamed and structured according to the model of the Soviet Union (for example, the Commissariat of Education, the State Administration of Printing and Publishing Enterprises, the State Administration of Literature and Publishing, the State Administration of Arts, the State Administration of Cinemas) (2007, p. 44).

The choice of literary works to be published was limited and extremely selective. Foreign[2] authors and their texts 'appropriate' for reading were selected with the utmost caution. As an obvious consequence, a variety of source languages fell off, especially in the first years of occupation: "Russian immediately became the main source language, and Soviet literature turned into the mainstay of fiction translation. [..] German was almost completely ousted [..] Other languages were minimised: Western literature was reduced to progressive authors only [..]" (Veisbergs, 2017, pp. 33-34). Ideological tasks set upon foreign texts were the same as for Soviet literature: to help Latvian readers build a new - socialist - life, to create a positive outlook on socialism, to disclose all the negative sides of the capitalist system, to make the society active in defending the principles of socialism and in fighting against the dangers of capitalism. Thus, in the 1941 March issue of the monthly *Karogs*, a lengthy article devoted to the status and problems of translated literature appeared, clearly declaring that:

> Noting the important role of translated literature in the general course of culture and in the life of every nation, the question of the choice of works and the quality of reproduction becomes very important. Here, certain principles are needed to limit the inflow of worthless and low-value material as much as possible. [..] The most extensive material is provided by the most recent writing, so it must be approached with a strict criterion in terms of choosing translations from the point of view of socialist culture (Egle, 1941, p. 387-388).

It is not surprising that translations from the Russian language prevailed as being more secure, more consistent with the Soviet ideology, and already approved

[1] In the article, all the quotations from Latvian press publications into English are translated by the author of the present article.

[2] In the context of the Soviet Union, 'foreign' did not refer to Russian or any other language of the Soviet republics.

by the Party, e.g., in the first year of Soviet occupation of Latvia (1940-1941), the State Administration of Printing and Publishing Enterprises actively published literary works translated from Russian into Latvian: 85 titles (including the reprints) were from Russian/Soviet literature and, accordingly, were translated from the Russian language, 5 from French, 2 from German, 2 from Estonian, 1 from Lithuanian, and 9 titles came from Anglophone literature (British and American) and were translated from English.[3]

3. Anglophone literature in Soviet Latvia of the 1940s

To examine the ways the Anglophone literature was involved in the process of constructing the 'New Soviet Person' in Latvia, several factors must be taken into account:

- an extreme selectiveness of both authors and their works and its reasons;
- the dependence of choice criteria on the political situation in the world ('friends'/ 'allies' and/vs. 'enemies' of the USSR);
- ideological tasks of translated literary works;
- the phenomenon of translated literature in the Soviet Union in general and in Soviet Latvia in particular.

Sovietisation targeted numerous spheres of human life, including art. The Soviet authorities were aware of the power of influence of all artistic expressions. Referring to Annus: "The Stalinist era, with a highly circumscribed model for acceptable art, Socialist Realism, repositioned the art sphere inside the sphere of politics. Art became a political tool to serve the Socialist worldview, under the direct oversight of the Communist Party" (2018, p. 1). Therefore, foreign authors were selected very carefully considering many factors: the country they were from, political and economic system in the country, writers' beliefs and worldviews. The Latvian professor and specialist in translation studies Ieva Zauberga outlines the tendencies related to foreign literature in the later period of the Soviet occupation (the 1960s and 1970s) and states that foreign works which did not oppose the Soviet course or which concentrated on injustices of capitalism were highly appreciated and their authors canonised (Jack London, John Goldsworthy, Theodor Dreiser, Archibald Joseph Cronin). But the situation was more complex with contemporary authors as one could not predict their public announcements or literary works (2016, p. 38). The research results demonstrate that the same tendencies are also well presented in Soviet Latvia of the 1940s.

Several specific features characterise the phenomenon of Anglophone literature in Latvia during those years. Firstly, due to the ideological causes, a

[3] The data are taken from the several editions of the reference source "Valsts Bibliotēkas biļetens [Newsletter of the State Library]" published in 1940-1942.

comparatively small number of Anglophone titles were translated and published if compared to the literature translated from Russian.

Secondly, the preference was given to contemporary progressive writers who had clearly declared their socialist views or demonstrated their anti-imperialistic position[4]. Thus, in total, during the 1940s, there were 31 titles by 25 Anglophone writers published, with progressive authors dominating: 14 - contemporaries and 4 non-contemporaries[5] who were considered to be active opponents of the capitalist system, social commentators, or supporters of revolutionary activities. Additionally, some Anglophone works, or fragments translated into Latvian, appeared in periodicals or collections, but it seems to be an exception rather than the rule. For example, in the collection devoted to the Elections to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR for February 10, 1946, stories by authors of different countries were included, the main criteria being either the glorification of the Soviet political system or criticism and satire of the election procedure in capitalist countries. In the collection, the Anglophone segment is only represented by the progressive authors and social commentators: the writer and journalist (known as muckraker) Samuel Hopkins Adams; the novelist, writer, journalist, political activist, and politician Upton Sinclair; the American writer and lawyer Thomas Sigismund Stribling; the novelist and journalist Theodor Dreiser; the writer, humourist, entrepreneur, publisher, and lecturer Mark Twain. The titles themselves are indicative: for instance, *'Freedom of Speech'* by U. Sinclair, *Running for Governor* by M. Twain, *The Sound Wagon* by T.S. Stribling (Rudzītis, 1946). In general, Anglophone literary texts are chosen with an extreme caution as their authors come from the capitalist world. Especially after WW II, when the world was split into two opposing camps - socialism and capitalism, the former wartime allies (Americans and Brits) became the main political and ideological opponents of the USSR. By 1946, Stalin "initiated an intense ideologic effort to eliminate Western influences, purify and propagate Stalinist dogma, and deify the dictator himself" (LaFeber, 1991, p. 40). Hence only those contemporary Anglophone authors were allowed to be translated and published who clearly declared their socialist views and demonstrated their anti-imperialistic position.

Thirdly, the Soviet power regularly coordinated and strictly controlled all stages of the reception process of Anglophone literary texts. In fact, to ensure an ideologically „appropriate" acceptance of the works, the publication of each text was

[4] For example, in 1941, John Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath* (1939), but in 1945, two books by John Boynton Priestley - *Blackout in Gretley* (1942) and *Daylight on Saturday* (1943) - were published in Latvian.

[5] From contemporary progressive authors the names of Richard Aldington, Archibald Joseph Cronin, John Boynton Priestley, or Upton Sinclair can be mentioned. Non-contemporary authors allowed for publishing were Ethel Lilian Voynich, Mark Twain, Jack London, and Theodore Dreiser (partly a contemporary (died in 1945) but known for his socialist fiction and essays written before).

under a strict governmental supervision. As a result, the reception process was well-planned and organised, comprising all necessary activities of pre-publishing, while-publishing and post-publishing stages. There were Soviet censorship officials who ensured and controlled the mediation of reception from its initial phase, which consisted of the editorial work on the text and the *paratext* - "[..] dedication, foreword, preface, afterword, postscript, packaging, summary on the back cover, blurbs"[6] (Sapiro, 2016, p. 322) to the final phase. The French sociologist and author Gisele Sapiro defines the following mediation ways of reception in the after-publication stage:

> After publication, reception is mediated by interpretations and strategies of appropriation/ annexation of the work by agents (individuals and institutions), be they professionals (critics, peers) or amateurs, belonging to the literary field (journals, juries, academies, circles) or to other fields such as the political, the legal, the medical, the psychoanalytical, be they organizations (censorship, association, morality leagues) or private gatherings (such as reading clubs) (Sapiro, 2016, p. 324).

In Soviet Latvia, Anglophone authors' books entered the publishing market with certain precautionary measures: in newspapers and literary magazines reviews were published to ensure the „correct" reading and understanding of the text would correspond to the Soviet ideology. Thus, the Anglophone works approved by Soviet censorship were preceded or accompanied by a high critical acclaim in the press praising what had to be praised in the Soviet literature of that time: a sound criticism of the capitalist system and/or a positive attitude towards the socialist political course. However, almost in all these „songs of fame" Soviet readers were constantly reminded of the fact that the writers still came from the enemy's camp and that was why even in their best works one could find some remarkable drawbacks unacceptable and uncharacteristic of a „New Soviet Person": the lack of fighting spirit, readiness to give up and tolerate a life of hardships, absence of either a positive worldview or clear directions for active opposition. A good example is the English novelist, playwright, screenwriter, broadcaster and social commentator J. B. Priestley's (1894-1984) story in the press. He was one of the rare Anglophone authors of that time who was highly appreciated in the USSR; in 1945, J.B. Priestley and his wife Jane even visited Russia as guests of the Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries. He held a lecture on his creative work in Moscow, attended a performance of his play *An Inspector Calls* and travelled extensively around the USSR. Later, J.B. Priestley wrote about their experience in a series of articles for the *Sunday Express*. In 1946, his writings were republished in the pamphlet *Russian*

[6] When explaining the concept of 'paratext', G. Sapiro refers to Gerard Genette's *Paratexts. Thresholds of interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

Journey. There he remembered his lecture in Moscow. J.B. Priestley was really astonished by the great popularity and agitation it caused:

> The tickets were sold out in a few hours. [..] When I rose to speak to the crowded hall, I had to stop because there was a noise outside and I saw the large doors at the back of the hall beginning to move. A moment later these doors burst open, and a swarm of young people charged into the hall, to fill all the aisles. Something like this could happen at a football match in London, at a prize-fight in New York - but to see and hear an author? That could happen only in Moscow (Priestley, 1946, p. 7).

It is not surprising that much was written about him and his literary works in the Soviet press of the 1940s, Latvia including. In 1947, his novel *Three Men in New Suits* (originally published in 1945) was translated into Latvian and published. As J.B. Priestley was a friend of the Soviets, when introduced to Latvian readers, his *Three Men in New Suits* got quite positive reviews. However, some specific criticism was provided as well to demonstrate that the characters created by the author from the capitalistic country lack a strong and definite socialist position, and the emphases put by the writer in the novel are not quite right:

> Priestley's ideological position cannot be said to be entirely consistent. His theses contain a lot of abstractions, all future perspectives are shown only through the veil. There is a hint at the impending struggle against capitalism, against the remnants of fascism, but only a hint, no more (Dzelme, 1947, p. 5).

Moreover, the author of the review regrets that in the novel, a character who makes a more specific and definite proposal for necessary changes in society is a representative of the aristocracy and not of the working class (Dzelme, 1947, p. 5).

Another difficulty with contemporary authors was their unpredictability as they could change their social position or create a text far from being acceptable for the Soviet readership. For example, J. Steinbeck, whose realist novel *The Grapes of Wrath* had been so highly praised and appreciated before WW II, was sharply criticized and despised in the post-war period, especially after his novel *The Wayward Bus* was published in 1947: "Steinbeck has long abandoned the spirit of critical realism and is now adhering to an idealistic philosophy, thus becoming a supporter of reactionary forces in US fiction" (Civjans, 1948, pp. 237-238).

Finally, Anglophone titles were regularly exploited when providing indoctrination of the Soviet ideologized morality of the society in an attempt to form a new Soviet person. This is well represented in press periodicals as a most essential means for communicating propagandistic ideas to masses. To detect and examine the close connection between the concept of the 'New Soviet Person' and the

Anglophone literature, the periodicals of Latvian SSR of the 1940s were studied (see section 4).

4. The role of Anglophone literature in constructing the "New Soviet Person"

In Latvia of the 1940s, the press played a crucial and dominating role in providing the society with mostly carefully selected information about all spheres of Soviet people's life and news from abroad. The study of the material presented in different Soviet newspapers and magazines published in Latvia of the 1940s (*Karogs* 'The Flag', *Cīņa* 'The Struggle', *Padomju Jaunatne* 'The Soviet Youth', *Padomju Students* 'The Soviet Student', *Padomju Latvija* 'The Soviet Latvia') allows to conclude that the political establishment realized and acknowledged the significance of fiction in forming the identity of a new Soviet person. In general, the importance of literature in propaganda is openly postulated: "By using fiction, the propagandists must ensure that listeners get interested and are fond of books, that young people become regular visitors of libraries and reading rooms" (Nogins, 1947, p. 4).

In fact, literature was invoked to develop and support an idea of the idealized Soviet life. The Latvian periodicals published in the 1940s regularly incorporate examples from fiction when excitedly reporting on advancements in diverse Soviet realia: farming, industry, politics, education. In regard to the Anglophone literature translated into Latvian, it can be noticed that references to the British or American fiction serve as definite evidence to the evil of the capitalist world; they function as border markers helping readers to distinguish the contrast between the two types of human represented by two opposing systems - the positive and beneficial Soviet world and the harmful and inhuman imperialistic one. For example, in *Padomju Jaunatne*, the article reporting about Soviet miners, their successful work and secure social position due to the state benefits and guarantees opens with an excerpt from A.J. Cronin's novel *The Stars Look Down* (published in 1935, translated into Latvian in 1944):

> The slant of the coal face was so low he had to bend himself double. The tunnel was like a rabbit run for size, so inky black his naked light, smoking a little, seemed hardly to carry a foot, and so wet, his feet made squelching noises as he plugged along (Cronin, 2015).

The excerpt is followed by the author's comment: "This is how the English writer Cronin describes the job of an English miner in his novel *The Stars Look Down*" (Sklejans, 1947, p. 1). This introductory passage provides a contrasting scene from an extremely friendly and positive reality of Soviet miners depicted further in the article. It is interesting that after almost a year, the same newspaper echoed itself when reporting on the dignity of the profession of miners (the newspaper issue came

out the day before the Miners' Day) and again refers to A.J. Cronin emphasizing the difference in the public attitude towards workers:

> Indeed, find at least one capitalist country where the job of a miner is an honorary profession, where there are honorary miners. Such a capitalist state does not and cannot exist. In the writer Cronin's novel, *The Stars Look Down*, which depicts the life of miners in England, even a simple saleswoman did not want to talk to a miner - he was just a labourer. But in our country, miners are respected (Lapiņš, 1948, p. 2).

The newspaper article that propagates the wide choice of honourable professions available to the Soviet youth (the slogan 'all works are good' is actively postulated in the USSR), refers to another A.J. Cronin's novel. Young people - students of institutes and vocational schools - are interviewed about their future professions. One of the students, Ludmila Sakne, accounts for her decision to become a doctor by turning against the corrupted nature of medicine in capitalist countries she knows about from A.J. Cronin's *The Citadel* and praising a Soviet person's worth and importance postulated in the USSR:

> Under the conditions of capitalism, medicine serves only the owner's profit, and the needs of the people are forgotten. The doctor becomes a slave of this system. [..] How much I was thinking about it, when I was reading *The Citadel* by the English writer Cronin! But in the Soviet Homeland, the most precious property is a human being as such - that is why the work of a doctor is necessary and honourable, because doctors are called to protect the health and life of a Soviet person (Vītiņa, 1946, p. 5).

U. Sinclair's novel *The Jungle* that portrays the harsh conditions and exploited lives of immigrants in the United States of America is invoked to honour „the consistent democracy of the Soviet system and an unshakable moral-political entity" of the Soviet people and demonstrate the corruption of capitalist politicians:

> Voter bribery is also particularly widespread in bourgeois countries. In his novel *The Jungle*, Upton Sinclair portrays how the unemployed Jurgis receives 2 dollars from the Democratic Party for his and every additionally fished vote, but 12 dollars from the Republican Party - in the next election (Vilks, 1947, p. 2).

If A.J. Cronin's or U. Sinclair's works help to demonstrate the injustices of the socioeconomic and political life under capitalism, then references to John Galsworthy's *The Forsyte Saga* reveal to Soviet readers the corrupted nature of the bourgeois family institution. Writing about the important role of family for a Soviet

person, about its educational and supportive functions such values as „mutual assistance, gender equality, friendship, common interests, feeling of collectivism, a sense of responsibility for the well-being of others" are propagated, but ill-natured relationships in a bourgeois family are criticised:

> A wife - it is a man's private property, it is the moral principle of bourgeois society, it is expressed in the literature, art, etc. of the capitalist world. Let us only remember John Galsworthy's novel *The Forsyte Saga* [..]. This work vividly shows the relationship of family members in bourgeois society (Sverdlova, 1949, p. 4).

It is noteworthy that not only separate fragments from Anglophone literary works are enwoven into the canvas of the socialist system realia. In the USSR, it was quite a usual praxis to demonstrate certain „life lessons" on the example of a whole book of fiction. Thus, in 1948, two newspapers - *Padomju Students* and *Padomju Jaunatne* - positively characterise an open discussion of T. Dreiser's novel *The Financier* organised between the 2nd-year students of Economics at the Latvian State University (LSU) and note the benefits and usefulness of such events in educating young people:

> An interesting and welcome event has been organized by students of the LSU Faculty of Economics. To better understand various political economy issues and other problems related to capitalism, the dean of the faculty prof. Jurgens advised students to read the book *The Financier* by the progressive American writer Dreiser. It was obligatory to get acquainted with this work for the 2nd-year students, who this year in political economy have listened to lectures on capitalism (Purens, 1948, p. 2).

It is regularly postulated that literature can give valuable life lessons, educate the society, form their attitudes and instil necessary values. Writers' responsibility is to realize their mission; they must be socially and politically active, they are not allowed to enclose themselves in the so-called 'ivory tower' of 'pure' art which is much criticized in the Soviet press when writing about the role of literature in the socio-political and cultural life of the country. That is one of the main Soviet ideologists' objections to „the decadence of modern bourgeois literature" which "postulates human insignificance, detachment from the dirty politics of imperialism, individualistic enclosure in the 'ivory towers' of lonely aesthetics" (Krauliņš, 1948, pp. 102-103). It is regularly reminded that literature is a powerful and fast channel of disseminating proper ideas, views, information to the Soviet people. Hence the same requirements are applied to the British and American literature (i.e., foreign, 'other' or 'their' literature). In Soviet Latvia's press of the 1940s, references to or the presence of Anglophone literary works help to perform the ideological

indoctrination of the society by (a) giving direct instructions what to read and how to understand what you are reading, (b) demonstrating the importance and educational role of the literature 'proper' for the Soviet people, (c) warning the society about the dangers of 'wrong' literature, the so-called imperialistic, bourgeois texts: Anglophone authors mostly represented the voice of an ideological enemy and were, therefore, claimed apolitical, pessimistic, passive, or even harmful. Criticism of their works, demonstration of the moral failure of their characters were accompanied by beneficial characterization of the Soviet literature, of the Soviet hero.

In the press, a peculiar and also 'long-living' tendency of Soviet propaganda can be observed – a demonstration of the achievements of the socialist system as being superior to any other governmental form; moreover, the Soviet life is shown as more preferable than not only the really existing - the world of the capitalist countries, but even the most unbelievable reality of the artistic world; the Soviet people's life is better than any science fiction writer can imagine while constructing their futuristic scenes. The reality of the USSR is compared with fantasy literature and conclusion is made that life in the USSR is superior, more unbelievable than in the most daring science fiction novels written by imperialistic authors. Thus, when celebrating the thirty-year anniversary of the October Revolution and praising all the positive changes that have happened in the USSR, the author of the article *Cilvēks no Oktobra cilts* 'A Man of the October Tribe' in the literary monthly *Karogs* provides a negative characteristic of the futuristic world represented in Western science fiction:

> And he [hero], disappointed and devastated, finds it was not worth waking up, it had not been worth humanity to torment and struggle for the thousands of years ... That's how it is in fantasy novels. What they have in common is that their authors have not been able to make their "sleepers" wake up later than at the age of capitalism (Žurgins, 1947, p. 1358).

Further, the wonderful and incredible reality of the Soviet life is described as compared to the insignificant reality or unreality of any fantasy novel concluding that Soviet people live in 'the best of all possible worlds':

> And it is not necessary at all for these "sleepers" to sleep for thousands of years - thirty years is enough: a person who has fallen asleep on the eve of the October Revolution and wakes up now will not find anything in our country that has not changed fundamentally in these thirty years. [..]; the reality many times surpasses the richest fantasy (Žurgins, 1947, p. 1358).

In Latvian press, readers are regularly reminded of the honourable mission of Soviet literature to unite and inspire society, very often contrasting it with the 'misery' of the Western/American literature:

> The war against fascism demonstrated to the American people that at a time when the literature of bourgeois decline proved to be ideologically completely powerless in the face of fascist threats, Soviet literature was fully armed as a powerful means of the spiritual mobilization of the masses to fight the enemy (Civjans, 1947, p. 1234).

In regard to the indoctrinating role of literature, the Soviet children and young people are considered as the most vulnerable audience. To ensure a 'proper' impact on the young readers, guidelines are given as to what is advisable for young audiences and even the age or school year is indicated for certain books to be offered. Young people are warned to be vigilant, cautious and selective when choosing what to read; they are reminded of the extremely influential and educational role of literature by socialist writers or authors friendly and loyal to socialism and of the dangers of the 'miserable' and 'degenerated' imperialistic literature. The significance of literature is especially emphasized in the war of opposite ideologies ('ours' vs. 'theirs'). *Parādi man, ko tu lasi* 'Show me what you are reading' - this appeal is addressed to students of Soviet Latvia. In an implacable way, pulp fiction - 'violent crime and luscious love stories' - is opposed and criticized. In Soviet Latvia of the 1940s, not a single detective story book was published. The propaganda says to be militant, to bravely turn against pulp fiction and deter one's mates from reading it: "Every true Soviet patriot, a true Soviet student, has the right to ask their mate: "We are fighters of the same front. Show me what you are reading. I need to know if we can fight together or not" (Padomju Students,1948, p. 1).

Conclusions

In an attempt to form a new type of person, a wide variety of manipulation tools were employed by the authorities. The study of the Anglophone literature translated and presented to the readership of Soviet Latvia in the 1940s allows to conclude on a uniform model of introducing foreign literature to the territory of the USSR. The translation policy was completely subordinated to the Soviet socio-political course and made dependent on the state ideology. As Anglophone writers mostly represented the capitalist world perspective, which was considered hostile to the Soviets, only a small amount of works by British and American writers were published. The choice criteria for publishing were strictly defined and controlled by the occupation authorities. "The opinion of Soviet ideologues and censorship officials was decisive in the publication of each text" (Zanders, 2020). To further the Sovietisation of Latvians and to cultivate a positive image of the 'New Soviet

Person,' literature was exploited as one of the most potent ideological tools. The foreign fiction was also involved in the process of forming a new type of society and helped to fulfil several ideological tasks: (1) to honour the Soviet people and their way of life, (2) to discriminate capitalism, (3) to ensure moral indoctrination and social position of the people. The policy of introducing foreign authors to a Soviet reader is well represented in Latvian press of the 1940s. It has been revealed that Soviet authorities acknowledged the significance of literature (foreign fiction including) in forming and influencing the public opinion, in educating people of different generations according to the Soviet ideology. Thus, various expressions of human life were presented with frequent references to the artistic world of the Anglophone literature to contrast two opposing systems, socialism vs. capitalism, and to demonstrate all the benefits of living in the socialist world and belonging to the 'great family of the Soviet peoples', and as a result, ensuring and accustoming people to only associate themselves with the model of the "New Soviet Person" advocated in public.

In the present research an attempt was made to understand the relationship between power and culture in the Stalin-era Latvia – the time which, according to the Latvian historian Daina Bleiere, can be considered maximally close to be called totalitarian (Bleiere, 2015, p. 36). The focus was on the manipulative strategies employed by the authorities to implant foreign segments into the Soviet narrative. Applied systematically and comprehensively, these strategies formed a set of patterns for introducing, presenting and interpreting the translated Western literature to a Soviet Latvian reader and undoubtedly had an impact on society. For further study it seems relevant to consider what is called by D. Bleiere "the complicated mutual manifestations between the agents (society) and structure (the institutions and officials of the Soviet regime)" (Bleiere, 2015, p. 34). One can assume that more educated and/or sceptical Latvians were good at reading 'between the lines' and therefore able to resist the conspicuous Soviet propaganda; however, the consequences of living "in the country that by all means tries to do everything possible in order to control contacts with the outside world and influence people life-style and view of the world" (Bleiere, 2015, p. 157) are inevitable. Therefore, the author of the present research considers that the question of a 'New Soviet Person' in present-day Latvia is still open and worth exploring.

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