



Anti-Soviet Leaflets and Climatic Conditions: Aftermath of the Cold War “Balloon Campaign” in Latvian SSR in 1954

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Abstract. In April 1954, reports of the Chairman of the Committee for State Security of the Latvian SSR to the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the LSSR mentioned for the first time information about anti-Soviet leaflets found in the territory of the LSSR. Up to the end of 1954, there were another ten reports of found leaflets sent here by balloon. The peculiarity of these leaflets was that most often their text was in Czech, Hungarian and German languages, which most people of the LSSR did not know. It was evident that leaflets found had entered Latvian territory as a result of erroneous forecasting of climatic conditions. However this mistake also made the LSSR territory an arena for a “Balloon campaign” implemented by Western countries. It provides a good opportunity to compare content of leaflets prepared for different countries. The most relevant difference between the leaflets was that those in Hungarian, Czech and German detailed practical requirements, while those in Russian consisted of general theoretical reflections. In turn, what almost all leaflets had in common was an emphasis on so-called feedback, or in other words, on a desire for proof that the leaflets found their target addressees.

Keywords: *propaganda, anti-Soviet leaflets, “Balloon campaign”, Free Europe Press, NTS, Latvian SSR, Committee for State Security of the Latvian SSR.*

Anotacija. Latvijas TSR Valstybės saugumo komiteto pirmininkas nuo 1954 m. balandžio iki gruodžio mėnesio vienuolikoje pranešimų informavo LTSR Ministrų tarybos pirmininką apie LTSR teritorijoje rastus antisovietinius lapelius, kurie į sovietinę respubliką pateko oro balionais. Iki 1954 m. pabaigos buvo dar dešimt pranešimų apie rastas antisovietines skrajutes. Šios propagandinės medžiagos ypatumas buvo tas, kad dažniausiai jų tekstas buvo čekų, vengrų

ir vokiečių kalbomis, kurių nežinojo dauguma LTSR žmonių. Buvo akivaizdu, kad rastos antisovietinės skrajutės pateko į Latvijos TSR teritoriją dėl klaidingo klimato sąlygų numatymo. Tačiau būtent ši klaida LTSR teritoriją pavertė Vakarų šalių vykdomos „Balionų kampanijos“ arena. Visa tai straipsnio autoriui suteikia galimybę palyginti lankstinukų, ruošų skirtingoms šalims, formą ir turinį. Svarbiausias lankstinukų skirtumas – vengrų, čekų ir vokiečių kalbomis rašytuose lapeliuose buvo keliami konkretūs reikalavimai, o rusų kalba – bendrieji teoriniai apmąstymai. Beveik visa Latvijos TSR rasta antisovietinės propagandos medžiaga pabrėžė grįžtamojo ryšio svarbą ir autorių lūkesčius gauti įrodymų, kad išsiųstos skrajutės rado adresatus.

Esminiai žodžiai: *propaganda, antisovietiniai lankstinukai, „Balionų kampanija“, „Free Europe Press“, NTS, Latvijos TSR, Latvijos TSR Valstybės saugumo komitetas.*

Introduction

The role of propaganda as a means of political struggle became especially prominent after World War II (WWII), when confrontation between two radically different economic and political systems escalated. The Soviet regime, which was a phenomenon of a single state before the war, had spread and established itself throughout Eastern Europe after the war, becoming a threat to the external security and internal stability of Western democracies. The situation was made even worse by the fact that the results of WWII had intensified leftist sentiment throughout European society. These threats required active reaction.

Initially, in the late 1940s, radio broadcasting became the primary means of Western propaganda: in 1947, the Russian-language program was launched by the radio station “Voice of America” for the Soviet Union (USSR) population, and in 1950, “Radio Free Europe” began broadcasting to the inhabitants of the so-called Soviet Bloc states in Eastern Europe. In response, already in 1949 USSR began to suppress the frequencies of Western radio stations. This led to the search for new methods of disseminating propaganda, resulting in the “Balloon campaign” launched in 1951, by which leaflets and literature addressed to the inhabitants of Eastern European countries were distributed with special balloons.

In 1954, information about the discovery of such anti-Soviet leaflets and balloons in territory of the Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic (LSSR) became a regular subject of reports of the *State Security Committee under the Council of Ministers of the LSSR* (LSSR KGB). The language and content of the leaflets found indicated that they were not addressed to the inhabitants of LSSR and that their entry into the territory of Latvia was the result of erroneous calculations and inaccurate forecasting of climatic conditions. However, this mistake also made the territory of LSSR an arena of Cold War political propaganda struggle, and this Latvian experience allows us to look at the “Balloon campaign” carried

out by the Western countries from a somewhat unusual point of view. Extraordinary in this case is fact that the reports of LSSR KGB on anti-Soviet leaflets found in 1954 show the “Balloon campaign” from the point of view of recipients not senders, moreover, in a situation where Latvia was not the addressee of these leaflets. Therefore, one of the issues that can be judged by leaflets found in various locations of LSSR is the climatic forecasting error in the “Balloon campaign”. Another feature of leaflets found in LSSR was the diversity of their recipients and senders, that makes it possible to compare the content and objectives of leaflets produced for different countries. But the most important indication, given by leaflets found on Latvian territory, is the fact that the “Balloon campaign” carried out in the 1950s actually comprised two overlapping propaganda campaigns, usually separated in historical research. Along with the distribution of leaflets for so-called Soviet Bloc countries the similar but less frequently mentioned leaflets distribution campaign was carried out, targeted at soldiers of the Soviet Army group in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and signed by Russian emigrant organizations based in the Federal Republic of Germany or West Germany.

The aim of this study is to look at anti-Soviet leaflets found in LSSR territory as a local cross-section of the “Balloon campaign”. The study is not focused on the general motives and organizational decisions of this action; the main attention of the study concentrates on its specific manifestations – the content and technical characteristics of leaflets and their delivery technologies described in LSSR KGB reports. The central issue of the article is to find out whether content of the leaflets addressed to inhabitants of different countries differed, and what requirements and arguments were used in these leaflets. Content analysis is the main research method used in the article. The chronological framework of the study is limited to 1954. This year can be seen as the culmination of the “Balloon campaign” that was linked to Western hopes for political change in Soviet Bloc countries following the death of Stalin (1878–1953) in March 1953. However, another important circumstance should not be overlooked: just a month before the first report on the discovery of leaflets, the State Security Committee under the Council of Ministers of the USSR (USSR KGB) was established on March 13, 1954, by reorganization, and now the Committee was in a hurry to prove its effectiveness. As a result, on both sides of the Iron Curtain, 1954 became a clash of two confrontational interests that needed to explore the real potential of the “Balloon campaign” to influence public opinion.

The terminology used in the study deserves special attention. So far as the study is based on LSSR KGB reports and reflects a view on the “Balloon campaign” through the prism of these reports, the study has in most cases used the terminology contained in these reports. By way of illustration, all leaflets found in LSSR KGB reports, irrespective of their addressee, were described as “anti-Soviet leaflets” (*antisovetskiye listovki*), and this term is used in the present paper.

Sources and literature used. The main source of information on anti-Soviet leaflets found in LSSR territory in 1954 is the reports of Chairman of LSSR KGB to the Chairman

of LSSR Council of Ministers, which are collected in the LSSR Council of Ministers Fund (Fund 270) and stored in the Latvian State Archives. Reports of the LSSR KGB Chairman, classified as “top secret”, indicated the time and place of finding the leaflets – usually with the name of administrative district only – and briefly described the contents and technical characteristics of leaflets. In cases where balloons were also found along with leaflets, brief descriptions of these were given. In most cases, the originals of leaflets found or, less often, their Russian translations, were attached to the reports.

The list of literature devoted to propaganda campaigns in 1950s is long enough, and the fact that this topic is still relevant is confirmed by research works in former so-called Soviet bloc countries, including, for example, the Prokop Tomek study in Czech.¹

It is clear that Western scientific research pays more attention to the propaganda efforts of the West behind the Iron Curtain, where, in addition to previously published works (Allan A. Mitchie,² Sig Mickelson³), studies published in recent years (Richard H. Cummings,⁴ Arch Puddington⁵) are particularly numerous. These studies deal in detail with the motives and decision-making processes of Western countries' propaganda activities, but the “Balloon campaign” is mentioned in a very general way, and the content of leaflets themselves is noted only fragmentarily. That is why more attention is being paid in this case to electronically published materials, among them the resource “Free Europe Press Cold War Leaflets” by former US Army officer and psychological warfare operations specialist Herbert A. Friedman, which stands out for its concentrated information and extensive visual material.⁶ In turn, “Battleground Berlin” – a joint work of former secret services members from three different countries, published in the late 1990s – gives insight into the broader developments of the period.⁷

There is relatively little research on propaganda campaigns conducted by Russian emigrant organizations. One of the most interesting descriptions of the “Balloon campaign” is in a study by Yaroslav Trushnovich, the prominent representative of Russian

¹ TOMEK, Prokop. *Balony svobody: Letákové operace Svobodné Evropy 1951–1956*. Cheb: Svět křídel, 2014.

² MITCHIE, Allan A. *Voices through the Iron Curtain: The Radio Free Europe Story*. New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1963.

³ MICKELSON, Sig. *America's Other Voice: The Story of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty*. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1983.

⁴ CUMMINGS, Richard H. *Cold War Radio: The Dangerous History of American Broadcasting in Europe, 1950–1989*. Jefferson: McFarland and Company, 2009.; CUMMINGS, Richard H. *Radio Free Europe's "Crusade for Freedom": Rallying Americans behind Cold War Broadcasting, 1950–1960*. Jefferson, NC and London: McFarland and Company, 2010.

⁵ PUDDINGTON, Arch. *Broadcasting Freedom: The Cold War Triumph of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2000.

⁶ FRIEDMAN, Herbert A. *Free Europe Press Cold War Leaflets*. Available at: <http://www.psywarrior.com/RadioFreeEurope.html> (viewed 2020 01 25).

⁷ БЕЙЛИ, Джордж; КОНДРАШЕВ, Сергей; МЕРФИ, Дэвид. *Поле битвы Берлин: ЦРУ против КГБ в холодной войне*. Пер. с англ. Л. Володарской. Москва: ТЕРРА, Книжный клуб, 2000.

émigrés.⁸ His description, with some additions, is repeated in a collection of common memory of Russian emigrants.⁹

Finally, it is worth noting the studies that characterize the impact and manifestations of Cold War propaganda campaigns in Latvia. A general overview of US-funded Western radio broadcasting to three former Baltic states that had become USSR republics after WWII is given in study by Jonathan H. L'Hommedieu.¹⁰ Of particular note, however, is the extensive study by Rolfs Ekmanis entitled “International broadcasts in Latvian in the second half of 20th century” which has been published in the magazine “Jaunā Gaita” in several sequels. Former collaborator of “Radio Free Europe” Ekmanis gives an extensive and at the same time detailed historical overview of Western propaganda actions addressed to the LSSR population, mentioning, among other things, the “Balloon campaign” and the planned leaflets drop campaign to Latvia in 1955.¹¹

However, in all previous “Balloon campaign” studies the fact of finding leaflets on Latvian SSR territory in 1954 is not mentioned, and the present study is an attempt to fill this gap.

“Balloon campaign” leaflet distribution operations implemented by Western countries and Russian emigrant organizations in the 1950s

The idea of distributing anti-Soviet propaganda material via balloons was topical even before WWII. According to Trushnovich, already in 1930s, the Russian emigrants' organization *National Labour Alliance of the New Generation (Natsional'no-Trudovoy Soyuz Novogo Pokoleniya)* had distributed literature to USSR by balloons, ordinarily using the territory of Baltic States for launching balloons (in Estonia it was done by Andrei (Andreas) Tenson (1911–1989)).

The return to this practice took place in the early 1950s. Although the first debate on the use of balloons for the distribution of propaganda material was begun by the Americans, in practice the first start was made by Russian emigrants whose main organization was renamed and became known as the National Labour Alliance of Russian Solidarists (*Natsional'no-Trudovoy Soyuz rossijskih solidaristov*) or NTS. As Trushnovich notes, the first attempt was made in September 1950 by launching two balloons from

⁸ ТРУШНОВИЧ, Ярослав. НТС в послевоенном Берлине: пробный шар. *Посев*, Nr. 9, 1999 г. Available at: <http://www.possev.org/jornal/archiv/izbran/> (viewed 2020 01 25).

⁹ *От Зарубежья до Москвы. Народно-Трудовой Союз (НТС) в воспоминаниях и документах: 1924-2014*. Москва: НП «Посев», 2014.

¹⁰ L'HOMMEDIU, Jonathan H. Baltic Language Broadcasting: Émigré politics and American Cold War Radios. *Latvijas Vēstures Institūta Žurnāls*, 2014, Nr. 2, pp. 94–119.

¹¹ EKMANIS, Rolfs. Starptautiskie raidījumi latviešu valodā 20. gs. otrā pusē. *Jaunā Gaita*, 2003–2010, Nr. 235–273.

West Berlin in the direction of the Berlin-Karlshorst area. In 1951 balloon production began in residential barracks built by Russian emigrants on the outskirts of the West Germany city Bad Homburg vor der Höhe (emigrants themselves named it the village of Solidarsk). Balloons capable of lifting up to 90 kilograms of weight using air currents were sent eastward, periodically dropping leaflets.¹² About 97 million leaflets and about nine million other literary items were sent by balloon over a six-year period.

The Western “Balloon campaign” was launched on August 13, 1951, when more than 11 million leaflets were sent to Eastern European countries during two weeks of Operation “Winds of Freedom”. The balloon program continued till November 1956. During this time a total of 590,415 balloons with 301,636,883 leaflets and other typographical materials, including posters and books, were sent.

Within this balloon program several special leaflet distribution operations were carried out in Eastern European countries: for Czechoslovakia – Operation “Prospero” (1953) and Operation “Veto” (1954); for Hungary – Operation “Focus” (1954–1955); and for Poland – Operation “Spotlight” (1955). We are, in this case, more interested in the first three operations.

Operation “Prospero” was deployed in July 1953, sending more than six thousand balloons with 12 million leaflets over four days from West German territory to Czechoslovakia. The leaflets sent were executed in three variants, including a leaflet made in form of a one-Krone banknote of the National Bank of Czechoslovakia. Operation “Veto” began in April 1954 and continued until September of that year. The operation was in line with parliamentary elections of November 1954 and the main message of leaflets was a ten-point requirement. About 41 million leaflets were sent by balloon during Operation “Veto”, while overall more than 50 million leaflets were sent to Czechoslovakia as part of the “Balloon campaign”.

Operation “Focus” was a campaign for Hungary started on October 1, 1954. This operation was coordinated with local elections in Hungary in November 1954. The leaflet’s text was the Manifesto of the National Resistance Movement with an outline statement of 12 claims. By the end of operation in 1955 a total of more than 16 million leaflets had been distributed.

The use of balloons to distribute propaganda material was discontinued in the second half of the 1950s. As the main reason for this various factors are highlighted in literature: Ekmanis attributes this to Czechoslovakia’s complaint about the crash of an

¹² It is interesting that at this time NTS continued to actively use traditional leaflet distribution methods, sending them to USSR with tourists or cargoes. One such case was described in the report of LSSR KGB Chairman in 1954: noting that starting from April 15, Riga Textile Factory was importing wool from Australia via Odessa port. The report stated that during the unloading and unpacking of wool there were found NTS anti-Soviet leaflets of various formats, some of which were made in the form of various denominations of Soviet banknotes, see: 1954 05 03 Special Report from Jānis Vēvers, Chairman of the LSSR KGB to Vilis Lācis, Chairman of the LSSR Council of Ministers. *Latvijas Valsts arhīvs (LVA)*, f. 270, apr. 1c, l. 951, p. 81.

airplane caused by balloons,¹³ while in Russian emigrants' version it was partly dictated by Americans' objections, whose U-2 reconnaissance aircraft launched in June 1956 over the USSR at the same height as balloons.¹⁴

Anti-Soviet leaflets found on territory of Latvian SSR and their delivery technologies: general characteristics

A total of eleven reports on the anti-Soviet leaflets found on LSSR territory in 1954 were sent by the Chairman of LSSR KGB Colonel Jānis Vēvers (1899–1978) to the Chairman of LSSR Council of Ministers Vilis Lācis (1904–1966). Chronologically the finding of the leaflets covered the period from March to December 1954 with particularly frequency within two months: July (11 cases) and December (16 cases). In most cases typographically made leaflets were found; in two cases the newspaper "Posev", issued by Russian emigrants' organization NTS was found; and in another case NTS sent a letter with anti-Soviet leaflets to the editorial board of the newspaper "Sovetskaya Latviya". Most often leaflets found were in German and addressed to the people of the GDR; less frequently found leaflets were in Russian and Czech, and only once in Hungarian.

Usually leaflets were found together with a balloon or air probe. The description of the balloon itself was given in two reports: in one case on July 19, 1954 anti-Soviet caricatures and leaflets in the Czech language were found in empty square (1.5 x 1.5 m) plastic balloons, and in the second case, on September 11, 1954, a blasted air-balloon was found in Dagda district, made of silvery-white, thin rubber-containing material about 10 meters in diameter.¹⁵ The leaflets were more often in cardboard boxes attached to a balloon or, more rarely, with a thin thread attached to the inside of a balloon.

An interesting indicator was the number of leaflets found together with balloons, which in different cases fluctuated over a very wide range. In May 1954, when leaflets with thin threads were attached to the inside of a balloon, 35 leaflets were found; in December 1954 a balloon with two packages of leaflets and overall 5792 leaflets were found in Aizpute district, while in the same month a balloon dropped on the ground was found in Ventspils district along with about five kilograms of leaflets in German.

One of the more complicated issues of the weather forecasting error in "Balloon campaign", is signified by leaflets found on LSSR territory. The peculiarity in this case is not

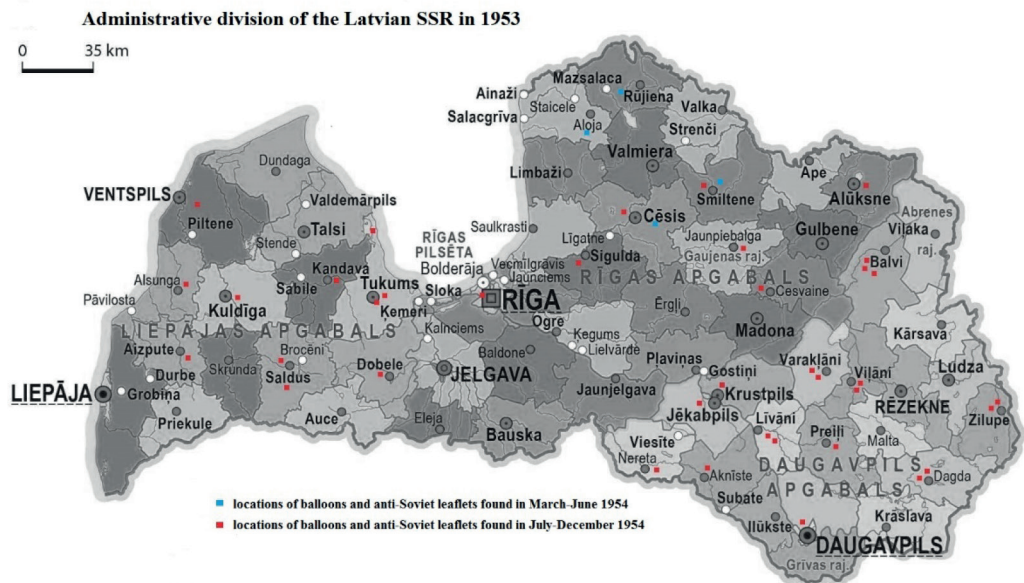
¹³ EKMANIS, Rolfs. Starptautiskie raidījumi latviešu valodā 20. gs. otrā pusē. *Jaunā Gaita*, 2010, Nr. 262. Available at: https://jaunagaita.net/jg262/JG262_Ekmanis.htm (viewed 2020 01 25). The incident occurred on January 18, 1956 with the plane DC-3 of the Czechoslovakian airline.

¹⁴ *От Зарубежья до Москвы. Народно-Трудовой Союз (НТС) в воспоминаниях и документах: 1924–2014*. Москва: НИП «Посев», 2014. Available at: <https://www.litres.ru/kollektiv-avtorov/ot-zarubezhya-do-moskvy-narodno-trudovoy-souz-nts-v-voisp/chitat-onlayn/page-3/> (viewed 2020 01 25).

¹⁵ 1954 09 30 Special Report from Jānis Vēvers, Chairman of the LSSR KGB to Vilis Lācis, Chairman of the LSSR Council of Ministers (*Report from Vēvers to Lācis*). *LVA*, f. 270, apr. 1c, l. 952, pp. 48–49.

the error itself, but its scale. Assuming the hot air balloons' launching area was around the city of Munich in the Federal state Bavaria of West Germany, we see that a leaflet sent in Hungarian has significantly changed its direction when coming to Latvia, while leaflets sent in Czech (the distance from Munich to Prague is about 300 kilometres) travelled more than four times longer distance (from Munich to Riga is about 1200 kilometres). Finding a convincing and understandable explanation for such a major mistake is difficult.

Of particular interest is the geographical coordinates of balloons and anti-Soviet leaflets found, where some correlations can be noted. A total of eleven LSSR KGB reports mentioned 41 locations of the detected balloons and anti-Soviet leaflets (this number does not include the letter sent to the editorial board of the newspaper "Sovetskaya Latvija"); locations of these places usually had been limited to the name of administrative district. First of all, it is striking that in only two cases – and both cases in December 1954 – the LSSR cities were mentioned as locations of leaflets found: two leaflets in German were found in Tukums and one leaflet was found in the outskirts of Riga, on a countryside road about kilometre from the city border. It is easier to explain another relationship, namely that of all balloons and anti-Soviet leaflet finding, only eleven concerned western regions of LSSR, while on the eastern side – assuming Riga, the capital of LSSR, as a starting point – 29 cases, almost three times as many. Apparently, this concerns some connection with air flows along the coast of the Baltic Sea. Furthermore, another interesting nuance is attracting attention: while in the first six months of 1954 all balloons and anti-Soviet



1 il. Map of locations of balloons and anti-Soviet leaflets found in the territory of the LSSR in 1954.

leaflets found were located in the northeast of the LSSR, over the next six months most of them were concentrated in the southeast. This change was sufficiently pronounced enough to suggest that there might have been some adjustments to the launch of balloons.

Content of anti-Soviet leaflets found in territory of Latvian SSR

The main difference between anti-Soviet leaflets found in LSSR territory was their language and addressee, and, accordingly, the contents of these leaflets also differed. Therefore, the following overview of the contents of found anti-Soviet leaflets is structured according to their language.

Leaflet in Hungarian. The only leaflet in Hungarian was found on November 5, 1954 in Alūksne district. The significance of the leaflet in the case of Latvia lies precisely in fact that it was the only leaflet found in Hungarian: it is very unlikely that leaflet had arrived on its own in LSSR territory, and this rather suggests that the LSSR KGB did not receive any information on detecting the remaining leaflets. The leaflet was found by a worker at a local road service during a hunt in the forest. As stated in the LSSR KGB report on November 29, the leaflet outlined the program of Hungarian nationalists.¹⁶

The report was accompanied by a Russian translation of the found leaflet.¹⁷ The leaflet's introduction contained general judgments about the Hungarian national movement and its aims, noting that anyone, regardless of gender, age, religion and occupation, can participate in this movement. Especially, it was stressed that the demands of national movement are facilitating by controversy and disagreement in the Hungarian Communist's camp, the fact that Hungarian people have already gained government concessions and communist leaders have already openly admitted they are failing. This introduction was followed by demands formulated in twelve theses, the most important of which was the demand to transfer real power to local councils, which must represent people's true interests, not blindly comply with state authority decisions; the demand for freedom of assembly and expression; the demand to Moscow for the release of Hungarian prisoners of war, who are still in slavery; and the demand for free trade union activities to express the true interests of workers. The other requirements had socio-economic content, asking for the production of manufactured goods primarily to meet the needs of Hungarians, the transfer of small industry and trade to cooperatives, and freedom of religion.

Leaflets in Czech. Propaganda materials produced in Czech stood out against backdrop of other found leaflets with their diversity and visual appeal. A peculiar solution, for example, was a leaflet in the form of an envelope by airmail.¹⁸ Instead the sign "Par Avion" it had the slogan "Force is in unity" and instead of addressee, the text: "For all

¹⁶ 1954 11 29 Report from Vēvers to Lācis. *LVA*, f. 270, apr. 1c, l. 952, p. 121.

¹⁷ 1954 11 29 Translation of anti-Soviet leaflet. *LVA*, f. 270, apr. 1c, l. 952, pp. 122–124.

¹⁸ Leaflet „V Jednote Sila”. *LVA*, f. 270, apr. 1c, l. 951, p. 193.

members of the Czechoslovakia's People's Opposition". The stamp printed in corner of the envelope mimicked the stamp issued for Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk's (1850–1937) 85th anniversary, so in later studies this leaflet is sometimes referred to as the "Masaryk letter".



2 il. Leaflet “V Jednote Sila” or “Masaryk letter”. LVA, f. 270, apr. 1c, l. 951, p. 193.

The basic idea of all leaflets found in Czech language, with slight variations, was focused on “ten demands” of popular opposition. All requirements were socio-economic in nature, requiring trade unions for union members, higher wages, reducing bureaucracy, producing goods in the interest of the population, etc.¹⁹ These requirements were visualized with successful cartoons and small leaflet images with the number “10” in various combinations, making them attractive and easy to understand.²⁰ However, Western scholars are rather critical in their judgments on Czech leaflets, stating that the “ten demands” set were moderate and limited and could be implemented within the existing political regime.

¹⁹ Leaflet „Kandidátka Lidové Oposice”. LVA, f. 270, apr. 1c, l. 951, p. 95.

²⁰ Leaflets „10 Požadaviek”. LVA, f. 270, apr. 1c, l. 951, pp. 96–97.

The apart from rest of the propaganda material found in Czech language is another edition worthy of note – the 22nd edition of the pamphlet “Svobodná Evropa” – which was found in Saldus district in December 1954.²¹ This edition, sent by the Free Europe Committee, consisted of ten sections of information material. There was information on both the political developments in Hungary and on wages in Czechoslovakia and the struggle of national opposition, but perhaps the most interesting was the description of the Schuman Plan resulting in the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community.



3 il. Pamphlet “Svobodná Evropa”, Nr. 22. LVA, f. 270, apr. 1c, l. 952, p. 165.

Leaflets in Russian. With the exception of one case, all leaflets and press issues in Russian had one author – the West German-based Russian emigrants’ organization NTS. Interestingly, in the 1954 LSSR KGB reports, the characterization of this organization

²¹ Pamphlet „Svobodná Evropa”, Nr. 22. LVA, f. 270, apr. 1c, l. 952, p. 165.

became increasingly threatening: if, after the first shipment of leaflets in April, it was only denoted as NTS, then in July it was already described as a “diversion-terrorist organization of White émigrés” and in December as an “espionage-terrorist organization”.

For the first time, leaflets signed by NTS were found on LSSR territory on March 2, 1954, in the area of Rūjiena district, and on April 7, in the area of neighbouring Aloja district; in both cases leaflets were identical. The peculiarity of these leaflets was fact that each leaflet had typographic print in both Russian and German at the same time.²² The report prepared by the LSSR KGB was accompanied by one NTS leaflet.²³ Judging by the text, the leaflet was addressed to soldiers of the Soviet Army group in GDR, whom the authors of leaflet addressed as the sons of Russian collective farmers. Noting that communist policy had reduced Russia’s agriculture to a deplorable state and led rural workers into poverty, a leaflet, referring to a soldier from a guard battalion stationed in Karlshorst, described some scenes of the life of a collective farm. Nikita Khrushchev’s (1894–1971) pledge to reduce income tax and increases in purchase price of agricultural products were seen by leaflet as a temporary step to gain time for the government to consolidate its power in countryside and then “bend the collective farmer into a horn”. Having come to this conclusion, the authors of leaflet went on to explain what should be done to prevent it: in order to fulfill the dreams and desires of every peasant, firstly the communist criminals in power must be removed. And this was followed by a specific call: the NTS revolutionary organization, which had taken the lead role in the nation’s anti-communist struggle, called everyone to join in that struggle. For this purpose, it was necessary to begin immediately to disseminate revolutionary literature among army comrades and to find ways of sending it to the homeland. The leaflet also called to seize the opportunity to get acquainted with German anti-communism, ways of expanding access to revolutionary literature and, if desired, to establish contact with the NTS Cross-Border Center via the Berlin Committee at: Berlin-Grünwald, Hohenzollerndamm 59–60.

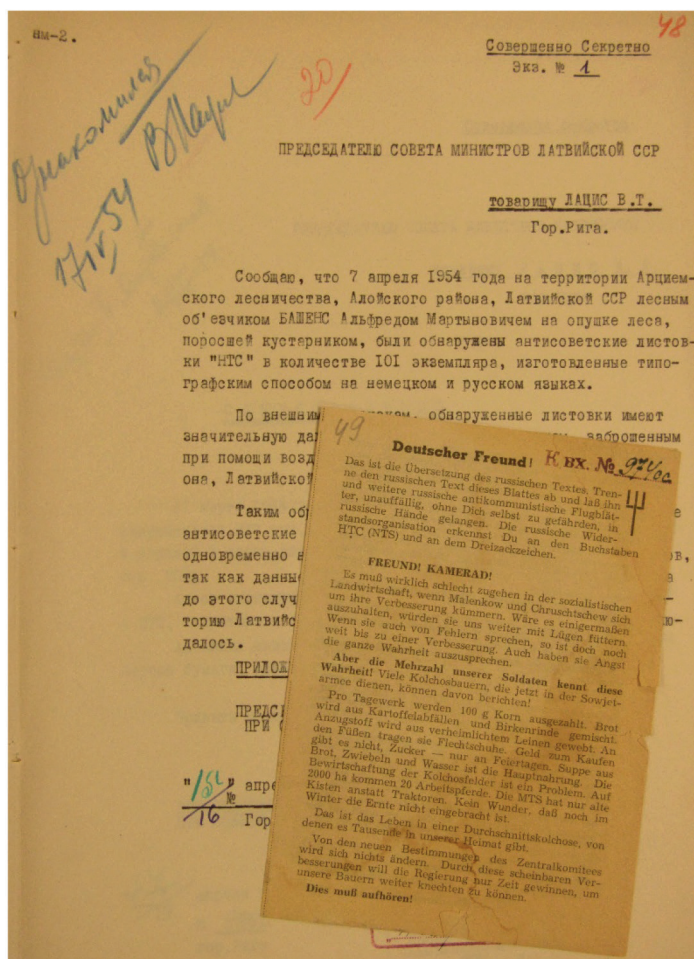
The next NTS leaflet shipment arrived in July 1954, when between July 17th and 19th NTS leaflets were found in Balvi, Viļāni, Līvāni and Varakļāni administrative districts.²⁴ The KGB report was accompanied by a Special Edition of the NTS press organ “Posev” on March 1954, which published an open letter to scientists from a Doctor of Biological Sciences, Professor N., working in the USSR.²⁵ After general theoretical reflexions the letter formulated two tasks for intellectuals: first of all, to do what is good for people, not blindly follow the instructions of the authorities, and, second, to expose Soviet propaganda lies by all possible means. In the subsequent judgments on this letter one thought triggers interest: while pointing out that the resistance to power in USSR has never ceased, at the

²² 1954 04 15 Report from Vēvers Lācis. *LVA*, f. 270, apr. 1c, l. 951, p. 48.

²³ Leaflet „Друг! Товарищ! Deutscher Freund!” *LVA*, f. 270, apr. 1c, l. 951, pp. 49–49a.

²⁴ 1954 07 22 Report from Vēvers to Lācis. *LVA*, f. 270, apr. 1c, l. 951, p. 171.

²⁵ 1954 03 Орган революционного движения НТС „Посев”, Специальный выпуск. *LVA*, f. 270, apr. 1c, l. 951, pp. 172–173.



4 il. Leaflet “Друзь! Товарищ! Deutscher Freund!” LVA, f. 270, apr. 1c, l. 951, pp. 49.-49a.

same time it was noted that in recent years many thousands of “combatants” have been formed, most of them former Soviet army soldiers and officers in Germany, Austria and other countries who have seen the real lives of Western workers. As an illustration, the June 1953 rebellion of GDR workers against the Communist government, when many units of Soviet army had refused to shoot at striking German workers, was mentioned. 18 soldiers and sergeants had been shot by MVD (Ministry of Internal Affairs) Special teams for this refusal, and several thousand had been sent to penal battalions in Far East; however, according to the author of letter, the entire 300-thousand strong occupation army in Germany was with the heroes killed and deported. At the end of letter there was a call for people to keep up the fighting spirit by listening to the underground radio station “Svobodnaya Rossiya” and to write the NTS abbreviation or organization

symbol – prong – wherever possible. When reading this letter, it is difficult to avoid the assumption that the mentioned person – professor N., working in USSR – was a mystification, and the letter was written on his behalf by NTS staff themselves.

A similar parcel was found in Dagda district on September 11, 1954: nine NTS anti-Soviet leaflets were found near a fallen and burst balloon, and a “Posev” issue Nr. 13 from May 1954 was glued to the top of the balloon.²⁶ Unfortunately, no material was attached to this report.

On December 11, 1954, a balloon was found in Aizpute district with two packages of leaflets (5792 leaflets in total) signed by the Central Association of Post-war Emigrants from USSR (*Central’noye ob’edineniye poslevoyennykh emigrantov iz SSSR*) or COPE.²⁷ The two leaflets attached to the LSSR KGB report were editions of the COPE print organ “Svoboda”. Judging by the fact that both leaflets also contained a brief explanatory text in German for a “German friend”, they were intended for soldiers of the Soviet Army group in the GDR. The addressees of leaflets were different: while one leaflet was aligned with the 37th anniversary of the “Great October Revolution” and addressed all USSR citizens,²⁸ the other leaflet turned to soldiers – yesterday’s collective farm workers – to show the flaws of the Soviet collective farm system.²⁹ What, in turn, united both leaflets were its general phrases about the communist regime, that in one case culminated in calling for the last anniversary of “October”, and in the other case – with an appeal to get rid of the collective farms, Stahanovism and parasitic Soviet rule. The generalized theorizing of both leaflets suggests that the main purpose may not have been as much in their content as in the COPE addresses at the end of leaflets, in the hope that some leaflet recipients would be ready to make contact.

The last, and at same time the most defiant, parcel of NTS, which was also the only one addressed to the LSSR, arrived in December 1954, when NTS had sent six anti-Soviet leaflets to the editorial board of the newspaper “Sovetskaya Latvija”, an official issue of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Latvia.³⁰ The LSSR KGB report on December 21st was accompanied by a “Read and pass on!” leaflet that turned to the peasant – Russia’s land owner.³¹ The leaflet started with a declaration that NTS is fighting for the overthrow of the hateful communist regime. That is why the leaflet called for a revolutionary fight, appealing to follow the NTS Revolutionary Staff’s instruction. It consisted of seven points, including an invitation to reproduce and distribute NTS revolutionary materials, to produce self-written revolutionary material, form like-minded groups, signal the ongoing struggle by leaving the NTS symbol – prong – wherever possible

²⁶ 1954 09 30 Report from Vēvers to Lācis. *LVA*, f. 270, apr. 1c, l. 952, pp. 48–49.

²⁷ 1954 12 18 Report from Vēvers to Lācis. *LVA*, f. 270, apr. 1c, l. 952, pp. 163–164.

²⁸ Leaflet „Свобода: К солдатам, сержантам и офицерам Советской армии, ко всем гражданам Советского Союза”. *LVA*, f. 270, apr. 1c, l. 952, p. 165e.

²⁹ Leaflet „Свобода: Товарищи солдаты, вчерашние колхозники!” *LVA*, f. 270, apr. 1c, l. 952, p. 165d.

³⁰ 1954 12 21 Report from Vēvers to Lācis. *LVA*, f. 270, apr. 1c, l. 952, p. 166.

³¹ Leaflet „Крестьянин, хозяин земли русской!” *LVA*, f. 270, apr. 1c, l. 952, pp. 167a–167b.

and to expose security agents and provocateurs. Particular attention should be paid to one point in this instruction, which called upon everyone in their professional field to achieve such a position of service that can be best for a revolutionary struggle; even if the moral ambiguity of such a call is ignored, the utopian view and misunderstanding of the political processes and power system of USSR by its authors is obvious.

Leaflets in German. It is definitely a surprise that reports by the Chairman of LSSR KGB on anti-Soviet leaflets found in 1954, most frequently – in four of eleven reports – referred to leaflets in German. A feature that already at first glance distinguished leaflets found in German from the others was fact that each time there were different signatories.

The first case of leaflets in German found in LSSR in March and April 1954 should be noted separately. These leaflets were signed by NTS and addressed to soldiers of the Soviet Army group in the GDR, so the German version of leaflets was an abbreviated translation from the Russian version of the same leaflets.

The next German-language leaflets found were reported by the Chairman of LSSR KGB in the summer of 1954: on July 2, 3 x 4.5 cm three leaflets were found in the Tukums district near Lake Engure.³² The KGB report concluded that, judging by the contents of leaflets, they were distributed from West Germany to the GDR for propaganda purposes. Further on, the report provided a Russian translation of the text of leaflets found; unfortunately, this translation was executed very poorly, which seems strange in context of LSSR KGB capabilities and resources (as the only comprehensible explanation can be assumed that translator did not know and therefore did not understand the context of his translation). The text on one side of leaflet was translated as follows: “Free elections! About Unity! About the defence of Germans in free Europe! The Fighting Group against Inhumanity.” The translation of text on the back of leaflet began with the appeal: “Germans in the Soviet zone!”; calling to vote in a “plebiscite” and to prove their will against the deception of people, the authors of leaflet at the end urged: “Send this leaflet (in envelope but no return address) to a friend in West Germany. Then your friends will know.”

Above mentioned Group that signed this leaflet, “Kampfgruppe gegen Unmenschlichkeit” (KgU), was an organization, located at Berlin-Nikolassee, Ernst-Ring-Straße 2-4, founded in 1948 in West Germany and partly funded by the US secret services.³³ The plebiscite mentioned in the leaflet was apparently the referendum in GDR on June 29, 1954, in which citizens had to make a choice between a peace treaty and the European Defence Community. The short text of the leaflet and its invitation to send the leaflet to a “friend in West Germany” raises doubt on the propagandistic aims of the leaflet; rather, the purpose of this leaflet seems to have been, through the situation, to ascertain the “feedback” of distributed leaflets, i.e. the ratio between leaflets sent and the proportion of recipients who were prepared to follow the invitations of those leaflets.

³² 1954 07 22 Report from Vēvers to Lācis. LVA, f. 270, apr. 1c, l. 951, p. 170.

³³ БЕЙЛИ, Джордж; КОНДРАШЕВ, Сергей; МЕРФИ, Дэвид. *Поле битвы Берлин*, 132–134. стр.

Mass notifications of anti-Soviet leaflets in German found in various areas of the LSSR were received in December 1954. Two reports by the Chairman of LSSR KGB (December 18 and 22) stated that, between 10th and 14th December, leaflets in German were found calling for GDR workers to conduct sabotage.

These reports were accompanied by a leaflet addressed to workers in the Germany Soviet zone on behalf of the Freedom Union (“Der Freiheitsrat”).³⁴ Criticizing the existing political regime in the GDR and the politics of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands, SED), the leaflet pointed out that the SED can no longer hide the truth that people’s resistance to the regime is growing and gaining support, especially in companies. It was confirmed by the events of June 17, 1953. Therefore, in order not to allow the communists to exploit workers and to live at their expense, in order not to contribute to the consolidation of SED regime, the leaflet put one main slogan to workers: “Work slowly!” (“Arbeite langsam!”) As the signatories of the leaflet, the Freedom Union and the Soviet-zone resistance movement (Widerstandsbewegung der Sowjetzone) were mentioned. At the very end of the leaflet there was a postal address: Franz Schuster, Berlin-Charlottenburg 6, Dernburgstr. 48, PL 44.

Against the background of all the other leaflets, this leaflet differed in two features. First, its sender and his relationship with the postal address holder at the end of leaflet remain unclear. And second, unlike other leaflets whose texts were more theoretical and whose calls for action were limited to loud but practically insignificant phrases: “get in touch”, “send a message” or “find like-minded people”, the given leaflet called for economic sabotage, which can strike a real blow to the existing regime; besides, it would be difficult to identify followers of the call “work slowly!” and even harder to gather concrete evidence of such sabotage.

Conclusions

The reports of the LSSR KGB on anti-Soviet leaflets found in LSSR territory in 1954 are an interesting testimony of the Cold War era, which, by comparing the contents of leaflets produced for different countries, provides an opportunity to evaluate both the aspirations of the authors of these leaflets and their understanding of political processes in so-called Soviet bloc countries of Eastern Europe.

Comparing anti-Soviet leaflets in general, the more noticeable difference is visual performance, and here the superiority of leaflets made for Czechoslovakia is evident: successful caricatures and photographs made these leaflets not only attractive but also easy to perceive. The opposite of this was leaflets in Russian, which with their seamless text in fine print looked boring and drab. It is more difficult to evaluate the content of

³⁴ Leaflet “Der Freiheitsrat ruft Euch, Arbeiter der Sowjetzone!” *LVA*, f. 270, apr. 1c, l. 952, p. 165c.

leaflets: understandably, the content of leaflets produced for each country was different. But in one respect they can be compared: leaflets in Hungarian, Czech and German stood out with concrete and clearly defined program requirements, while leaflets in Russian were a collection of theoretical reflections and cliché slogans bordering on banality. There are several explanations that can be found for such abstraction in leaflets in Russian. The purpose of distributing leaflets apparently also played a role here: while leaflets addressed to Hungary and Czechoslovakia in 1954 were aligned with the upcoming elections in those countries, and leaflets to the GDR were aligned with the referendum vote, leaflets distributed in Russian had no such specific purpose. However, the decisive factor was more likely the different historical experience of USSR society unfamiliar with the requirements of other Eastern European countries – free trade unions, individual farms, freedom of expression and assembly. In this situation, it is not surprising that the content of leaflets distributed in Russian was the most illusory and least convincing of all leaflets. Against the background of these differences, what united almost all leaflets was the emphasis on so-called feedback, or in other words, a desire to get proof that leaflets sent have found their addressees. This desire in various formulations could be seen both in call to send a message to a “friend in West Germany” and in the invitation in every possible place to draw the NTS organization symbol.

A separate research problem posed by reports of the LSSR KGB on anti-Soviet leaflets found in LSSR territory in 1954 is the question of the political mood of Latvian society at that time. The fact that in several cases mentioned in reports, even when leaflets found in remote rural areas were not destroyed or concealed, but handed over to institutes of power, at first glance, might suggest thinking that these people and society as a whole were pro-Soviet and absolutely loyal to the Soviet rule. However, it is important to keep three reservations in mind. First of all, it should not be forgotten that leaflets found were not addressed to Latvians or residents of Latvia. Second, alongside the national heterogeneity of LSSR population, which fueled mutual distrust within the community, there were still strong memories of mass deportations in 1949, which made many cautious, including against such anti-Soviet leaflets as a possible provocation by the KGB. Finally, the reports understandably referred only to cases in which the LSSR KGB had become aware of the discovery of anti-Soviet leaflets, but the question remains: how many were anti-Soviet leaflets that were not handed over and about which there is no information in LSSR KGB reports. Not only the above-mentioned single leaflet found in Hungarian, but also some of the LSSR KGB reports on found leaflets with a note: Steps are taken to remove all leaflets – suggest that such cases of non-reporting should be taken into account.

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Antisovietinė medžiaga ir klimato sąlygos: Šaltojo karo „Balionų kampanijos“ atgarsiai Latvijos TSR 1954 metais

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Santrauka

Latvijos TSR Valstybės saugumo komiteto (LTSR KGB) pirmininkas nuo 1954 m. balandžio iki gruodžio mėnesio vienuolikoje pranešimų informavo LTSR Ministrų tarybos pirmininką apie LTSR teritorijoje rastus antisovietinius lankstinukus (iš viso minėti 42 tokie atvejai), kurie į sovietinę respubliką pateko oro balionais.

Dažniausiai antisovietinių skrajučių tekstas buvo čekų, vengrų ir vokiečių kalbomis, kurių nežinojo dauguma LTSR gyventojų, ir tai patvirtina prielaidą, jog rasta antisovietinės propagandos medžiaga pateko į Latvijos teritoriją dėl klaidingo klimato sąlygų numatymo. Tačiau būtent ši klaida LTSR teritoriją pavertė Vakarų šalių vykdomos „Balionų kampanijos“ arena ir suteikė galimybę palyginti lankstinukų, paruoštų skirtingoms šalims, turinį. Pagrindinis tyrimo metodas šiame straipsnyje – turinio analizė.

Palyginus rastas antisovietines skrajutes, pastebima skirtinga vizuali realizacija, čia akivaizdus Čekoslovakijai darytų lankstinukų pranašumas: dėl veiksmingų karikatūrų ir nuotraukų jie buvo ne tik patrauklūs, bet ir lengvai suvokiami. Įvertinti lankstinukų turinį yra sunkiau: suprantama, kad kiekvienoje šalyje pagamintų lankstinukų turinys buvo skirtingas, tačiau vienu aspektu juos galima palyginti. Propagandinė medžiaga vengrų ir čekų kalbomis išsiskyrė konkrečiais ir aiškiai suformuluotais programiniais reikalavimais, o tekstai rusų kalba buvo teorinių pamąstymų, banalių šūkių rinkinys, paremtas skirtinga TSRS gyventojų istorine patirtimi ir neįsisąmonintais reikalavimais – laisvos profsajungos, privatūs ūkiai, žodžio ir susirinkimų laisvė ir t. t. Todėl visų rusų kalba platintų lankstinukų turinys nebuvo toks įtikinamas.

Atgalinio ryšio akcentavimas, noras gauti įrodymą, kad siūsta medžiaga rado gavėjus, vienijo beveik visus Latvijos TSR rastus antisovietinius lapelius.

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