

ON THE ATTITUDES OF RESIDENTS OF THE ESTONIAN SSR IN STATE SECURITY AND COMMUNIST PARTY REPORTS IN THE POST-STALINIST ERA

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An anecdote from the Soviet era aptly summed up the nature of public opinion in Soviet society: “Don’t think! If you think, then don’t talk! If you talk, then don’t write! If you write, then don’t sign! If you sign, then don’t be surprised!”

The quoted anecdote reflects the split nature of the personality of the average Soviet citizen. They lived a double life: there were things that they actually thought and messages that were meant for the outside world. The absence of real freedom of opinion makes the appraisal of public opinion in one time period or another very complicated. Memory researcher Aili Aarelaid has formulated this as follows: “It would be expedient to consider double thinking as a very sensitive social-psychological mechanism that allows people who find themselves in complicated historical whirlwinds to adapt to conditions that have suddenly changed. The task of this mechanism is to facilitate the preservation of the self-identity of as many members of the social community as possible under the conditions of continuous external pressure through constantly switching between ideologies. Double thinking functions as a self defence mechanism, allowing the greater portion of society to overcome the wholesale “loser” mentality that can emerge under difficult social conditions. Physical and psychological self-preservation is of overriding importance for every person, even in spite of outwardly unfavourable conditions, whether they be direct warfare, deportation, wrongful imprisonment of innocent persons, or some other type of direct political terror.”¹

The Soviet Union was a state where public opinion did not exist. People could only be in favour of or against the Soviet regime – there was only the Party’s opinion and the wrong opinion. This was reflected in the statute of the Communist Party that ruled out all manner of alternatives within the Party as well: “The immutable law of the life of the CPSU (Communist Party of the Soviet Union) is ideological and organisational unity, the total uniformity of its ranks, the high level of conscious discipline of all communists. The creation of all manner of factions and groupings runs counter to the Marxist-Leninist party spirit, to membership in the ranks of the Party.”² This was an ideological issue and intolerance of independent thought carried over into all ideological foundations of Soviet power. Since the complete achievement of an Orwellian ideal totalitarian society, where people even think in the same way, did not succeed in the Soviet Union, this meant that in terms of public opinion, the Party lied to its own subjects as well as to itself.

¹ Aili Aarelaid, *Topeltmõtlemise kujunemine sovetiajal* (The evolution of double thinking during the Soviet era), *Akadeemia*, no. 4 (2000): 756.

² Nõukogude Liidu Kommunistliku Partei põhikiri. Kinnitatud NLKP XXII kongressi poolt, osalised muudatused sisse viidud NLKP XXIII kongressi poolt (Statute of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Passed by the 22nd Congress of the CPSU, partial amendments made by the 23rd CPSU Congress) (Tallinn: Eesti Raamat, 1966), general part.

The most traditional form of expressing public opinion is elections. In the Soviet Union, the Supreme Soviet and soviets of workers' deputies, and the organs of executive power formally appointed to office by those soviets, were supposed to fashion the "will of the people" into laws and other legal acts under the guidance of the Party. At the same time, there was only one candidate to choose from and that one candidate was nominated by the Party. And even voting against that candidate was very complicated. Regardless of the fact that voting was obligatory for Soviet citizens, elections were free according to the constitution and it was not allowed to force anyone to vote. At the same time, it was in the interests of the seeming legitimacy of power to get people out to vote. There were milder means for exerting influence. People were drawn to elections by concessions that resembled bribes. For instance, foodstuffs and goods that were in short supply could be purchased at the polling station concession stand. Alternatively, cultural events (combined with agitation, naturally) were held on election day. If this did not work, coercive measures had to be adopted. For instance, there were separate "agitation brigades" that went to the homes of people who did not come out to vote and either persuaded or threatened them in proportion to their capacity to resist. Evasion of the duty to vote could lead to problems later on because people who did not appear at the polling station were watchfully registered and this already was an indication that the attitude of the person in question towards the Soviet regime was at least suspicious.

At this point, let us forego analysing official and actual results (meaning the extent of falsification). In this case, this is an example of how the distortion of public opinion and its presentation to the public already began with the formation of constitutional organs of state power. If it was possible to present the support enjoyed by the Communist Party to the public as being consistently 99%,³ then it was also possible to present whatever violations of the constitution and other legal acts, and cases of disregard for human and civil rights to the public as the "fervent wish of working people".⁴

³ It would be an exaggeration to refer to such events as elections. They were more like a kind of referendum, the results of which were known in advance, confirming that the country was on the right course. And official election results also indicated that the "course is right". If we leave out the first elections of the ESSR Supreme Soviet in 1940 (it was elected still under the name of *Riigivolikogu* (lower house of the Estonian parliament) and formally according to the laws of the Republic of Estonia, though those very same laws were repeatedly violated), where voter participation was allegedly 84%, and the elections of the XII ESSR Supreme Soviet in 1990 with 71% participation, over 99% of eligible voters cast their votes in all the remaining ten elections according to official results. The percentage of support for the communists was officially less than 99% only in the elections of 1940 and 1947 (93% and 96% respectively). The elections held in 1990 were free already and communists were hidden in the lists of candidates of various parties, yet the number of votes they received turned out to be rather modest (compared to previous elections). Nevertheless, there is no point in considering voters to be altogether stupid. It was clearly obvious to a great proportion of them that those elections were not worthy of the name but they did not start causing problems for themselves for no reason. Nevertheless, there were also people in all the elections who anonymously scribbled their actual opinion on their ballot or tried somehow to imply that they are voting against the candidate.

⁴ It must also be pointed out that the appointment of the Supreme Soviet and local soviets were not the only so called elections. According to the constitution, all courts were also formed according to the principle that judges and people's lay judges are to be elected. There were numerous public organisations (and their commissions, councils, and other such bodies) in the Soviet Union with governing bodies that were also staffed through elections. The more important of these organisations were trade unions that officially comprised over 99% of the corresponding target group in Estonia by the final years of the Soviet Union. The larger the membership, the easier it was to appeal to "the will of the people".

Thus the distortion of public opinion was already encoded in the foundations of the social order. Therefore, it is difficult to research Soviet era frames of mind because later assessments are hindsight and not a single Soviet era source is reliable. For this reason, the following article focuses on providing an overview of what factors affected public opinion, what the Soviet regime considered to be public opinion, and how Party and security organ documents reflected this. The temporal end limit of this article is 1986. A major change took place in the field of public opinion during the years of perestroika and that is a topic for an entire separate article.

Sources

Reports on the views and attitudes of the public written up by the Committee for State Security (hereinafter referred to using the acronym KGB) from the latter half of the 1950's onward are not available to Estonian historians. These documents are kept in classified archives of the Russian Federation, where Estonian researchers are not allowed access as a rule. Fragments of documents have been preserved among the papers of the Estonian section of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (the Estonian Communist Party, hereinafter the ECP) which indicate that the KGB continued evaluating the views and attitudes of the people until the collapse of the Soviet Union. Nonexistent conspiracies were continually being exposed; similarly "rampant bourgeois nationalism" was also identified.

Alongside the scarcity of KGB documents, the fact that ECP documentation from the 1960's onward became unusable for the most part for historians makes research more difficult. There are nevertheless a few more specific reports on the people's views and attitudes in files containing decisions and materials on meetings of the ECP Central Committee (hereinafter the ECP CC) Bureau. Even criticism is allowed in them in the course of various campaigns, but that is all.

A method resembling a ritual had been worked out for finding out the attitudes of the people and for passing that information on through the Party and administrative chains of command. Compulsory meetings of workers were held in institutions, enterprises or organisations where an agitator introduced domestic and (or) foreign policy issues. Workers then took the floor both spontaneously and with prepared speeches in which correspondingly to the issues on the agenda, speakers expressed indignation concerning the plots of "American imperialism", for instance, or expressed approval of the "wise policy of the Party and the government".⁵ If there were any critical viewpoints, they were traditionally concealed behind the meaningless phrase "there are also some shortcomings". Generally speaking, this was compulsory self-criticism in Party vocabulary and shortcomings

⁵ There are hundreds of such documents even in the Estonian National Archives ECP CC collection alone (ERAF collection 1). A few examples: Информации ЦК КП Эстонии в ЦК КПСС об откликах трудящихся республики на события в Чехословакии, на советско-китайской границе и на международное совещание коммунистических и рабочих партий, 29 January 1969 – 30 October 1969, ERAF.1.8.61; Информации ГК, РК и ЦК КП Эстонии об откликах трудящихся на провокации на Советско-Китайской границе и на события в Чехословакии, 12 March 1969 – 30 October 1969; Информации ЦК КП Эстонии о целеобразности организации городских и районных советов профсоюзов и об откликах трудящихся на речь Генерального секретаря ЦК КПСС тов. Л. И. Брежнева на XV съезде профессиональных союзов СССР, 13 January 1972 – 22 March 1972, ERAF.1.11.128; Информации райкомов и парткомов г. Таллина, Раплаского и Харьюского РК КП Эстонии, Совпрофа республики и ЦК ЛКСМ Эстонии об откликах трудящихся на «Обращение ЦК КПСС к партии, к советскому народу», 4 January 1975 – 6 January 1975, ERAF.1.18.1 etc.

were presented as isolated cases without noteworthy generalisation. Yet the opposite could also be the case: very far-reaching conclusions and generalisations were made based on some isolated example. The point was not the analysis of the substance of the issue in reality in the given time and place. "A few shortcomings" as isolated cases usually were supposed to illustrate some broader change in Party policy, or some initiative or campaign.

Summaries of questions posed by workers at propaganda meetings, political discussion groups, and other such functions form a second category. These summaries were categorised as foreign policy and domestic policy oriented questions, depending on the theme brought up at the meeting. From the sphere of foreign policy, we could point out the kinds of questions that Soviet citizens, who were cut off from information, might not have exactly understood (or were not even supposed to understand). Questions about China, for instance, or rebellious sentiments in the socialist camp belong to this category. Questions related to everyday life dominated in discussions related to domestic policy, including "pesky questions" à la "why aren't rubber boots on sale anywhere"?

Additionally, references to "manifestations of bourgeois nationalism" are consistently found in Party reports (the mentioning of which increased in frequency starting from the end of the 1960's). This was part of a USSR-wide campaign to construct a "nation of one people" and "the Soviet people". Here "bourgeois nationalism" did not literally mean nationalism. Instead it was more a phrase that accompanied the standardisation campaign. All manner of insubordination – both actual and fabricated, active and passive aversion – was measured in the category of bourgeois nationalism. Thus over time this concept became an abstract image of the enemy behind which difficulties in building up communism were hidden.

Information on attitudes can also be obtained from sociological surveys that were conducted starting from the 1960's. These surveys can be considered Party documentation according to numerous attributes. Surveys were carried out under the supervision of ideology overseers who also approved the questions to be asked in the survey. The Party decided how much of the results of the survey was disclosed to the public, in what form and to whom. In this case, Soviet sociology will not be discussed and this is a topic for a separate article.

Many memoirs have been written about life in the Soviet era. Most of what was published during the Soviet era cannot be taken seriously nowadays. Memoirs written after the restoration of Estonia's independence are significantly more informative yet the usual problem related to memoirs becomes a factor here: they have been written long after the events they describe. There are very few memoirs that were written in real time that relied on notes and diaries from that very time. This is also understandable because diaries would have served as valuable material evidence if the KGB got hold of them and they could cause problems for people mentioned in the diary as well in one or another context.

One person remembers things in one way, another in a different way. Some people have either intentionally or unintentionally presented someone else's memories as their own memoirs, or later appraisals, etc. This all makes creating an overall picture and arriving at generalisations very complicated. Conditions have changed in the meantime and along with them, so have viewpoints. At the same time, much about the Soviet era that people do not want to remember remained in people. Thus many things have been hushed up and some things have been portrayed as having been worse than they actually were. The opposite is also true: memories of childhood and youth that as a rule were nice and pleasant are expanded as an assessment of society as a whole. There is also self-justification, especially the memoirs of former officials that had belonged to the *nomenklatura*, in which they

describe how in spite of unfavourable conditions they still acted with Estonia's best interests in mind. The same idea emerges from time to time in the recollections of cultural figures – they claim that regardless of the prevailing conditions, “real art” was cultivated, while at the same time forgetting all the Lenins that were painted, chiselled in stone or poured into poetic form.

Memoirs are not used directly in this article but they are indirectly used in the first chapter, where factors that affected public opinion are briefly summarised.

Factors that Affected Public Opinion

The changes in society that followed Stalin's death are referred to as a “thaw”, which rather aptly depicts a situation where totalitarianism and the Cold War did not end yet somewhat greater freedoms than before were allowed. Whether the authorities liked it or not, the concept of catching up to and passing America indicated that official rhetoric had abandoned the claim that life in the Soviet Union was the best. A certain optimism replaced the post-war national depression in Estonia as well. Now that repressions had abated somewhat, it was possible to plan one's life over a somewhat longer perspective.⁶

In addition to post-war industrialisation, the rapid urbanisation that accompanied it affected society. The confiscation of land and arbitrary administrative reforms severely disrupted traditional settlement patterns and this manifested itself in the dying out of villages. Industrialisation and urbanisation brought major social displacements.⁷ The development of industry placed new demands on workers and their qualifications. The system of channelling resources was one means for redeploying people, or manpower resources in bureaucratic language.⁸ The development of technology brought specialisation which was also accompanied by an increase in the importance of specialised education and a general increase in the level of education. The entire system also became more and more bureaucratic and an ever larger proportion of wage earners found work in the bureaucratic *apparat*.⁹

⁶ Mart Kalm, Saunapidu suvilas. Nõukogude eestlased Soome järgi läänt mängimas (Sauna party at the cottage. Soviet Estonians pretending to be Western according to Finland), *Kohandumise märgid* (Signs of adaptation), compiled and edited by Virve Sarapik, Maie Kalda, Rein Veidemann. Series: collegium litterarum 16 (Underi ja Tuglase Kirjanduskeskus, 2002), 161.

⁷ See Tiit Tammaru, *Linnastumine ja linnade kasv Eestis nõukogude aastatel = Urbanisation and urban growth in Estonia during the Soviet period* (Tartu : Tartu University Press, 2001); see also Raimo Pullat, *Nõukogude Eesti ühiskonna sotsiaalse struktuuri peamised arenguhood : [ülevaade Nõukogude Eesti sotsiaalse struktuuri ajaloo]* (Main outlines of development of the social structure of Soviet Estonian society: overview of the history of Soviet Estonia's social structure) (Eesti Teadus- ja Tehnikainformatsiooni ning Majandusuuringute Instituut, 1977).

⁸ The system of channelling that applied to specialists who graduated from higher educational and vocational schools ordinarily did not permit graduates to choose for themselves where they lived and worked. Graduates were sent where specialists in that particular field were needed. There were also exceptions here and on top of scholastic proficiency, a great deal determining where one was sent could also depend on personal or family relationships. Spouses were mostly sent to the same settlement.

⁹ Kadi Roosma, Kadri Täht, *Sõjajärgse põlvkonna sotsiaalne mobiilsus* (Social mobility of the post-war generation), *Sõjajärgse põlvkonna elutee ja seda kujundanud faktorid* (The course of life of the post-war generation and the factors that shaped it), editor Mikk Titma (Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus, 2001), 23–24.

A certain cultural invigoration accompanied the end of Stalinism. Connections developed between Estonian intellectuals and intellectuals in Moscow and Leningrad who were critically disposed towards the regime. Contacts with the West were also allowed, as were familiarisation with new philosophical ideas and innovations in art and music. Contacts with expatriates also developed, which had previously been impossible. Finnish television and “capitalist foreign tourists” significantly affected the atmosphere in Estonia, providing the possibility for comparisons between “us” and “them”.

The first critical public speeches also date back to the 1960’s (for instance the 13th Congress of Estonia’s Leninist Communist Youth Association (hereinafter referred to as ELKNÜ) and the Congress of the Estonian SSR Writers’ Union in 1968). The invigoration of university students in the 1960’s affected all of society. Something resembling liberation from totalitarianism was experienced and relatively liberal freedom of speech compared to before was enjoyed for a short period of time.

This period ended at the end of the 1960’s when the consequences of the events in Czechoslovakia regarding the crushing of the Prague Spring manifested themselves in Estonia as well after a certain provincial time lag. Ideological control was noticeably tightened. Many types of expression of opinion that had been permitted until then once again turned out to be forbidden.

The economy became further centralised. Economic growth slowed down in the 1970’s and undeniable decline began in the 1980’s already, which led to a split in people’s way of thinking and attitude towards life. The consumer goods cult, pragmatism and cynicism started having growing impact. A clear distinction developed between official life and private life.¹⁰

Particular kinds of economic and social relationships developed. Theft of state property (in those days it was referred to as misappropriation) was widespread, whereas most of the thieves involved were not thieves in the literal sense of the word. Poorly paid employees with a more flexible conscience found moral justification for themselves for appropriating state property. Direct connections between people also facilitated this. Connections started playing an ever increasing role in everyday life and the consequence was associations of people, some of which were even of a criminal nature. By the 1980’s, people’s personal life interested the Party and bureaucratic *apparat* less and less. The average Soviet citizen encountered bureaucracy when he turned to the state with his problems. It was within the power of the bureaucracy to relate favourably or unfavourably to a petition. In many cases, bribes or useful acquaintances were behind favourable responses.

People’s formative years were an important factor in people’s attitudes towards society. People who were born and raised in independent Estonia and people whose childhood and formative years coincided with the Second World War and the Stalinist era had the greatest difficulty in adapting. Young people who had been born and raised during the period of Estonian independence encountered the era of totalitarian spiritual, intellectual and physical terror at an age when their personality was developing and they were becoming aware of plans for the future. The contrast between what could have become of Estonia and what the situation was in reality was enormous: future potential was replaced by prohibitions and

¹⁰ Peeter Vihalemm, Marju Lauristin, *Eesti ühiskonna ja meedia muutumine 1965–2004* (Change in Estonian Society and Media 1965-2004), *Meediasüsteem ja meediakasutus Eestis 1965–2004* (Media System and the Use of Media in Estonia 1965-2004), editor P. Vihalemm (Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus, 2004), 2–3.

orders. Things were no better for people who were still children at the beginning of the occupation and the outbreak of war. Due to their impressionable age, most people of this age group remember that time as a nightmare. Double thinking became a lie of necessity for them, from which there was no hope of escape. Most people played that double game consciously but more successfully and diligently compared to people from the era of independence. They quickly understood that home on the one hand and school, the workplace and life in society on the other are very different things.¹¹

Since it was difficult to live under the conditions of internal conflict for years, a particular kind of “honest double-faced person” evolved in the 1950’s, in other words a type of person who simultaneously behaved in a Soviet and a Western manner yet nevertheless seemed to be a complete whole as a personality. The evolution of double-facedness began in school. The teaching of civic studies and social science in particular was a kind of exercise in steering the middle course for teachers and lecturers. The result was that young people were thoroughly taught social make-believe during the formative period of their personality and self-censorship was inculcated in them. The memory of the independent Republic of Estonia had not yet faded, yet Soviet stereotypes were compulsory. At the same time, they were adhered to ever more formally over time. At home, a person could be an earnest “bourgeois nationalist” according to the Soviet regime’s definition of the term, and at the same time, he could be an honest Soviet person and communist at work. Whereas this kind of role change came automatically and did not seem to be particularly hypocritical for the individual himself. In later years, the identity of the honest double-faced person eroded somewhat and “honest” started fading from in front of “double-faced”. This kind of increasing spinelessness also had its own name – “radish” (red on the outside, white inside). This in turn was also the reason why many individuals who fashioned careers in the Soviet system managed to quickly adapt when conditions started changing at the end of the 1980’s and do not see anything deplorable in their past.¹²

For the following generation, in other words the “young people of the thaw”, their period of self-searching coincided with relative political liberalisation and cultural expansion. At the same time, young people who had lived under Soviet rule since birth were already considerably more receptive to official ideas and propaganda. The concepts of fatherland, homeland, Estonia and freedom acquired a new meaning. Parents did not dare to tell their children much about past times. The era of independence aroused curiosity, the violation of prohibitions meant adventure. Yet at the same time, they had been deprived of traditional upbringing and the corresponding social environment. They experienced an abstract feeling of hostility towards foreign conditions, yet since this could not be expressed publicly nor was it permitted, representatives of this generation started being transformed from creative subjects into passive objects subject to manipulation. It was during the thaw in particular that nationalist mentality started receding and that period meant an even greater loss of spiritual freedom for people than the Stalinist era. The number of people who started losing their national identity increased sharply.¹³

The 1960’s were a turning point. Twenty years had passed since the war, the more major repressions were past, and there were some tendencies that promised reforms. People

¹¹ Aarelaid, *Topelmtõlemise kujunemine*, 767–772.

¹² Aili Aarelaid, *Ikka kultuurile mõeldes: [collection of articles]* (Tallinn: Virgela, 1998), 126, 127.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 155-156.

started becoming accustomed, even people who still remembered the Republic of Estonia. The deterioration of work efficiency also began with conformation.

The period beginning with the 1970's is referred to by some researchers as a stagnant era. In retrospect, it seems to many that something ended at the end of the 1960's and life began anew in the latter half of the 1980's.¹⁴ It can be claimed that the degeneration of the dictatorship began in the 1970's. Social fatigue syndrome was spoken of publicly while people told each other anecdotes about Party imbecility, the greed of Moscow, the absurdity of "Russian stuff" and economic decline.¹⁵ This developed into passive resistance against a social system that offered no prospects. People gradually constructed a Soviet Estonian identity for themselves. Among other things, people tried as much as possible to be the opposite of everything Soviet. The system was so total that there was little in which one could be in contrast with it. More of an "us-them" conflict manifested itself where Estonians were honest, industrious and clean while immigrants who immigrated on their own or were sent to Estonia were dishonest, lazy and filthy.¹⁶

It is true that nationalist culture was appreciated in ideologically restricted narrow conditions, possibly due to ideological pressure in particular. Thus the "vitality of the Estonian spirit" did not grow in this respect due to Soviet rule but rather in spite of it and specific factors were its bearers:

An idealised picture of the Republic of Estonia – developed out of their own experience but mostly on the basis of the stories and attitudes of older people. This was considered to be the saviour of their identity that helped to differentiate them from the grey "mass of Soviet people";

The nearness of Finland – alternative information was obtained thanks to Finnish media channels and personal contacts, all of which helped to withstand the one-sided propaganda directed from Moscow (the same also applied to foreign radio stations);

Closeness to nature – emphasis on grandparents who lived in the country and their country home, which helped to counter the mentality of Soviet people that developed from living among large quantities of people in big apartment blocks;

The authorities did not succeed in completely destroying the historical picture because what was presented as its alternative was crude, politicised and saturated with propaganda, which all in all caused resistance.¹⁷

¹⁴ The article *Tartu sügis* (Tartu Autumn) by L. Priimägi and A. Juske published in 1982 in the expatriate Estonian cultural periodical *Mana* pointedly summed this condition up: "Administratively we do everything that is required, as much as is necessary to remain afloat and as little as possible in order to be free. [...] Other young people are emerging alongside us. We don't have money, they do. [...] Unlike our ideal, theirs is obvious. The young people of the 1960's bore spirituality and intellectuality, we bear indifference, they wear jeans. The young people of the 1960's gathered to discuss, we just hang around for the heck of it, they hang out at flea markets and discos." Priimägi and Juske adopted the expression "indolence" to describe the average university student. It was conditionally called the last thinking generation, the subsequent generations were characterised as disco and jeans generations. See Linnar Priimägi, Ants Juske, *Tartu sügis* (Tartu Autumn), *Mana*, nr 51 (1982): 67–72.

¹⁵ Aarelaid, *Ikka kultuurile mõeldes*, 193.

¹⁶ Kalm, 161–162.

¹⁷ See Jaak Rakfeldt, Helle Leetmaa-Rakfeldt, *Rahvusliku identiteedi säilitamine okupeeritud Eestis* (Preservation of National Identity in Occupied Estonia), *Akadeemia*, no. 8 (1996): 1571–1590.

Ideological pressure was supplemented by the added pressure of russification at the end of the 1970's and with this, the struggle against so called bourgeois nationalism also intensified. Censorship was intensified compared to before. A more earnest struggle against Finnish television began, at least in words. The backlash to these measures was the increased activity of dissidents,¹⁸ the resistance of school pupils, and to a certain extent, intellectuals also had their say. The importance of the effect of the underground anti-Soviet movement is often exaggerated. The number of members was small, the people involved did not carry great social weight, and their activity did not create any particular reverberations. Passive resistance and negative attitudes towards the Soviet regime were more concealed and cultural than public and political.¹⁹

Study of the Attitude of the Population in ECP and Security Documents

ESSR KGB reports to the ECP on anti-Soviet manifestations and the moods of the population

As was stated in the introduction, there are no longer many security documents available from the period after Stalin's death. A few attitude reports until 1960 can be found in the collection of ESSR State Security Committee special intelligence materials at the National Archives.²⁰

On 28 February 1957, the KGB delivered a special notice to ECP CC First Secretary Ivan Käbin, which among other things discussed "unwholesome frames of mind" reported by their networks of agents. The reports are structured traditionally: the population's frame of mind is positive, the building of socialism is proceeding enthusiastically...but there are still some malcontents.

The relative proportion of non-Estonians among the grumblers had increased considerably. For instance, Maria Popova, a production quantity surveyor at the Construction Trust no. 5 Brick Factory, had told the workers Maslov, Mohirev and Spiridonov at the same enterprise on 22 January 1957: "Life is crappy under Soviet rule, workers can't make ends meet from their wages, but Soviet representatives of power don't look after workers. Kolkhozes have brought nothing good in the Soviet Union. Our kolkhozes should be disbanded. But I'm going to go to a foreign embassy and tell them that I'm going to be given political asylum in America. I have a job and a flat there and it's a lot better to live there than it is to live here." Popova also reportedly said that she has nothing against being arrested because her living

¹⁸ Dissidence developed on a broader scale after the Helsinki Accords were signed at the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe in August of 1975. The Soviet Union seemingly gained the most from the accords. For instance, it was agreed that the participating states would henceforth respect sovereignty and the rights deriving from it, including the rights to territorial integrity. It was also agreed that the participants would not intervene either directly or indirectly in each other's internal or foreign affairs. At the same time, a list of the rights of individuals and of peoples was also included among the Helsinki principles that formed a legal and moral trap for the Soviet Union. The movement to defend human and civil rights was born, all of which fit in under the concept of dissidence. The main trait characterising dissidence was turning resistance public, the demand that the authorities follow the Soviet Union's own laws and observe international agreements, and the fact that dissidents acted in their own name.

¹⁹ Vihalemm, Lauristin, 7.

²⁰ See ERAF (Branch Archive of the Estonian National Archives) Ministry of Internal Affairs collection 131.

conditions can't get any worse.²¹ Characteristically of the post-Stalin era, Popova, a disseminator of anti-Soviet propaganda, was not arrested; instead a "prophylactic conversation" was held with her.²²

Another example is from a report by the Chairman of the Estonian SSR KGB Ivan Karpov dated 4 May 1959. One week earlier on 25 April, a Byelorussian named Yakov Chupik, who worked as a motorman for the Spetsstroy construction enterprise, was arrested because according to information gathered by agents, he had talked during a break at work on 6 March "anti-Soviet talk and expressed himself particularly pointedly in terms of a Party and government leader." The investigation also ascertained that Chupik had for years already allegedly conducted "anti-Soviet agitation among workers, distorted Soviet reality, criticised the poor working and living conditions of workers, the kolkhoz system and the seven year plan for the national economy."²³ Chupik especially hated communists and his pronouncements were identified as being of a "terrorist nature". For instance on 6 March, the agitators Alisov and Kiselev spoke to Spetsstroy workers at an agitation meeting and Chupik shouted out "anti-Soviet" catcalls. When the speakers turned to the subject of the decisions of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Central Committee's (hereinafter CPSU CC) 21st Plenum, Chupik shouted out an interjection that "this is all just talk and all communists together with the First Secretary of the CPSU CC should have long since been hanged".²⁴

Traditionally, the KGB keenly observed all elections, which never passed without any anti-Soviet incidents. For instance, Nikolai Lyamin arrived at Agitation Station no. 8 in Kohtla-Järve on 8 March 1957 "singing an anti-Soviet ditty that made fun of the leaders of the Soviet state and the decisions of the CPSU CC Plenum, and insulted the employees at the agitation station".²⁵ During the elections of the local soviets on 1 March 1959, a meeting

²¹ Special report from the ESSR Council of Ministers and the Chairman of the KGB Karpov to ECP CC 1st Secretary I. Käbin dated 28 February 1957, ERAF.131SM.1.365, 7–9.

²² People were not taken to court, instead remained at liberty but were under constant surveillance. Prophylactic procedures first and foremost meant frightening people by telling them what might happen if warnings are not heeded. This could also become a hindrance in life subsequently, for instance it could prevent acceptance to institutions of higher education.

²³ There was only one point on the agenda at the 21st CPSU Extraordinary Congress from 27 January to 5 February 1959: Planned figures for developing the Soviet Union's state economy in 1959–1965. The conclusion was arrived at that "socialism has achieved complete victory in the Soviet Union" and that the "period of the far-reaching building of communist society" was beginning. The planned figures approved by the Congress for the state economy included planned targets for the last two years of the sixth five year plan that took into account new opportunities for economic development, demands for the acceleration of science and technology, and an increase in the extent of economic cooperation between socialist countries. The preferential development of heavy industry was prescribed and by 1965, industrial production was supposed to increase by 80% and agricultural production by 70%. See *Nõukogude Liidu Kommunistliku partei ajalugu* (History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union), compiled by B. Ponomaryov (head of the collective of authors), V. Khvostov, A. Kutchnik, I. Mints and others (Tallinn: Eesti Raamat, 1975), 591–596.

²⁴ Special report from the ESSR Council of Ministers and the Chairman of the KGB Karpov to ECP CC 1st Secretary I. Käbin dated 4 May 1959, ERAF.131SM.1.392, 15–16. See further Yakov Chupik's investigation file, ERAF.129SM.1.27363

²⁵ Special report from the ESSR Council of Ministers and the Chairman of the KGB Karpov to ECP CC 1st Secretary I. Käbin dated 14 March 1957, ERAF.131SM.1.365, 14–15. Lyamin was arrested on 8 March on the basis of RSFSR Criminal Code Section 58-10 and sentenced by decision of the ESSR Supreme Court on 13 May 1957 to six years in prison camp. He was released in April of 1960. See further Nikolai Lyamin's investigation file, ERAF.129SM.1.26350.

with one candidate was held at an agitation station on Paldiski Highway in Tallinn. At the same time, Lembit Koern, Helmut Korju, Jüri Tau and Ants Kork drew “caricatures of a pornographic nature” on the agitation station building.²⁶ A separate report stated that Urvaste village resident Karl Sinimets took out his ballot upon arriving at the polling station. He demonstratively tore it in half and stuffed it into the ballot box.²⁷

The suppression of the Hungarian Uprising of 1956 was the foreign event that had the greatest effect. This gave rise to the particular interest of the security organs in that event. The report of the ESSR KGB 4th Department for 1956 repeatedly mentions a sharp increase in nationalist moods in connection with the events in Hungary. In October of 1956, a delegation of Finnish university students visited Tallinn and Tartu, and this motivated the following summary in the annual report: “In connection with the Finnish delegation’s visit to Estonian university students, but also as a result of intensified anti-Soviet propaganda broadcast by Western capitalist radio stations and the events in Hungary, the activation to a certain extent of nationalist activity is noticeable recently among a certain sector of young people and especially among students at institutions of higher education.” Some examples were included, such as from the paper *Vaba Ungari eest* (For Free Hungary) by Tallinn Polytechnical Institute (hereinafter TPI) fifth year student A. Toompalu. Generally, nationalism nevertheless consisted of the negative attitude of Estonian university students towards Russians and communists. For instance, TPI student S. Trill wrote to his acquaintance: “We don’t talk to Russians anymore and we’ve stopped all manner of interaction with them.” TPI student H. Rebane wrote: “Yesterday we had a fight with Russians in the Institute’s dormitory. This morning we continued to fight with them. That probably will never end.”²⁸

As before, school pupils were the most tumultuous now as well. The number of underground young people’s organisations that were discovered had decreased considerably compared to the Stalinist era but they nevertheless continued to be uncovered.

A separate category was “terror” in relation to pioneers and Komsomol members. On 1 April 1959, head of the KGB’s Estonian section Karpov reported to the ECP CC about Jüri Raudsepp’s complaint that pioneers are being terrorised in Secondary School no. 20 in Tallinn. An investigation followed and it was ascertained that pupils Peeter Brafeld, Tõnu Karu and Heinar Kukk posed “questions of an anti-Soviet nature” in history class. For instance, Karu asked why there is a portrait of Lenin in school but not of President Päts. Kukk and Brafeld allegedly spoke of their desire to escape to Germany. Karu also allegedly

²⁶ Special report from the ESSR Council of Ministers and the Chairman of the KGB Karpov to ECP CC 1st Secretary I. Käbin dated 3 March 1959, ERAF.131SM.1.392, 13–14.

²⁷ Special report from the ESSR Council of Ministers and the Chairman of the KGB Karpov to ECP CC 1st Secretary I. Käbin dated 25 March 1959, ERAF.131SM.1.392, 15–16.

²⁸ Report of the Estonian SSR Council of Ministers and the KGB 4th Department on operative work in 1956, *Aruanne Eesti NSV MN juures asuva RJK 2. osakonna agentuur- ja operatiivtöö kohta 1956. aastal*. *Aruanne Eesti NSV MN juures asuva RJK 4. osakonna agentuur- ja operatiivtöö kohta 1956. aastal*, translated and edited by Jüri Ojamaa and Jaak Hion (Tallinn: Umara, 2000), 96–97. See also the report from the ESSR Council of Ministers and the Chairman of the KGB Karpov to ECP CC 1st Secretary I. Käbin dated 5 March 1958. Докладная записка о фактах антисоветских проявлений и аморальных поступках среди молодежи Эстонской ССР в 1957 году, ERAF.1.191.46, 1–10; Olaf Kuuli, *Sula alguses ja lõpus: Tartu ülikooli komsomoliorganisatsioon 1955–1957 ja 1967–1968* (At the Beginning and End of the Thaw: the University of Tartu Komsomol Organisation 1955–1957 and 1967–1968), *Tartu Ülikooli Ajaloo Muuseumi materjale. Tartu Ülikooli ajaloo küsimusi XXXI*, editor Ken Kalling, (Tartu Ülikool, 2001), 71–72.

threatened the teacher that if Karu is appointed class monitor, he will hoist the blue, black and white national flag, which he has already fashioned out of paper, instead of the red flag. A conversation at school brought to light the existence of another “anti-Soviet gang”. Its members were Mart Taim, Tiit Kokla and Jüri Kepp, who by threat of physical punishment forced pioneers to remove their red neckerchiefs. Sixth grade pupil Kalju Timusk refused and it was removed from around his neck by force.²⁹

Komsomol members were also hassled. Tallinn trade school student Aldo Juhtsalu allegedly cursed Komsomol members as “reds” and constantly threatened to physically settle accounts with them. Komsomol member Martin Maasing reportedly was beaten up on 16 May. Active Komsomol member Vello Pukk, who was given the nickname “Stalin”, was terrorised in particular according to the report; he was also called “red”, “bootlicker” and “brown nose”. He was sent threatening letters that informed him that when the “white ship” arrives, Komsomol members will be the first to be hanged. Juhtsalu allegedly also sent an “express telegram” to Pukk: “Most honoured Stalin, our father in heaven, hallowed be thy ugly mug...” etc. Komsomol activists went to inform on the terrorisers and turned in the “anti-Soviet gang” that consisted of Aldo Juhtsalu, Tiit Poomre, Matti Eero, Kalju Leitaru, Vambo Metsoja, Rein Peeker and Eugen Afinogenov. The members of the “gang” were not arrested; instead they were subjected to “prophylactic measures”.³⁰

Only a few documentary fragments of the work of the security organs from later years in investigating the attitudes of the population have been preserved in Estonian archives. According to them, it can be presumed that the same procedure and working routine continued for ascertaining the attitudes of the people. A thing or two about the results of the investigations that were passed on to the leadership of the ECP has been preserved in the National Archives. Much more material was surely forwarded to the Party than the documents preserved in the Party collections but depending on the regulations for processing one or another document, they were either destroyed after they were read, sent back to the persons who drew the documents up, or were later removed from Estonia.³¹

²⁹ Special report from the ESSR Council of Ministers and the Chairman of the KGB Karpov to ECP CC 1st Secretary I. Käbin dated 1 April 1959, ERAF.131SM.1.392, 36–38.

³⁰ Special report from the ESSR Council of Ministers and the Chairman of the KGB Karpov to ECP CC 1st Secretary I. Käbin dated 15 June 1959. Спецсообщение о нездоровых проявлениях среди учащих ремесленного училища № 2 города Таллина, ERAF.131SM.1.392, 47–49.

³¹ The correspondence between the Party *apparatus* and the security organs that is preserved in Estonian archives has been archived in different time periods and for this reason, it is scattered in several series of the ECP CC archival collection. This is reflected in the documentation created in the course of information exchange and looking after other affairs. For instance, ECP CC Bureau minutes are preserved almost in their entirety. Particularly important decisions were kept in a “special file” (Особая папка) and a restricted circle of addressees had access to them. Decisions associated with the KGB are also often placed among materials in special files. At the same time, the decisions in the special files and the relevant correspondence and reports have not been preserved in their entirety and there is no way to ascertain even the subject of the missing decision. The fact that all special file materials have not been preserved indicates that all Party materials were not handed over to the archives or were removed from the archives later. The higher leadership of the ECP CC appointed during the Stalinist era was in office until the end of the 1970’s, yet in the mid-1950’s already, participation in repressions became a compromising circumstance for Party officials. By order of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism under the CPSU CC, the review of ECP archival collections began in January of 1991 in connection with their declassification. In parallel with this activity, collections and individual files and documents for which the restriction of access would have remained in force started being removed from Estonia. That is probably when the Party documents connected to the security organs were identified that were

As a rule, these documents were associated with “unwholesome” attitudes, where “ideological sabotage” and “bourgeois nationalism” were the key words along with rumours connected to foreign political events. The reporting method remained the same: a couple of isolated incidents were presented along with a muddled generalisation “concerning certain unwholesome attitudes”. This was as a rule followed by a decision in the Party *apparat* prescribing the strengthening of ideological work, counterpropaganda, or other such measures.

For instance, the regulation issued on 22 March 1960 by the ECP CC Bureau found that anti-Soviet attitudes spread primarily among those young people whose close relatives were repressed by the Soviet regime. As always, the problems were seen as the shortcomings of ideological work. The adopted regulation ordered the Ministry of Education, the ECP rayon committees and the KGB to intensify prophylactic educational work among young people. Party, Komsomol and trade union organisations were to be included in political educational work. “Friendship among peoples, socialist internationalism, love for one’s socialist homeland,” etc. were supposed to be borne in mind. Intolerance of bourgeois morality and ideology was also important. Komsomol organisations and the leaders of pioneer organisations were criticised for their deficient work. The Ministry of Education was supposed to strengthen political educational work in schools and control over the views of teachers in cooperation with Party organs. The press was also supposed to be included in state-wide educational work, especially the newspapers *Noorte Hääl* (Voice of Young People) and *Molodezh Estonii* (the official voices of the Komsomol in Estonia). Generally speaking, similar documents and the corresponding recommendations repeated from year to year in one and the same form yet in somewhat altered wording.³²

Yuri Andropov was appointed chairman of the Soviet Union’s KGB in 1967 and that was the turning point in the hunt that was being conducted for individuals that had ended up “under the influence of Western centres of propaganda”. Future developments could already be perceived from the memorandum that Andropov sent to Brezhnev on 3 July 1967, which mentions the activation of reactionary forces and subversive activities. The instigation of nationalist tendencies was allegedly the approach adopted by the subversives. Young people and intellectuals in particular had come under the sway of hostile ideology. Thus Andropov considered it necessary to reorganise the KGB’s structure and to form an administration in its central headquarters for dealing with “ideological sabotage” and local departments for dealing with familiarisation with psychological attacks and ideological warfare, that is political counterintelligence.³³ These were supposed to reinforce the struggle against dissidents and the supervision of intellectuals and creative intellectuals. The 5th Department was supposed to focus on the reaction of local Party organs as well in its reports. The last

subsequently removed from Estonia. See Meelis Saueauk, *Nõukogude julgeolekuorganite ja Eestimaa Kommunistliku Partei koostöö Eesti sovetiseerimisel aastatel 1944–1953* (Cooperation between Soviet Security Organs and the Estonian Communist Party in Sovietising Estonia in 1944–1953). *Dissertationes Historiae Universitatis Tartuensis* 29 (Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus, 2013), 41–46.

³² ECP CC Bureau regulation no. 4/33 (op) issued on 22 March 1960 (Постановление Бюро ЦК протокол № 4, § 33 (оп) от 14 марта 1960 г. “Об отдельных проявлениях нездоровых антисоветских настроений среди некоторой части учащейся молодежи республики.”), ERAF.1.5.57, 1–5.

³³ The events of 1956 in Hungary had notably affected Andropov since he had been the Soviet ambassador in Budapest at that time. In order to avoid a repetition of similar events in the Soviet Union, KGB structural units were formed for combating “ideological sabotage”.

remains of the “thaw era” were quickly done away with. A general conception of ideological sabotage was created. According to this, ideological sabotage emanated from the ideological services of capitalist countries, emigrant circles and religious organisations. Thus, the media came under particular scrutiny and the surveillance of foreign tourists was increased, especially their contacts with local residents.³⁴

KGB statements and reports on the attitudes of the people were more often drawn up in connection with some particular extraordinary event and usually the incident itself, Western subversive activity and “bourgeois nationalism” are lumped together. In retrospect, regardless of incomplete data, it can be said that an actual increase in the number of opponents nevertheless did not occur until the latter half of the 1970’s. The gatherings of young people in Tallinn in September and October of 1980, which were motivated by ideological pressure in particular along with the russification campaign, were a sign of greater danger.³⁵ The brutal dispersal of the gatherings of young people and the subsequent arrests and interrogations were followed by the open letter from 40 Estonian cultural figures, which attracted attention in the foreign press as well.³⁶ Many of the issues in the KGB reports were also discussed by the ECP CC Bureau. For instance, moderate strike initiatives that did not have any direct connection to political resistance were discussed: these were work stoppages motivated more by economic problems and substandard living conditions.³⁷

Most KGB documents already habitually mentioned the “anti-Soviet acts of hooliganism” of young people in particular, all of which was ascribed to defective ideological work. In the autumn of 1962 for instance, the KGB informed the ECP CC, the ELKNÜ CC and the Party and Komsomol committees of Tartu State University and the Estonian Agricultural Academy of negative tendencies among university students. An incident from 31 October 1962 was presented as an example, where 2nd year Tartu State University law students held a drinking

³⁴ Mati Graf, *Kalevipoja kojutulek: 1978. aasta poliitilisest pööripäevast 1988. aasta suveräänsusdeklaratsioonini*(Tallinn: Argo, 2008), 21–23.

³⁵ One of the main tasks of the period of “advanced socialism” was to make society homogeneous in terms of nationality, in other words the breeding of *homo soveticus*. Ethnic distinctions were supposed to gradually disappear and a uniform “Soviet people” was supposed to emerge. In the course of this process, colonisation took place from other Soviet republics (under the aegis of industrialisation); the Russian language was given special status: the number of hours of teaching of the Russian language was increased significantly in educational institutions, administrative procedures in many agencies started being carried out in Russian (including within the Estonian republic as well and also where Estonians formed the prevailing numerical majority), mixed marriages, integrated schools and kindergartens were encouraged, a reduction of the relative proportion of Estonian ethnic culture was demanded in the field of culture, and other such measures. While the campaign was initially propagandistic to a great extent, administrative measures were adopted in the 1970’s already which on the background of overall ideological pressure evoked open resistance.

³⁶ See ECP CC Bureau minutes nos. 155, 156 from 23 September, 9 October 1980, ERAF.1.4.5696, 31–55, 56–77; ECP CC Bureau regulation no. 162/4 (op) from January 1981 (Постановление Бюро ЦК протокол № 162, § 4 (op) от 30 декабря 1980 г.); «Информация о предварительных результатах рассмотрения т.н. открытого письма группы интеллигенции из Эстонской ССР», from 30 December 1980, ERAF.1.5.133, 1–5.

³⁷ See for example ECP CC Bureau minutes no. 70 from 9 December 1959 (agenda item: On the refusal of Kreenholmi Manufaktuur (Kreenholm Manufactory) integrated plant old spinning factory terry cloth products shop workers to start working), ERAF.1.4.2356, 41–45; ECP CC Bureau minutes no. 156 from 9 October 1980 (On the work stoppage at the Tartu Pilot Repair Factory motor repair department), ERAF.1.4.5696, 56–77; ECP CC Bureau minutes no. 61 from 21 June 1983 (On the refusal of Bus Unit no. 3065 group’s bus drivers to drive along their bus routes), ERAF.1.4.6214, 1–43.

party at a dormitory on the occasion of their fellow student Rein Seedre being called up for his compulsory military service. Twenty-four law students, three biology students and one forestry student from the Estonian Agricultural Academy were present. Professor Elmar Ilus³⁸ and the Tartu State University Komsomol committee deputy secretary P. Rahi (Seedre's fellow 2nd year student) were also invited to participate in the evening's proceedings. Anti-Soviet songs were sung, including the German Army marching song *Erika*, Estonian SS-Legion songs, the "hymn of Estonian War of Independence veterans",³⁹ and other such songs. Inebriated Estonian Agricultural Academy student Visnapuu is said to have yelled "Heil Hitler" and he was seconded by law student Kasemaa. Professor Ilus allegedly sang particularly zealously and at the banquet table he talked on other anti-Soviet themes, including about the university during the tsarist era and in the Republic of Estonia (for instance about how students could study abroad). The party ended with dancing in the room, in the corridor and outside, in the course of which a dormitory window was broken.

Conscript Seedre was supposed to report to the war commissariat at 3:30 am. A large group set out towards the commissariat and for this purpose, student Ilmar Maran had made several signs with dubious content. The most interesting of them was perhaps "Greetings to the *Bundeswehr*".⁴⁰ Songs were sung on the way, of which KGB agents named separately: *Jää vabaks Eesti meri* (May the Estonian Sea Remain Free), *Gaudeamus*, and *Kaugel, kaugel Venes* (Far, Far Away in Russia). At the same time, a couple of hundred students had gathered at the war commissariat, most of them tipsy. There the militia confiscated the signs. On top of that, the group shouted many "anti-Soviet" appeals: "Cuba no – Yankees yes" (in English), "Down with the army", and other such slogans. The students tried to push a bus over onto its side at the war commissariat. A bus window was broken. "Unruliness" continued on the following days as well. For instance, only 200 Tartu State University students attended a festive gathering on 5 November to celebrate the 45th anniversary of the Great Socialist October Revolution and on 7 November, students came to the demonstration without signs. The Tartu State University Faculty of Law Party Bureau discussed "unwholesome attitudes", as did the Tartu State University Party Committee at meetings on 3 and 4 November, and the ELKNÜ CC Bureau on 10 November. As a result, Professor Ilus was fired. Tartu State University Komsomol Committee Secretary Enn Kreem, his deputy Rahi and the ELKNÜ Tartu Committee First Secretary Jüri Tammaru were all relieved of their duties. Five law students were expelled from the university.⁴¹

³⁸ Elmar Ilus (1898–1981) was part of the "suspicious element" anyway because he had served in the Black Sea "White Guard fleet" during the Russian Civil War and belonged to the Estonian Nationalist Club in 1937–1940. He taught at the University of Tartu in 1924–1949. Then he was dismissed as a "bourgeois nationalist". He was hired again in 1956 when it turned out that manifestations of "bourgeois nationalism" were clearly exaggerated. He had become a full-time lecturer in March of 1962. He was dismissed in November of that same year but after a time he was invited back again as a lecturer.

³⁹ *Eestimaa, mu isamaa* (Estonia, My Fatherland). Song by Friedrich Kuhlbars (1841–1924), which was the flag song of the Estonian War of Independence veterans radical right-wing movement in the early 1930's.

⁴⁰ "ТГУ продает нас", "Да здравствует Армия", „Да здравствует бундесвер", „Да здравствует реалисты".

⁴¹ Statement from the deputy head of the ECP CC Science, Education and Culture Department A. Laus and ELKNÜ CC Secretary J. Lüllemets from November 1962. „Справка об антисоветском выступлении группы студентов Тартуского Государственного Университета и Эстонской Сельскохозяйственной Академии"; Постановление бюро ЦК ЛКСМ Эстонии от 10 ноября 1962 г „О серьезных недостатках в идейно-воспитательной работе комсомольских организаций города Тарту среди студенческой молодежи," ERAF 1.254.29, 41–51. See also Karl Siilivask, *Poliitilisest võitlusest Tartu Riiklikus Ülikoolis aastail 1950-1970* (On the

The events in Czechoslovakia in 1968 were also not without reverberations among young people. Estonian SSR KGB Chairman August Pork reported to the ECP CC on 31 October 1968 on the university student youth torchlight processions and evening concerts held in Tallinn and Tartu within the framework of events celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Union-wide Leninist Communist Youth Association (Komsomol, hereinafter ÜLKNÜ) and international university students' day. Nationalist songs were reportedly performed and politically suspicious slogans and signs were carried like "Yankees, clear off to the other side of Lake Peipus", "Russians, go to the Moon", "Freedom for small peoples", "Belief in the victory of communism – opium for the people", "Even a hanged person can gravitate to the wrong side" and "Long live socialism and aphorism".⁴² The "hooliganism" that took place in a TPI dormitory in the spring of 1972 during an ice hockey match between the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia, when students loudly and demonstratively cheered for Czechoslovakia, was also thought to be indirectly connected to the events in Czechoslovakia.⁴³

The Estonian University Students' Construction Unit (Eesti Üliõpilaste Ehitusmalev) was particularly troublesome for the authorities. The KGB and the Party and Komsomol committees as well as the leadership of institutions of higher education received complaints every year in connection with its activity. One example of an event that aroused the interest of the KGB is from 1984. ECP Tartu Municipal Committee Secretary Enn-Arno Sillar drew up a report on 14 December 1984 on the basis of information obtained from the KGB. The report includes the following excerpt: "Pro-fascist manifestations and attitudes expressed in the use of fascist symbols and the wearing of SS uniforms have been observed recently among certain Estonian Agricultural Academy students. Thus members of the Estonian University Students' Construction Unit Misso village group wore German fascist army uniforms and helmets during the summer work period. Some of them fashioned wooden automatic weapons for themselves, erected a gallows at the group's location, built a barricade of boards and barbed wire on the road leading to the group and built an obstacle course of barbed wire. The behaviour of the fascist invaders was imitated during the group's free time: the "hanging" of the group's commander was carried out (a life-size effigy was prepared using the group commander's clothes and the effigy was hanged); "competitions" were held for the group's young women in going through the obstacle course. They wore fascist German Army helmets and jackboots. After passing through the obstacle course, they reported on the completion of their mission. When neighbouring groups arrived to participate in the Misso group's so called "Misso games", they were stopped on the way on the road, where the shooting of "commissars" was imitated, whereas the persons from the Misso group who stopped the visitors wore SS uniforms."

In addition to German military paraphernalia, Ku Klux Klan symbols were also used at events associated with the group. For this, Faculty of Forestry and Soil Improvement students A. K.

Political Struggle at Tartu State University in 1950-1970), *Tartu Ülikool läbi kolme okupatsiooni II : Tartu Ülikooli ajaloo küsimusi XXVII*, executive editor Helmut Piirimäe (Tartu Ülikool, 1993), 36.

⁴² Special report from ESSR KGB Chairman A. Pork to ECP CC 1st Secretary Ivan Käbin dated 31 October 1968, Toomas Karjahärm, Väino Sirk, *Kohanemine ja vastupanu: Eesti haritlaskond 1940–1987. Eesti haritlaskonna ajalugu* (Adaptation and Resistance: Estonian Intellectuals 1940-1987. The History of Estonia's Intellectuals), vol. 3 (Tallinn: Argo, 2007), 142, 852–853; ECP CC Bureau minutes nos. 93, 96 from 15 November and 24 December 1968, ERAF.1.4.3696, 43–105; 180–234.

⁴³ See ECP CC Bureau minutes nos. 43, 44 from 25 April and 4 May 1972, ERAF.1.4.4181, 157–183; ERAF.1.4.4189, 1–39.

(4th year, commissar of the Misso group), K. M. (3rd year) and T. J. (3rd year) were expelled from the Estonian Agricultural Academy (though the formal reason for expulsion was disturbing the peace in a Tartu State University dormitory and for fighting). A criminal matter was brought against the expelled students (and U. T.) on the basis of ESSR Criminal Code Section 195 Subsection 2. Mait Märtin (5th year), the commander of the Misso group, was punished by reprimand in accordance with the rector's directive. Arvi Kink (2nd year), who attended a joint party for Tartu State University and Estonian Agricultural Academy Komsomol activists wearing an SS uniform rented from the Vanemuine State Theatre costume depot, also received a directive from the rector. Personal issues related to the remaining members of the group were to be discussed at Komsomol meetings.⁴⁴

Finally, two ESSR KGB reports to the ECP CC from 1986, which more generally sum up what the security organs considered to be negative tendencies in society with the emphasis on young people. A KGB report from 4 February 1986 deals at length with "ideologically unsound music trends". While the existence of the phenomenon named disco was somehow generally accepted, the KGB saw the fact that parties were clearly divided into Estonian or Russian events as a bigger problem. International educational work proved to be totally ineffective everywhere. An Estonian who found himself at a Russian party was a foreign body and vice versa. The result was fights, sometimes on a large scale that were not without their provocative side (people went to "foreign" parties to pick fights). The fact that the repertoire at discos and of music bands included a disproportionately large amount of Western music was also considered a problem. The performances of some bands were also seen as generators of "psychosis" that resulted in hooliganism and acts of vandalism. In the first place, punk and heavy metal music were noted together with the corresponding paraphernalia and clothing. Additionally, the alleged hostility towards society that accompanied those music trends was emphasised. This music supposedly increased young people's aggressiveness considerably and promoted antisocial lifestyles. A series of isolated incidents were highlighted in the report.

A "vocal-instrumental ensemble" held a concert at Taebbla Secondary School in September of 1983. The performers were Ivar Aadnik, Ergo Pikver, Andrus Post and Jaanus Lehtla, who among other things sang a song about forest brothers (Estonian patriotic partisans). The ensemble was subject to "prophylactic measures" with the participation of the school administration. In June of 1984, V. P., the educationalist at the Tabivere cultural centre participated in a Jõgeva Rayon youth festival as a disc jockey. He indulged in anti-Soviet pronouncements and resisted auxiliary militia officers. He was arrested and in November of that same year, he was sentenced to four years in prison for hooliganism (ESSR Criminal Code Section 195, Subsection 2). He was released from Rummu prison in 1988.⁴⁵

In November of 1984, TPI 3rd year students Heldur Vaht and Robert Käsper performed a sketch at the TPI cultural centre in which they ridiculed war veterans and the supply of the

⁴⁴ ECP Tartu Municipal Committee Secretary E.-A. Sillar's statement dated 14 December 1984. Statement on antisocial manifestations among students of the Estonian Agricultural Academy; Special report from ESSR KGB Chairman Karl Kortelainen to ECP CC 1st Secretary Karl Vaino dated 15 December 1984; Statement from A. Aben, head of the ECP CC Science and Educational Institutions Department, dated 4 February 1985. Справка о серьезных упущениях в организации воспитательной работы в Эстонской студенческой строительной дружине летом 1984 года, ERAF 1.302.466, 1–5, 12–13.

⁴⁵ See Jõgeva Rayon Prosecutor's Office supervision file concerning Valdo Paddar's criminal case, 30 June 1984–26 October 1984, LVMA (National Archives Rakvere Department) 644JO.2.644.

population with food. The KGB limited its action to prophylactic measures. Master of ceremonies Eerik Laanemets (a teacher at Kohila Secondary School) made ideologically improper pronouncements aimed at the Soviet Union's domestic policy at a rock music event held that same year at the TPI club. Laanemets was summoned to the KGB for a conversation. In the summer of 1985, Herbert Murd presented excerpts from Finnish television at video-discos in Pärnu and Haapsalu. He lost his disc jockey license as a result.

Additionally, a series of incidents were highlighted in association with so called anti-Soviet acts carried out at public events. In May of 1983, Tallinn's Secondary School no. 21 pupils Kaarel Tarand and Erik-Niiles Kross had presented their version of *Tere-tareke* at the "last school bell" party. The play was considered to be ideologically improper and nationalist by its nature. Tarand and Kross were subject to "prophylactic measures" with the participation of the school administration.⁴⁶

In October of 1983, an incident took place at a disco evening at the Risti cultural centre. More precisely, the partygoers destroyed Lenin's portrait at the Risti railway station. Tiit Tedre pulled the portrait down off the wall, and he and Arved Iher, a student at Vocational Secondary School 29 in Rapla, trampled on it together. Veiko Rooba, Margus Korv and Ardi Timusk also allegedly gave anti-Soviet speeches at the scene of the incident. A criminal matter was initiated according to ESSR Criminal Code Section 195 Subsection 2. During a movie screening held at the Kabli camping grounds in July of 1985, Bruno Raap, an electrician at the Sõprus (Friendship) sovkhos, and Yuri Zverev, a tractor driver at the enterprise Pärnu Kalur, called out anti-Soviet catcalls and sang forest brother and Estonian SS-Legion songs. They were both sentenced to two years and six months imprisonment for hooliganism.⁴⁷

A report written on 11 August 1986 paid particular attention to the "cult of goods" and "grovelling before the West", among other things. Illegal business dealings with foreigners were to a great extent behind this. As a result, young people obtained various kinds of foreign goods. The fact that the attitude began spreading among young people that everything that comes from the West is good but everything domestic and Soviet is bad was considered a very worrisome tendency. Finnish television and Western radio stations (including the Estonian-language broadcasts of Voice of America and Radio Free Europe) were subjected to particular scrutiny since they were all intended to "idealise fascism and propagate Western culture". Western ideological circles allegedly sent emissaries to Estonia

⁴⁶ The play was based on the children's story *Tare-tareke* (Терем-теремок) by Samuil Marshak. Eerik-Niiles Kross, one of the individuals involved, recalls that event as follows: "A nice Russian author and a nice Soviet fairy tale. The only change was that the characters were strangely dressed to shock the school administration and to delight the audience: the good animals were dressed like Russians and the bad animals were dressed very much like Germans. The good animals were the little mouse snitch, the rooster political instructor, etc. and the bad animal was the sharp-clawed wolf dressed in field grey. The actors and the audience clearly sympathised with the bad animals. There was lots of barbed wire on stage as well and a few minor changes were made to the dialogue so that even though in the end the good guys formally won, everyone was left with the alternative impression. To this day I remember how the principal and head teachers sat in the front row in this very hall with pale faces and the entire secondary school roared with laughter behind them." See Eerik-Niiles Kross, *Vabaduse väravad: valik tekste 1988–2006* (The Gates of Freedom: A Selection of Texts 1988–2006) (Tartu: Ilmamaa, 2007), 14.

⁴⁷ ESSR KGB statement dated 4 February 1986. Справка о негативных проявлениях в местах свободного время препровождения молодежи на территории ЭССР имевших местов 1983–1986 годах (drawn up by ESSR KGB department head E. Selgal). – ERAF 1.302.499, 2-5.

as tourists to conduct campaigns of enlightenment among young people, disseminating illegal literature and video cassettes.⁴⁸

The KGB admitted the ineffectiveness of ideological work because the enemy had markedly better means for influencing young people: music, films, fashion and mass culture in general, which consistently seeped in regardless of the state's sealed off borders. In determining the reasons for the spread of punk, for instance, "defective families" (alcoholism, single parents, the "parasitic lifestyles" of parents, etc.) were soon arrived at. The defects in the Soviet system were not acknowledged in the growth of the popularity of such manifestations and it was claimed to be the ideological sabotage of abstract Western groupings. The KGB also was incapable of coming up with a miracle remedy. They had nothing else to recommend to the ECP other than the usual strengthening of ideological work and the intensification of internationalist and patriotic educational work.⁴⁹

Since Soviet people lived in an artificially created information blackout, they had learned to read between the lines of official announcements, which in turn created favourable conditions for the spread of all manner of rumours. Gathering rumours was for the most part the job of the KGB yet they are occasionally reflected in Party reports as well (possibly adopted from KGB reports). A significant proportion of a file from 1985 containing information for the ECP CC from municipal and rayon committees consisted of rumours that were particularly widespread among the people.⁵⁰ The Tallinn-Lviv-Chisinau passenger airplane catastrophe, for instance, was a running theme as a topic of rumours in that period. Rumour had it that the plane collided with a military aircraft. Sabotage was suggested as another possibility.⁵¹ There were lots of rumours about an impending large price hike for cigarettes, coffee, cosmetics and perfumery.

Since Gorbachev's radical policy to reduce alcohol consumption and his prohibition law were beginning at that time, alcohol policy was the topic of most rumours. On 13 May 1985 for instance, the ECP Pärnu Municipal Committee announced: "In June of this year, some members of working collectives expressed the opinion that the anti-alcohol struggle is a campaign that will soon blow over." On 30 June 1985: "In June of this year, the notion that Pärnu, Haapsalu and Narva will be declared alcohol-free cities spread in most working collectives."⁵² From an ECP Tartu Municipal Committee report from that same year: "In the latter half of August, a rumour began spreading in Tartu that the city will become alcohol-

⁴⁸ The people who drew up the statement were right to a certain extent. Western intelligence services did indeed use "soft means" to undermine the morals of Soviet citizens.

⁴⁹ ESR KGB statement dated 4 February 1986. Справка о причинах и факторах, способствующих возникновению негативных проявлений в молодежной среде ЭССР на базе анализа оперативной обстановки за 1983–1986 годы (drawn up by ESR KGB department head E. Selgal), ERAF.1.302.499, 7–12.

⁵⁰ Информации ГК и городских райкомов КПЭ о негативных проявлениях и настроениях в городах и городских районах республики, 30 November 1984–4 December 1985, ERAF.1.302.471

⁵¹ On 3 May 1985, a TU-134 that took off from Tallinn on a scheduled flight Tallinn-Lviv-Chisinau collided with an AN-26 that belonged to the army about 60 kilometres before landing in Lviv due to an air traffic control error. All 79 passengers on board the TU and all 15 people on board the AN perished in the accident. Nearly fifty of the victims were registered residents of Estonia. Major General Yevgeni Krapivin, head of the Trans-Carpathian Military District Air Forces, was among the people aboard the AN who were killed.

⁵² ECP Pärnu Municipal Committee information bulletins from 13 May, 30 June 1985 to the ECP CC Party Information Sector, ERAF.1.302.471, 39, 36

free as of 1 September of this year. Accordingly, in some cases city residents began stocking up on alcoholic drinks and their sales turnover increased. The ECP Tartu Municipal Committee immediately explained to Party activists and by way of the newspaper *Edasi* (Forward) to the general population that since the awareness of all city residents has yet to be raised to the level that would facilitate the enactment of prohibition law, such a decision would be premature.” It is evident from the information bulletins drawn up by E. Popov, Secretary of the ECP City of Tallinn Kalinin Rayon,⁵³ that in the spring and summer of 1985, people were talking about a 100% increase in alcohol prices and that even at those new, higher prices, alcohol would henceforth be sold on the basis of ration cards (that is how things really went a couple of years later).⁵⁴

Party Information Bulletins

When perusing reports from Party committees to the ECP CC after Stalin’s death, one can be left with the impression that the Party was not particularly interested in the moods of the people. As before, a fixed procedure was in force for Party political reports now as well. Every report on political attitudes had to include:

1. patriotic declarations by employees to demonstrate an increase in activeness in the fields of work and policy, and the socialist obligations that employees have taken upon themselves;
2. an overview of the content of letters received by Party and Soviet institutions;
3. analysis of questions posed to lecturers and agitators;
4. isolated examples of negative attitudes (not of the general political attitude indicated by the analysis) and countermeasures.⁵⁵

Political reports were ordinarily perky summaries on the topic of building communism. Thus the first of the above-mentioned four points was usually included: people fulfilled the five-year plan, praised the Party and government, and reviled imperialists. While examples of faultfinding concerning the ups and downs of everyday life and the inhumane social system were also highlighted selectively in Party information bulletins during the era of Stalinist terror, the highlighting of negative attitudes was more the exception than the rule in the post-Stalinist era. This change could have been due to the impression that future perspectives appeared to be somewhat brighter after the abatement of spiritual and physical terror. Over time, kolkhozes and sovkhoses started getting off the ground on the strength of state subsidies and through the merging of kolkhozes and sovkhoses. Another reason was that the most serious opponents had been arrested and the remainder of the population had been frightened out of its wits. At the same time, a new generation was growing up that did not have as direct a connection to the Republic of Estonia, the Second

⁵³ E. Popov also reported on an interesting incident that was not connected with alcohol policy. His report of 1 February mentions a rumour that the workers at a factory named after Pöögelmann were against nominating the factory’s manager for election to the Executive Committee of Tallinn’s Soviet.

⁵⁴ Information bulletins from Secretary of the ECP City of Tallinn Kalinin Rayon E. Popov to the ECP CC Department of Party Organisational Work dated 1 February, 19 April, 5 May, 15 May, 30 August 1983, О настроениях в Калининском районе г. Таллина, ERAF.1.302.471, 48–52, 81

⁵⁵ Circular from head of the ECP CC Party, Trade Union and Komsomol Organisations Department S. Chernikov to ECP municipal and rayon departments dated 11 July 1953, ERAF.2150.6.10, 11.

World War and Stalinist repressions compared to older generations. A more important reason nevertheless lay most probably in the fact that in the space of 10 years, the lower level Party cadre had learned that it is not necessary to report negative aspects because nobody expects that of them. Thus Party reports after Stalin's death are essentially useless for researching the attitudes of the people.

The year 1959 was of symbolic significance when it was declared at the 21st CPSU Congress that "socialism has achieved complete and ultimate victory in the Soviet Union and society has arrived at the stage of the far-reaching building of communist society." The primary task of this era was "the creation of communism's material-technical base, the development and supplementation of socialist social relations, and the cultivation of Soviet people in the spirit of communism." This was the beginning of the period of "advanced socialism",⁵⁶ which was supposed to be an intermediate stage preceding the achievement of the ultimate victory of communism. This was fixated in the CPSU's 3rd programme (the programme for building communism) at the 22nd CPSU Congress in 1961 and the corresponding changes were made in the Party statute. The new Constitution of the Soviet Union adopted in 1977 established the situation once and for all.⁵⁷

Some key words that accompanied the above-mentioned decisions are as follows: "the far-reaching building of communism", "the movement for a communist attitude towards work", "a state of one people and the "Soviet people"" (meaning that the nationality question had been solved once and for all), "collectivity", "all for the good of mankind, all in the name of the happiness of mankind", "the CPSU – the party of the entire Soviet people", etc.⁵⁸

That is likely where the change in Party reports came from as well. If there were no longer any conflicts in society, then it is logical that negative tones also disappeared from the reports. Attention was no longer paid to them in attitude reports. Instead, they were dealt with within the framework of attending to general business, where general appraisals were avoided and the negative was presented more as exceptional isolated incidents. The primary emphasis in reports was henceforth on "the creation of the material-technical base of communism". Attitude reports, if they can be referred to as such at all, highlight "heroes of labour": who milked how much milk, who laid how many bricks, who ploughed how much new land, and also the obligatory glorification of the Party, under the wise guidance of which such victories of labour were possible.

⁵⁶ The concept of "advanced socialism" (it was claimed that an "advanced socialist society" had been built up) was adopted in the latter half of the 1960's. This hinted that Soviet citizens would not yet see communism in their lifetimes, meaning that "advanced socialism" was supposed to develop into a long period of history and the transition to communism was to be postponed into the nebulous future. The situation was spelled out once and for all in the Constitution of the Soviet Union of 1977. Nikita Khrushchev's thesis from the early 1960's about the arrival of communism in the 1980's had caused this problem for ideologists.

⁵⁷ See further *Nõukogude Liidu Kommunistliku Partei programm* (Programme of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union) : (adopted by the 22nd CPSU Congress) (Tallinn: Eesti Riiklik Kirjastus, 1961); *Nõukogude Liidu Kommunistliku Partei põhikiri : kinnitatud NLKP XXII kongressi poolt* (Statute of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union: approved by the 22nd CPSU Congress). (Tallinn: Eesti Riiklik Kirjastus, 1961); *Nõukogude Sotsialistlike Vabariikide Liidu konstitutsioon (põhiseadus) : vastu võetud NSV Liidu Ülemnõukogu 9. koosseisu erakorralisel, 7. istungjärgul 7. oktoobril 1977. aastal* (Constitution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics: adopted at the 7th extraordinary session of the 9th Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union on 7 October 1977) (Tallinn: Perioodika, 1977).

⁵⁸ See *Nõukogude Liidu Kommunistliku partei ajalugu* (History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union), 591–604.

Since international imperialism supposedly did not like the Soviet Union's "colossal achievements", the reports usually also include a section on abstract ideological sabotage and a reference to persons without faces and names who had been caught in the trap of ideological sabotage. Yet this was no longer directly connected to the failure of building communism because nothing could throw "historical inevitability" off course anymore. Attitude reports nevertheless did not disappear. Two forms of reports stand out clearly. Firstly, summaries of the demonstrations and meetings of workers and the more memorable speeches from them. Secondly, reports of questions posed to Party propagandists and bureaucrats. The first type of report adhered rigidly to the Party line. In the second type of report, as a rule, there was no analysis of what preceded and followed the questions reported and it is unclear whether certain questions were considered as anti-Soviet attitudes, constructive criticism or whether these kinds of summaries had some other objective. It is difficult to formulate conclusions based on them.

There were lots of meetings in the life of a Soviet citizen: Party, trade union and Komsomol meetings; festive meetings on the occasion of some red-letter day that was important to the Soviet regime; general meetings for informing all employees about some event or Party decision, etc. As a rule, they were tedious: a propagandist gave a speech, the audience applauded, questions were asked, recommendations were made and positions were expressed (some of which had already been coordinated in advance), some sort of resolution was sometimes also adopted and then everyone went their separate ways. The propagandists put together a summary of it along with the relevant proposals and speeches, and they reported that the "people's mood" was just the way they described it. Meetings can in turn be divided into two categories: meetings that were compulsory throughout the Soviet Union or within the ESSR, and the rest that could be referred to as regular political meetings. Meetings in the former category were more important. Orders were sent from Moscow that employees have to be informed about some CPSU decision, a domestic or foreign policy event, or other such matters. For instance, an extensive undertaking took place in the latter half of the 1970's in association with the deliberation of the draft of the new Soviet Constitution. This was followed by the discussion in educational institutions and working collectives of the new constitutions of the union republics drawn up on the basis of the new constitution of the Soviet Union. This was a ritual with no significant content and even if some sensible amendment was proposed, it did not mean the amendment of the draft constitution that had already been put in writing, orchestrated and approved.⁵⁹

The following are some brief overviews of collective summaries of such meetings drawn up in the ECP CC *apparat*, which in turn were forwarded to the CPSU CC.

The easiest questions were those where a position that was agreeable to the Party could be formulated without any particular difficulty and one did not have to constantly keep up with constantly changing ideological positions. For instance, "ESSR workers" unanimously denounced Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag Archipelago* in the winter of 1974 as a "bourgeois-propagandistic pasquil" and this is followed by pages and pages of corresponding

⁵⁹ See ECP CC Bureau minutes no. 80 from 14 March 1978 (agenda item: on the progress of general public discussion of the ESSR Constitution) and no. 81 from 10 April 1978 ("on the draft constitution of the ESSR and the results of its general public discussion"), ERAF.1.4.5283, 106–148; ERAF.1.4.5393, 1–26.

speeches (essentially denunciations) that were presented as the “opinion of the working class” to the CPSU CC Department of Party Organisational Work.⁶⁰

For instance, the principal of Tallinn’s Secondary School no. 7 Angelika Mäses (who was deported in 1941 together with her parents and whose father perished in prison camp) was quoted: “I suffered illegal repressions in my childhood together with my parents yet I never lost my faith in the Soviet people and the Soviet system. Solzhenitsyn has already betrayed his Homeland once. Only a person without honour and conscience can behave like that.” This case is somewhat exceptional while at the same time making reference to the importance that was ascribed to Solzhenitsyn’s writings. Several scholars and cultural figures, who were part of the *nomenklatura* and whose names are otherwise rarely encountered in this type of report, had to declare their position. The writer Egon Rannet: “This raises the question, aren’t we being too patient with A. Solzhenitsyn? On the one hand, this demonstrates our humanism and democratic attitude towards culture and art, yet on the other hand it is our unjustifiable tolerance regarding a person who has gone too far in crossing all limits. Betrayal of the homeland is a justified penalty.” Endel Sögel, director of the ESSR Academy of Sciences (hereinafter TA) Institute of Language and Literature (hereinafter KKI): “When meeting with foreign scholars, we are frequently incapable of explaining to them how we can stand that miscreant and traitor, and why we don’t prosecute him.” Chairman of the ESSR Composers’ Union Boris Kõrver: “I’m not a lawyer and thus I don’t know how to evaluate his activity from a legal standpoint, but one thing is clear – it is betrayal. Solzhenitsyn has to be deprived of the opportunity to transmit his pasquils beyond the border. Why have we been too merciful in regard to him?” The artist Evald Okas: “The fact that Solzhenitsyn has not been harshly punished thus far has a devastating effect on those young artists who sometimes still deviate from the mainstream of Soviet art. It is for this reason in particular that it is necessary to implement harsh measures in regard to Solzhenitsyn as quickly as possible.” Head of the Tartu State University Department of Philosophy, Professor Jaan Rebane: “Solzhenitsyn’s heinous and provocative activity against the Soviet state and people serves the interests of anti-Soviet propaganda and imperialist states. This kind of decision by the highest organ of power in our state to expel this literary Vlasovite demonstrates to the whole world Soviet democracy and personal freedom on the one hand, and on the other hand the decisive will of the Soviet people to fight against such traitors of the homeland – apologists of imperialism who sell off everything for money – their Homeland, family, view of the world” etc.⁶¹

⁶⁰ The abuse levelled at academician Andrei Sakharov was very similar. For instance, ESSR TA Department of Physics, Mathematics and Technical Sciences academician-secretary Ilmar Öpik: “A Soviet scientist speaking against the peace-loving policy of our Party and state is terrible and horrible. Academician Sakharov’s activity is a weapon in the hands of the West’s most reactionary and imperialist forces.” ESSR Supreme Soviet representative Minna Klement (former rector of the Estonian Academy of Agriculture, P.K.): “A. Sakharov has placed himself in opposition to progressive people by speaking against our state’s peace-loving policy and by slandering Soviet reality with his declarations.” See the report dated 30 August 1973 from ECP CC Secretary Vaino Väljas to the CPSU CC Department of Party Organisational Work. Информация об откликах в Эстонской ССР на письмо членов Академии наук СССР, ERAF.1.302.186, 10–12.

⁶¹ Report dated 21 January 1974 from ECP CC Secretary Vaino Väljas to the CPSU CC Department of Party Organisational Work. Информация об откликах и оценке антисоветской деятельности Солженицына; Report dated 14 February 1974 from ECP CC Secretary K. Lebedev to the CPSU CC Department of Party Organisational Work. Информация об откликах трудящихся Эстонской ССР на лишение гражданства СССР и выдворение за пределы Советского Союза Солженицына, ERAF.1.14.3, 1–7.

In some instances, the “people’s mandate” was also sought in assessing important foreign policy events. The following sentiments were presented to the CPSU as the viewpoint of the workers of the Estonian SSR during the invasion of Afghanistan in December of 1979. Worker at the oil shale mine “Estonia” and hero of socialist labour⁶² Aksel Pärtel: “We miners rejoice at the Party’s and government’s wise foreign policy, that concrete steps are being taken to defend the Afghan people against foreign aggressors. The Communist Party led by Comrade Brezhnev, implementing the ideas of Great Lenin and the decisions of the CPSU CC, is doing everything to bring about peace in the world, beating back all imperialist attacks against the freedom and independence of peoples.” Estonian SSR Supreme Soviet representative and railwayman Endel Laane: “We railwaymen are closely monitoring Soviet-Afghani negotiations and we rejoice at the achievements of the brotherly Afghan people. We wish them manly stoutness in defending the achievements of the April Revolution.”⁶³

Needless to say, the issue of “worldwide peace” was a pervasive theme at meetings on the background of Soviet foreign policy. ECP CC Secretary Vaino Väljas reported to the CPSU CC Department of Party Organisational Work on 10 July 1973 on the overwhelming interest of the population in First Secretary Leonid Brezhnev’s visit to the USA and his meeting with the President of France. This apparently meant a major step towards peace in Europe. The Soviet Union’s “peace-loving programme” was approved from below at political meetings to the accompaniment of acclamations. Worker R. Viird at the Kalinin electro-technical factory in Tallinn was informed enough to say: “The events taking place now have great historical significance affecting the whole world. The most important thing is that they are taking place in the name of world peace.” Construction brigade leader H. Lillemägi from Pärnu: “1973, the third and decisive year of the five year plan, will go down in history as a historical turning point in world politics. What the Party and government have been doing recently to achieve peace in the world makes all working people very happy.” Võru dairy plant worker E. Toomepuu: “All mothers most sincerely thank Comrade Brezhnev, who is doing so much to achieve peace in the world.”⁶⁴

⁶² Hero of socialist labour (*Герой Социалистического Труда*) was the highest honorary title for a front-rank worker. It was established in 1938 and was conferred on individuals who “had through noteworthy work contributed to the development of the state economy, culture or science and to increasing the strength and fame of the socialist homeland.” A certificate of honour from the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union, the Order of Lenin, and the *Hammer and Sickle* medal accompanied this honorary title. People who had become a “hero” twice over were supposed to be honoured with the erection of a bronze bust in their home town or neighbourhood. There were nevertheless quite few such double heroes. For instance, Estonia’s only double hero Endel Lieberg (chairman of the *9th of May Kolkhoz* (initially named Dawn) model farm located in Väätsa in Paide rayon) became a double hero in 1987 and was only the 219th person in the USSR to be honoured with that title (he earned his first honorary title in 1971). His bronze bust was supposedly already finished and the authorities wanted to erect it in front of the Paide cultural center (later in Väätsa) but the times were already such that this meritorious farmer decided to forego this honour.

⁶³ Report dated 29 December 1979 from ECP CC 1st Secretary Karl Vaino to the CPSU CC Department of Party Organisational Work. Информация об откликах партийных, советских работников, трудящихся Эстонской ССР на события в Афганистане, ERAF.1.26.2, 32–33; Report dated 20 October 1980 from ECP CC Secretary Vladimir Kõo to the CPSU CC Department of Party Organisational Work. Информация об откликах трудящихся Эстонской ССР на советско-афганские переговоры, ERAF.1.29.4, 24–26.

⁶⁴ Report dated 10 July 1973 from ECP CC Secretary Vaino Väljas to the CPSU CC Department of Party Organisational Work. Информация об откликах трудящихся Эстонской ССР на внешнеполитические акции ЦК КПСС и Советского правительства после апрельского Пленума ЦК КПСС, ERAF.1.302.186, 1–5.

Explaining unrest in other Eastern Bloc countries to the people was a rather serious ordeal for the Party. They were not ideological enemies but rather friends. The CPSU decided to publicly discuss the events in Czechoslovakia, or rather to imitate discussion, and surviving documents reflect this. Engineer E. Veski: "I'm very pleased that the situation has normalised in Czechoslovakia. Even though the Communist Party and government of Czechoslovakia still has to undertake the decisive struggle against right-wing elements, and enhance educational work among workers in the spirit of friendship among socialist states." The claim that imperialist Western countries who want to restore bourgeois rule were behind the events in Czechoslovakia was ascribed to the hero of socialist labour Mikhail Mikhailov. He warned that the counterrevolutionary element has not disappeared even under the conditions of advanced socialism and the events in Czechoslovakia are proof of this. Generally speaking, imperialist forces that wanted to destroy the unity of the socialist camp were depicted as being behind it all. To this end they used hostile and hooligan elements as their instruments.⁶⁵

Coordinated critical viewpoints regarding the Polish leadership were also found in the context of the unrest in Poland in 1980. For instance, it was pointed out that the social condition of workers was not cared for sufficiently due to the mistakes of Polish communists and thus the workers were caught in the net of imperialist propaganda. Tractor driver Henno Kastor from the Vambola kolkhoz in Viljandi Rayon: "We fully support the wise policy of the CPSU CC in resolving this crisis. I believe that the new leadership of the Polish Workers' Party will adopt far more decisive measures for strengthening the economy and for drawing the Party and the people closer together." Brigade leader H. Kaarlep at the mine "Estonia": "The situation in the Polish People's Republic makes us workers very worried. Mistakes have to be admitted now and a counterstrike has to be delivered from the position of class struggle against everyone that wants to sway Poland to deviate from the path of socialism."⁶⁶

People were reportedly the most belligerent in relation to China in the 1960's and 1970's. Border incidents on the Ussuri River in 1969 between the Soviet Union and China attracted particular attention. Tractor driver Arnold Reid from the Ranna sovkhos: "The behaviour of the Chinese authorities goes beyond all limits. Even Chinese young people are antagonistically attuned towards us. We're stronger than China." Party organiser Vaike Tiik from the Vasalemma sovkhos: "Negotiations have to be held, if only China would consent to talk with us. If they don't do that, they'll have to take the use of force into account. The Chinese leadership has obviously lost the capacity to think realistically."⁶⁷ Head of the full-time study department at Tallinn's technical school for light industry O. Trofimova: "I constantly follow the progress of the international communist forum very attentively. I fully support the CPSU's position regarding the Chinese Communist Party. The Soviet Union's proclamation to the government of the People's Republic of China is a timely reminder that state borders that have evolved through history and have been confirmed by bilateral

⁶⁵ Information bulletin from Secretary of the ECP City of Tallinn Kalinin Rayon Committee Z. Shishkina to the ECP CC dated 23 August 1969. Информация об откликах трудящихся Калининского района на события в ЧССР, ERAF.1.8.95, 14–17.

⁶⁶ Report dated 1 October 1980 from ECP CC Secretary Konstantin Lebedev to the CPSU CC Department of Party Organisational Work. Информация о работе партийных организаций республики в связи с событиями в Польше, ERAF.1.29.4, 20–23.

⁶⁷ Information bulletin from ECP Harju Rayon Committee Secretary Teetlaus from March of 1969, ERAF.1.8.95, 6.

documents cannot be ignored. I would like to see that the Chinese CP no longer be considered communist since that brings shame to the communist name. The leader of the Chinese CP Mao-ze-dong should be removed from power as an enemy of human society.”⁶⁸

Issues related to everyday life were also discussed. In a normal country, residents would resent rising prices or at least nobody would have rejoiced over price hikes. In the Soviet Union, however, the issue was presented in an opposite manner as the wise policy of the Party and the government which will benefit everyone. Tallinn’s building construction integrated plant worker Jaaku, for instance, said that workers are very content with the rise in prices and that it will benefit all families and naturally the state as well. The collective farmer M. Onno at the People’s Victory kolkhoz rejoiced together with other kolkhozniks over the fact that the rise in prices is in harmony with vital interests of workers and guarantees everyone a higher standard of living.⁶⁹

Personality cult style expressions of approval were also extended to Leonid Brezhnev as he grew more aged and senile.⁷⁰ In 1973 when Brezhnev was awarded the Lenin Prize, Member of the USSR Supreme Soviet, hero of socialist labour and locomotive depot machinist Ruppert Kaik allegedly declared: “We all watched the broadcast of the decoration of CPSU CC First Secretary L. I. Brezhnev with a high honour – the International Lenin Prize in the struggle for peace. Everyone knows very well his immense contribution to peace, Lenin’s cause, our Party...” etc. People’s Victory kolkhoz (kolkhoz “Rahva Võit” near Tallinn) worker V. Süvaorg: “As I watched the festive decoration ceremony, I felt very proud of our land, people and Party. This is an event of very significant importance considering that the Soviet state in particular shows everyone the humane path to peace in the world.”⁷¹

Meetings were organised throughout the Estonian SSR during the russification campaign that began at the end of the 1970’s, at which the campaign was praised in every respect. Here are a couple of speeches from May of 1979. Tallinn Pedagogical Institute (hereinafter TPedI) Russian Language and Literature student Svetlana Adamson: “As a student at the TPedI Department of Russian Language and Literature and a future teacher of Russian at schools where the language of instruction is Estonian, I confirm that this conference once

⁶⁸ Information bulletin from the head of the ECP City of Tallinn Central Rayon Committee Propaganda and Agitation Department E. Suurvärav dated 15 June 1969; Information bulletin from Secretary of the ECP Kohtla-Järve Rayon Committee V. Koort to the ECP CC dated 20 June 1969, ERAF.1.8.97, 33–36.

⁶⁹ ECP CC report to the CPSU CC Department of Party Organisational Work dated 1 March 1978. Информация об откликах трудящихся Эстонской ССР в связи с сообщением Государственного комитета цен Совета Министров СССР, ERAF.1.24.1, 1–3.

⁷⁰ Brezhnev’s memoirs, in other words the so called Brezhnev trilogy, was published in 1978 with a 15 million copy print-run, for which the “writer” Brezhnev was awarded the Lenin Prize, the Soviet Union’s highest literary award, in 1979. The trilogy consisted of the books *Little Country* (Малая земля), *Rebirth* (Возрождение) and *New Land* (Целина). The author of the books was not Brezhnev himself but rather the journalists Anatoli Agranovskiy, Aleksandr Murzin and Vladimir Gubarev, and the writer Arkadi Sakhnin. Meetings were organised throughout the Soviet Union to glorify the memoirs. This file is rather thin. It seems that the workers were not inclined to take the floor. Thus a couple of model speakers were sought out – heroes of socialist labour who spoke more about wise Party policy under Brezhnev’s leadership. See Информация об откликах на книгу Л. И. Брежнева "Воспоминания" и ее пропаганде в Эстонской ССР, ERAF.1.35.3.

⁷¹ Report from the ECP CC Secretary to the CPSU CC Department of Party Organisational Work dated 12 July 1973. Информация об откликах трудящихся Эстонской ССР на вручение международной Ленинской премии "За укрепление мира между народами" генеральному секретарю ЦК КПСС тов. Л.И. Брежневу, ERAF.1.302.186, 6–9

again proves the necessary role of the Russian language. Improved mastery of the Russian language means the political, economic and intellectual unity of the people.”⁷² Kuusalu kolkhoz worker Linda Tamm: “All the people in our country, regardless of their nationality, carry forward the shared idea of working for our common objective, which is communism. This would be impossible if the great Russian people had not taken us – the workers of the union republics, autonomous republics and ethnic circles – under its wing. It is the Russian language in particular that is the central language of international communication, uniting the Soviet people into a unified family.”⁷³

Questions for the Party from Working People

Questions posed to Party propagandists at meetings are somewhat more informative since direct criticism can be found in them between the lines. In the case of such questions, it must naturally be taken into consideration that the mechanism for asking questions is not precisely known and summaries consist of lists of questions but it is not precisely known why such lists were required, what answers were given to the questions, and what kind of conclusions were drawn from these lists.

Thus it can be suspected that these question and answer sessions could have been examples of collusion where critical questions were agreed upon in advance, giving propagandists the chance to expose the “misanthropic nature of imperialism” on the basis of examples. Yet in this case as well, the questions are clearly such that troubled the Soviet people, who were cut off from information from abroad, and collusion could possibly have been of a preventive nature – if nobody dared to ask, the matter was resolved in such a way that “I do the asking and the answering myself”.

Generally speaking, the questions can be divided into two categories: questions on domestic and foreign policy. Particularly in the case of the latter category, the question arises concerning which sources the persons asking the questions acquired their information from to formulate their questions. The Soviet press conveyed foreign policy news with a long time lag and after repeated consultations. At the same time, some of the questions are also too matter-of-fact to have acquired that kind of information from Soviet media channels in the first place. There are four possibilities. Firstly, the question was agreed upon with the lecturer in advance, secondly the enquirer had happened to listen to foreign radio stations or watch Finnish television, thirdly the enquirer was a participant in some kind of political discussion group or was studying in a political education course where somewhat more information was made available, and fourthly, rumours also circulated and they were turned into questions in political lectures.

Even though in this case what was asked about the Soviet Union’s domestic situation is of greater interest, we will touch briefly on foreign policy themes. People constantly grumbled that news was not received in a timely manner and that the news was often distorted. For

⁷² Report from ECP Tallinn Maritime Rayon Committee Secretary N. Nechayev to the ECP Tallinn Municipal Committee dated 24 May 1979. Отклики трудящихся Морского района г. Таллина на проходящую в Ташкенте научно-теоретическую конференцию “Русский язык – язык дружбы и сотрудничества народов СССР, ERAF.1.25.12, 3–4.

⁷³ Report from ECP Harju Rayon Committee Secretary L. Hark to the ECP CC dated 24 May 1979. Отклик на приветствие тоб. Л. И. Брежнева участникам Всесоюзной научно-теоретической конференции „Русский язык – язык дружбы и сотрудничест ва народов СССР,” ERAF.1.25, 12, 9–10.

instance: “Why doesn’t the press announce space flights in advance like they do in the USA and why do we find out about it only after the fact?” (1969) “Why is information about the events in Poland so sketchy in our press and disclosed so late after the events?” (1971) “According to foreign sources, it appears that lots of information is given to people about Nixon’s visit. Why doesn’t any of that reach Soviet people?” (1972).

The questions ordinarily derived from the general international situation. Through the years, pervasive questions referred to what was taking place in the Middle East. There were also many questions about conflicts in the Third World. Everything associated with space flights aroused particular interest (for instance, “How high up does the border of the air space of countries extend to?”). The greatest number of questions was about China and China was thought to present an even greater threat than the USA and NATO, at least judging by the questions posed. Aside from that, pervasive questions were about other “black sheep” from the socialist camp: Yugoslavia, Albania, yet also about Romania’s at times two-faced foreign policy. In the 1970’s when the reduction of nuclear arsenals rose to the agenda, nuclear arms limitation negotiations aroused quite a bit of interest.

A cursory cross-section of questions about the domestic situation in the Soviet Union is presented below from questions posed in the 1970’s based on examples from the City of Tartu and Võru, Haapsalu and Kohtla-Järve rayons.

These questions could conditionally be divided into two categories: questions concerning work and everyday living conditions, and broader questions on ideology. Interest in issues concerning wages was pervasive, divided into more general (for instance, “Why do the wages of industrial workers and employees shrink ever smaller compared to those of agricultural workers?”; “Can the regulation of wages be expected on a broader scale?”) or more specific walks of life (“When will the wages of teachers be raised?”; “When will the earnings of administrative sector employees be raised?”).

People also wondered why wages do not depend on one’s level of education and an additional question accompanied this: why do people with secondary or higher education work at the same positions as workers? In terms of labour force policy, there was moderate interest in the nebulous status of kolkhozniks (meaning the cooperative form of work and ownership) as well (“Why is the length of employment of a worker or employee interrupted if he goes to work at a kolkhoz?”; “Why can’t all kolkhozniks belong to a trade union?”), and in restrictions that applied to pensioners as well if they worked at a second job (“Why are there restrictions on working at a second job?”; “What is the economic effect if pensioners lose part of their pensions when they work?”).

Questions related to daily life could be categorised more generally under two broader themes: prices and shortages. As a rule, questions were specific concerning prices: “When will the price of meat products and butter be reduced?”; “Is a rise in the price of car tires to be expected?”; “What is the cause of the rise in prices in the Soviet Union?”

From time to time, people were also interested in the relationship between price, quality and shortages: “Why are the prices of manufactured goods being raised while their quality remains the same?”; “Why is the quality of domestic mass consumer goods poor and why are imported goods so expensive?”; “Why are imported products so expensive and why aren’t domestic textile products on sale?”.

On the basis of analysis of these questions, it can be claimed that the constant deficit in consumer goods is what caused the most discontent. For instance the rhetorical question:

“Why is it still not possible to buy whatever is needed in the Soviet Union that has turned 50 years old, and why is the selection so small?”

Generally speaking, the erratic distribution system and drab selection of goods caused annoyance, especially in rural areas. For instance: “Are country stores going to start being supplied better during the new five-year plan?”; “Why don’t trade associations ship goods to stores rationally?” The same generally applied to tourism, holiday home and sanatorium packages, for instance: “Why isn’t it possible to get family packages to holiday homes?” (there were also a few questions about tourism packages to foreign countries, for instance on what basis they are distributed).

Through the years, two dreams of Soviet people were pervasive. In every report, people felt that these were missing from their lives – a privately owned automobile and a new place to live: “Why is there bureaucratism in the sale of automobiles to the population and why are there not enough cars?”; “According to what procedure does the purchase and distribution of individual automobiles take place?”; “Why is the sales price of automobiles sold to the population three times higher than their production cost?”; “What are the prospects for supplying workers with apartments?”; “Can someone tell me when the question of living space will be solved once and for all?” etc.

There were rather few manufactured goods about the availability of which people did not grumble: “When are rubber boots finally going to go on sale?”; “Why is children’s and men’s winter footwear unavailable and why is the selection of textile products so small?”; “Why is there so little building material on sale (eternit, paints and other such materials)?”; “Why are simple dishes so rarely on sale in the shops (plates, cups, mugs)?”; “Why has the manufacture of cheap children’s cotton socks been discontinued?”; “Why has the selection of fabrics and ready-made clothes been reduced?” etc.

People also grumbled from time to time about the availability of foodstuffs: “Why is there no flour on sale in the stores other than cake flour?”; “Why are potatoes sold in stores in limited quantities (up to 10 kg)?”; “Why is so little fresh fish on sale?” etc. The Soviet “fashion industry” also was unable to keep up with the times: “Why don’t fashion studios take the taste of customers into account when making garments?”

People occasionally even grumbled about shortages in propaganda materials: “Why is there not enough propaganda material available on the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Soviet Union?”; “How can schools acquire pictures of the leaders of the Soviet Union?”; “Why is the ordering of some newspapers limited?”; “Why don’t post offices supply residents with greeting cards in Estonian?”

The problems of kolkhozniks formed a separate category of its own: “Why aren’t spare parts for agricultural machines and lorries manufactured?”; “Agriculture is supplied poorly with technical equipment and spare parts, what is the reason for this?”; “Why aren’t kolkhozes supplied with the machines necessary for storing feed?”; “It is not possible to systematically develop mechanisation since it is not known which technical equipment will be acquired in the coming years, is there any information on that?”; “Why didn’t sovkhoses receive the quantities of mineral fertilisers and machinery called for in the five-year plan?”

As a rule, defective goods and the carelessness of bureaucrats and service staff went hand in hand with deficits. Such questions were ordinarily posed in reference to bottlenecks in some particular region (for instance, “Why doesn’t the condition of Tartu’s streets improve regardless of repeated expressions of dissatisfaction?”; “What is going to be done with the

Jõhvi railroad crossing, where hundreds of cars stand waiting every day and are only detrimental to the state economy when they do nothing?"; "When will Suursaare village be provided with electricity?"). The question of telephone service can also be included in this category. The point of departure was not so much the wish to personally acquire a telephone as it was the poor quality of telephone connections and the absence of telephone service in some rural areas: "Why is telephone service between settlements so poor?"; "When will the question of the availability of telephone service in rural areas finally be tackled?"⁷⁴

There were many questions about more general disorder: "Why are new buildings approved with the grades "good" and "very good" but after their approval, two months worth of renovation work is done?"; "Is the culture of commerce merely circumstantial or is it also a question of political importance?"; "Why are checks like frisking conducted on purchasers in self-service stores?"; "Why are construction organisations allowed en masse to omit providing public services and amenities and leave landscaping undone for new buildings?"; "Does the career of employees who administer the city depend on whether the city is in good condition?" etc.

There was another larger category of questions alongside everyday problems that can be summarised under the concept "questions of ideology". Important ideological questions were the kind that directly affected the Party, the Komsomol and trade unions: "Why is the Komsomol the Party's devoted assistant and primary reserve but not trade unions?"; "Why is the work of the Komsomol so ineffective?"; "To what aim are Party membership dues used?" etc.

There was a remarkably large number of questions connected to Khrushchev's death in 1971: "Why was Khrushchev's death announced two days later and foreign news agencies were once again allowed to create the mood since they announced it earlier?"; "Why was Khrushchev not buried with all the appropriate honours like the state's previous Party leaders and why wasn't he buried along the Kremlin wall?"; "Why didn't the voice of the Party publish a worthy eulogy for Khrushchev?"; "To what extent did the so called Khrushchev era harm the work of Soviet state organs?"

There were many questions on the economy. There were, for instance, more general questions for finding out how the economic system implemented in the Soviet Union functioned: "Why are the conditions of five-year plans approved at CPSU congresses in

⁷⁴ Telephone service meant for ordinary citizens was divided into local and long distance calls. The prices of local calls were cheap. If there was no telephone at home, people could talk for an unlimited amount of time using a public phone for the price of 2 kopecks. At the same time, this applied only within the boundaries of the rayon (or the city limits) and if it was necessary to make a call to the neighbouring rayon, a long distance public phone had to be used, where the price per minute was 15 kopecks already. Whoever wanted to make a long distance call from home had to order it from the telephone exchange, connection was usually achieved in a few hours and it was not cheap. In the 1970's and 1980's, it was in principle possible to order long distance calls abroad from one's home phone, which were for the most part listened in on at the telephone exchange. There is little material on eavesdropping of telephone calls. Telephone calls abroad, however, are mentioned in the KGB investigation file of Enn Tarto, one of the better known dissidents, for instance (ERAF, f 129.1.2955). An excerpt from an amendment of the Soviet Union's communications regulations (USSR Council of Ministers regulation issued on 8 September 1978) is also included in the file: "It is forbidden to use telephone service (long distance, municipal and rural telephone service) for aims that contradict state interests and public order." Abuses, so to speak, could only be ascertained by eavesdropping, which was indeed not directly stated but it was clear that the telephone exchange dealt with both connecting calls and listening in on calls.

particular?"; "How does socialist planning work?"; "Why do the directives prescribe the smallest percentage of growth in industrial production for Estonia?"; "Will the *nomenklatura* of goods to be purchased from abroad increase in the new five-year plan?"; "Was the entire plan for agricultural products fulfilled during the previous five-year plan throughout the Soviet Union as well?"

Among other things, people wanted points of comparison so that they could compare their lives with something: "What are the achievements of the Soviet Union in the economic competition with the USA?"; "What place does the Soviet Union occupy in the world in terms of standard of living?"; "How large a proportion of the Soviet Union's export consists of manufactured products?"; "Is it possible to develop the Soviet Union's production of mineral fertilisers in the coming years to the level that developed Western countries have attained?"

Some questions had an historical tone to them as well: "How was the Soviet Union's first five-year plan worked out?"; "What provided the impetus for collectivising agriculture?"; "What kind of economic effect did the cultivation of new land bring?"

Questions on the economy were nevertheless ordinarily connected to the present moment (meaning defects, technological backwardness, the import of foreign manpower, pollution of nature, and other such matters): "Is the agricultural development planned for the new five-year plan realistic?"; "Why are there so many defects in industrial production?"; "Why isn't the production of computer technology more widely developed in the Soviet Union?"; "Doesn't the draining of land damage nature and the animal kingdom?"; "Is it rational to build electric power stations that operate on combustion heating considering the progress that is being made in science?"; "What are the plans for supplying the housing construction integrated plant that is nearing completion in Tartu with a cadre of workers?"

There were different questions concerning the media, censorship and other such matters: "To what extent does foreign propaganda that is hostile towards us use the criticism of shortcomings that is published in our newspapers?"; "Couldn't A. Solzhenitsyn's works be published, supplying them with the appropriate reviews?"; "How should we relate to listening to foreign radio stations and to listeners who do so, and is this allowed?"; "Shouldn't something be done to have International Women's Day treated as a true state holiday and not as a vulgar joke at the expense of the male and female genders?" (radio and television variety shows in particular were criticised in this field).

There was also no lack of moralising questions: "Why are long haired, sloppily dressed young people allowed to perform on television?" Questions on the state alcohol policy are also part of the sphere of morality. Most of them were of a general nature: "Why are alcoholic drinks still so easily obtainable?"; "Why isn't the selling of alcohol restricted?"; "What plans are there for reducing the divorce rate and alcohol abuse?"

Everything associated with religion and atheist propaganda was important subject matter in the sphere of ideology. Whereas it became evident that the people asking the questions were not very hostile towards religion: "Why is electricity more expensive for churches than for institutions?"; "Isn't it about time to start celebrating the New Year's holiday earlier – during Christmas – as is done in other people's democratic countries since 99% of people don't give it religious cult content anyway?"; "Where do religious believers acquire literature?"; "What is the cause of the widespread popularity of religion among young

people?"; "Which religious sects are banned in the Soviet Union?"; "How does our moral code differ from the religious ten commandments?" etc.⁷⁵

What conclusions can be drawn from the questions briefly touched on above? First of all, that critical attitudes had not disappeared and people were not afraid to speak up if given the chance. Formulating one's concerns or frustration as a question at a propaganda meeting with its primary emphasis on the problems of everyday life was a rather harmless act. This, of course, was true in the event that the socialist social system itself was not questioned or inappropriate comparisons with capitalist countries were not made (meaning that abstract bureaucrats were to blame but not the system). Questions in this form were also not illegal. They were to a great extent simply prompted by the interest of poorly informed Soviet people or directed against disorder, the struggle against which the Soviet regime itself had also set as a priority.

Questions that leave the impression that the enquirer was simple-minded also stick out clearly here. Of course, the enquirers could indeed have been not the most intelligent, but it is more likely that these questions were a kind of provocation. Without knowing the context, it is difficult to ascertain if the enquirer was indeed sincerely interested, whether the question was coordinated in advance, or if it was a provocative wish to place the propagandist in an awkward situation. It is unfortunately not known what answers were given to questions like "Do medical sobering-up centres also have a plan for how many "customers" are to be treated?"

Secondly, the questions highlighted in Party reports were, in turn, selected on the basis of instructions that are not known to the author of this article. Generally speaking, a certain social criticism can be discerned in them. The majority of questions were similar or neutral and it appears that questions that were completely loyal to the state apparently did not particularly interest the ECP CC in terms of such summaries. "Suspicious" questions were more likely to be of interest.

One of the reasons for this was definitely the wish to find out what the people think about everyday life. It is possible that what was posed as a rhetorical question or one asked in irritation was thereafter resolved and also made it possible to demonstrate that the Party is interested in the problems of "working people" and that it deals with those problems.

More important reasons nevertheless most likely lie elsewhere. It is important to note that the lists were not sent to the administrative agencies that dealt with the problems under

⁷⁵ Информации ЦК КП Эстонии об откликах в Эстонской ССР на внешнеполитические мероприятия ЦК КПСС и Советского правительства, 28 February 1971 – 1 December 1972. See ERAF.1.11.134; ECP Tartu Municipal Committee information bulletins to the head of the ECP CC Propaganda and Agitation Department dated 4 January, 2 April, 2 June, 5 October 1971, 3 January, 5 October, 3 June 1972, ERAF.148.83.41, 17–21, 49–50, 76–78; ERAF.148.84.19, 1–2, 44–48; ECP Haapsalu Rayon Committee information bulletins to the ECP CC Propaganda and Agitation Department dated 5 January, 12 July 1979, ERAF.2141.34.14, 1, 10; ECP CC Kohtla-Järve Rayon Committee information bulletin to the ECP CC Propaganda and Agitation Department dated 2 April 1971, ERAF.9311.1.13, 1–6; ECP Võru Rayon Committee Secretary E. Saarik's report to the ECP CC dated 8 April 1970 "Information bulletin on questions posed to lecturers, rayon committee employees and *Teadus* (Science) Society lecturers in Võru Rayon in the 1st quarter of 1970", ERAF.4896.43.23, 15–19; ECP CC Secretary K. Vaino's information bulletin to the CPSU CC Department of Party Organisational Work dated 29 January 1969. Информация о некоторых моментах политического настроения трудящихся Эстонской ССР, ERAF.1.8.61, 1–8; ECP CC First Secretary Ivan Käbin's information bulletin to the CPSU CC Department of Party Organisational Work dated 26 February 1969. Информация о ходе подготовки к выборам в местные советы депутатов трудящихся Эстонской ССР, ERAF.1.8.61.13–19.

consideration but rather to the ECP CC Propaganda and Agitation Department. This agency did not deal with people's leaky faucets, ill-tempered sales clerks and poor telephone service but rather with gathering information and conducting propaganda and counterpropaganda. These lists of questions were to a great extent needed for instructing propagandists in how to answer complicated and "ill-disposed" questions (certain "pesky" questions were indeed pervasive, regardless of time and place). Propagandists had to be better informed than the average enquirer, particularly in foreign policy questions. We must not forget that a large portion of Estonia's inhabitants had an information channel in the form of Finnish television that was not subject to the control of the CPSU. Alternative information reached people by way of Western radio channels as well. Questions on domestic policy and everyday life similarly required better answers in the post-Stalinist era than communist slogans that citizens could read in *Pravda* or *Rahva Hää* (People's Voice) editorials. In the Stalinist era, it was actually already realised that poorly prepared, uneducated and fanatic propagandists can only cause a lot of damage. Various instructional materials were drawn up by the ECP CC Propaganda and Agitation Department, the Party History Institute, various methodology cabinets, "red" faculties at institutions of higher education, the Science Society ("Ühing Teadus") and other propaganda institutions. They contained information that was impossible to find from public sources. Such publications were often strictly confidential, yet access to information was not utterly impossible either. People who participated in some political discussion group, studied at a Party school, at Marxism-Leninism evening university or some other institution of political education were also more informed than average. In these materials, novel facts are mixed with appraisals from Soviet social scientists concerning how this information should be related to (meaning what the propagandist should actually say on the background of certain facts).

In Conclusion

The attitude of the Soviet Union's political elite towards public opinion was contradictory. On the one hand, the approval of the masses was supposed to prove that they were moving in the right direction, yet on the other hand, it can be said on the background of the information bulletins drawn up by the security organs and by the Party that the actual situation was not of very much interest to the authorities. The situation resembled a theatrical play and public opinion acquired a rather peculiar form in the relevant attitude reports.

The fundamental documents of the Soviet Union's social system stressed collectivity and democracy. If some communist idealists initially perhaps really did seriously think that way, it soon became clear that if one's subordinates are allowed democratic freedom of opinion, the Party's power monopoly and the formation resembling a state founded on that monopoly would not last very long. At the same time, the theory that emphasised that the communist social system is the free choice and will of the majority of the people, and is a historical inevitability, could not be openly and directly contradicted. If there were opponents, then according to theory, they could only be "former people" who did not want to give up their privileges and the "bribed flunkies of international imperialism". They could also be persons who had fallen victim to imperialist propaganda.

The Soviet regime also tried to influence public opinion. There were at the same time few options for influencing something that did not exist in reality – terror and propaganda. It is clear that it was difficult to elucidate to Soviet people living under ideological pressure and

in economic difficulty that they were living in the “workers’ paradise”. Thus it was necessary to isolate them from the rest of the world so that there would be no possibility for comparison. When this was no longer really possible in the post-Stalinist era, the opinion was created that the external picture beyond the “Iron Curtain” was actually an illusion and a fabrication of propaganda hostile to the Soviet Union. The image of the abstract enemy (for instance imperialism and the most important internal enemy – “bourgeois nationalism”) also occupied an important place in society. All previous, current and future failures of the Soviet regime could be blamed on that enemy. If that did not work, a tangible enemy was used to frighten the people. The best example of this was the daily use of nuclear warfare to frighten the people, which lasted for years, and on this background the constant propaganda referring to the Soviet Union’s peace-loving foreign policy.

It is difficult to evaluate the effect of propaganda yet in many ways, it worked on the average *homo soveticus* who lived in an information blackout. Very many people really believed that the Soviet Union’s ordering of the affairs of life was the best. Communist propaganda that had lasted for decades, the absence of the experience of living in a democracy and of alternative information channels, and the general cultural background had their effect. *Homo soveticus* was an individual who was formed by dogmatic ideology directed by the state. The weakness of national identity and often also the absence of the need to contemplate matters independently followed from this. Thus there were very many people who really did consider the Party’s decisions to be the truth from the highest authority. This came to light particularly strikingly in the case of people who emigrated to the national republics, so to speak. Integration with local society or assimilation with locals was a rare phenomenon. On the contrary, the authorities tried to hinder that in every possible way.⁷⁶ It was possible to manage without knowing the local language and speaking only Russian from the cradle to the grave, even though the local language was taught in the union republics in schools where the language of instruction was Russian. According to sociological surveys conducted in Estonia in the mid-1980’s, 2/3 of the colonists considered not Estonia but rather the Soviet Union as their homeland. It made no difference to half of the respondents, however, what part of the Soviet Union they lived in.⁷⁷ The state had taken upon itself the obligation to think on behalf of the people, and to defend and support them, and in return it demanded absolute obedience.

Propaganda did not work as well on Estonians even though it was not entirely without effect. The proximity of Finland also played a role, among other things. Even the availability of Finnish television in Northern Estonia and personal contacts with Finns made Soviet propaganda rather ineffective in Estonia because people had something they could compare their lives to. Western radio channels also definitely played an important role, though the authorities tried to use jammers to keep people from listening to them. Many people also had relatives who had escaped abroad at the end of the Second World War. Communication with them was no longer expressly forbidden in the post-Stalinist era. Stalinist repressions also did not succeed in destroying (or frightening once and for all) “former people”. The ideology forced on children at school could be dealt a counterblow when the children

⁷⁶ See Mart Nutt, *Homo soveticus’ e sündroom* (Homo soveticus Syndrome), *Looming*, no. 2 (1989): 221–225.

⁷⁷ See further Kaarel Haav, *Venelaste suhtumine eesti rahva enesemääramisõigusesse* (The Attitude of Russians towards the Estonian People’s Right to Self-Determination), *Eesti rahvas ja stalinlus : ajalugu ja tänapäev* (The Estonian People and Stalinism: History and the Present), compiled by Kaarel Haav, Rein Ruutsoo (Tallinn: Olion, 1990), 124–139.

communicated with “reactionary” grandparents who had experienced the era of independence and thus were able to compare it to contemporary times (this is where the idealised picture of the Republic of Estonia derives from).

As a means of influence, terror relied primarily on fear, and most people did not publicly express their opinions. What people said publicly when it was compulsory for them to speak did not necessarily coincide with their actual thoughts. Thus the viewpoints of the working people presented in Party information bulletins cannot be treated as the actual truth. People said what the authorities expected them to say or what the powers that be prescribed for them out of routine, fear, careerism or stupidity.

At this point, the conclusion can be drawn on the basis of existing sources that the Party lied to itself and its subjects. The outlines of inconsistency also take shape: an event of secondary importance in the broader perspective was often inflated into an act of serious ideological sabotage while at the same time more serious signs of danger went unnoticed, meaning the population’s opinion of the state’s economic and moral decline. This was expressed in anecdotes, rumours, people’s attitude towards work and everyday problems, and other matters. A particular expression was even in use in Estonia to describe this – “vene värk” (Russian stuff), meaning something of poor quality, in short supply, campaign-like, and annoyingly propagandistic.

There are unfortunately few security organ documents available and conclusions can be drawn on the basis of scant excerpts of documents that were presented to the Party concerning the attitudes of the population. On the one hand, the fact that there were not very many instances of defiance probably reassured the Party. If only a couple of isolated incidents were presented as negative manifestations, then the problems could not be all that serious. On the other hand, the reports consistently warned that there were disturbing tendencies in society. Those tendencies were usually not spelled out more precisely (the image of the enemy was abstract as a rule).

Considering the size of the network of agents working for the security organs and the fact that a large part of that network obviously reported findings, it can be presumed that at least the KGB had a general idea of the prevailing moods in society. At the same time, the dissident movement that was small in numbers and had little influence in society as a whole, and other manifestations with even the slightest signs of public opposition (including the onslaught of Western mass culture) attracted a disproportionately large amount of attention, yet more serious signs of danger remained in the background in reports submitted to the Party or they were not mentioned at all. While the more general attitudes were perhaps not directly opposed to the Soviet regime, the security organs definitely had to notice the decline in its authority in association with economic and ideological decline. This had to be clear even on the basis of the spread and tone of anecdotes.⁷⁸ It was, however, difficult to report on this because there was no “commission” for it. Nobody expected summaries and evaluations from the KGB of a situation that in the first instance should have raised the question of changing the entire organisation of society and the economic system.

Yuri Andropov, Leonid Brezhnev’s successor as CPSU CC First Secretary, had a general picture of the moods and attitudes circulating in society due to his KGB background and he tried to change something during his rule, which proved to be short. First and foremost, his aim was

⁷⁸ See further Kadi Sarv, *Poliitiline anekdoot nõukogude okupatsiooni aastatel* (The political anecdote during the years of Soviet occupation), <http://www.folklore.ee/tagused/nr4/nali3.htm>

to restore the authority of power (this means that (semi)public dissident forms of resistance were suppressed once and for all). Secondly, attempts were made to energise the Soviet Union's ever more stagnating economic system (meaning "forcing people to work"). He did all this as could be predicted according to his background – in Chekist style, disregarding international reaction, and it can only be speculated how far he was prepared to go if his health had not failed. He also scared the rest of the leadership of the Soviet Union with his Stalinist methods and his death in 1984 was received with obvious relief. The harmless Konstantin Chernenko was put in power and he restored the status quo but did so in conditions where the authority of the powers that be and the state economy had declined to a critical level. On this background, it can be claimed that the KGB reports on attitudes were commissioned by the aging political elite, which seemingly wanted to be lied to.⁷⁹

Spiritual and intellectual decline emerges vividly from Party reports that were presented as the attitudes of the population, a general summary of which was sent to Moscow for the perusal of the CPSU CC. We are left with the impression that the Party lived in a separate world of its own and no longer understood what was going on in society. It is difficult to assess why this kind of lying to itself was engaged in and to what extent those lies were believed. While to a great extent, lies were told to each other during Stalin's lifetime out of fear, another defensive reflex replaced it in later times. If the truth had been admitted to, it would have put the legitimacy of the Party elite in question as the body making decisions for the people (in the eyes of rank and file Party members as well).

In a nutshell, it can be said that the attitude reports described derived in that form from an adjusted theory of class struggle. The CPSU 3rd Programme from 1961 stressed that an advanced socialist society had been built up where class conflicts had disappeared and ethnic conflicts had been eliminated, and that the next step was communism. In retrospect, it can be said that palming "advanced socialism" off as an intermediate stage preceding communism, which contradicts dogmatic theory, was already implicit surrender and admission that communism will never arrive. Yet in the interests of the legitimacy of power, the Party could not admit that to itself. That is what the farce described above arose from in distorting public opinion.

⁷⁹ Certain conspiratorial considerations cannot be entirely ruled out either. Total secrecy ruled in the running of affairs behind Party decisions. There are very few specific decisions with open text that provide an overview of the actual situation (especially on the kind of sensitive theme like public opinion) among post-Stalinist era Party documentation (with the exception of those that were drawn up in the course of various campaigns, the objective of which was not to change anything, meaning Party self-criticism, which the Party's statute defined already). The actual situation had to be concealed not only from the "broad masses" but also from lower level Party members. Regardless of this, some information leaked out from time to time. The best known incident was perhaps the ECP CC Bureau decision of 19 December 1978 and the long-term plan that accompanied it, which followed the regulation issued on 13 October 1978 by the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union (Concerning measures for further supplementing the learning and teaching of Russian in the union republics). See the ECP CC Bureau regulation issued on 19 December 1978. О мерах по выполнению ЦК КПСС „О дальнейшем совершенствовании изучения и преподавания русского языка (Протокол № 105 заседания Бюро ЦК КП Эстонии от 19 декабря 1978 года), ERAF.1.4.5353, 22–24; План мероприятий по выполнению постановления ЦК КПСС „О дальнейшем совершенствовании изучения и преподавания русского языка“. 19 December 1978, ERAF.1.4.5353, 40–44. These documents provided detailed instructions for speeding up russification. To the chagrin of the authorities, this document leaked out and made its way abroad. The ideological-propagandistic damage was assessed as being very great, and control over and access to the Party's secret documents was tightened even further.