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On the Literary Life in the Soviet Estonia

Abstract: The paper deals with the literature of the Soviet Estonia that was a very ambivalent phenomenon. It suffered considerably in the forties and fifties by the direct assault repressions. Banning the publishing of the exile authors destroyed the continuity of the literature and spoiled the best creative years of many writers who had stayed homeland. In the early sixties a new generation came into the Estonian literature, by today they have become the living classics (Hando Runnel, Paul-Erik Rummo, Mats Traat, Arvo Valton, Jaan Kaplinski, Viivi Luik, Juhan Viiding etc.). The doctrine of “the flourishing culture” was included in the Soviet doctrine, so the authorities had to bear the writers, though they tried to control and direct them permanently. Though the pressure of the regime eased in the sixties, the censorship and the party’s guidance still endured. This was the reason why there were no memoirists or essayists, why many authors have some confusing texts among their early works, why the tradition of the Estonian literature is fragmentary. In the last decades of the occupation the creative unions were in opposition rather than in collaboration with the establishment.

Key words: Estonian literature, Soviet literature, literary life, censorship.

Specifics of the Soviet literary life

The forties were the watershed decade in the history of all the Baltic States including Estonia. In the period the Estonian society was divided into two – those who did not leave their home country stayed under the Soviet despotism, and those who escaped from Estonia in 1943–1944 formed the Estonian exile society with its main centres in Sweden, Canada and the USA.

The culture/literature, created under the conditions of the Soviet power, had its specifics that remained almost the same for half a century, as long as it lasted, from 1940 to 1991. It was a period when the non-literary factors designed resolutely the character of literature and the operation of literary insti-

tutions. The Estonian literature in the Soviet period was a guarded, controlled and censored literature. In years 1940–1941 and 1944–1953 the whole field of literature was purged, and the prevailing part of the hitherto published literature was banned. Instead, an avalanche of unfamiliar texts was implanted, and quite an unfamiliar model of text production. Last years before Stalin’s death, when the ideological pressure all over the territory of the Soviet Union was especially harsh, it was completely impossible to publish anything in Estonian deflecting from the officially predetermined main course. Without doubt, the literature of the period can be called the *Soviet literature in the Estonian language*, since all the features connecting it to traditions of national literature had been removed. Even the Estonian language was not an inevitable feature any more since one of the leading authors, Hans Leberecht, wrote his books in Russian.

As political pressure after Stalin’s death decreased, the official cultural policy also changed. Generally the Soviet occupation can be divided into three main periods as to the strength and character of its political pressure: the Stalin era (1940–1941 and 1944–1953), the period of liberalization or the so-called political “thaw” (1954–1968?) and the period of power stabilization and stagnation. Considering the presence of national features, the literature of the Stalin era could be called the Soviet literature, the literature of the thaw-period – the literature of the Soviet Estonia, while in the period of stagnation two kinds of literature in Estonia can be distinguished: the so-called big and the small ones or the Soviet literature and just literature.

In all periods there were two unbreakable rules in the Soviet society: the state monopoly of publishing and the censorship of the printed word. The only way to publish anything was to use the state publishing houses, regulated by nationwide Soviet laws and plans confirmed in Moscow with economical considerations being the last ones in the line. Requiring multiple pre- and post-censorship, on 23 October 1940 in Estonia there was established a special institution – the Literature and Publishing Authority (the Soviet Union censorship committee), called colloquially *Glavlit* after the Russian abbreviation of the institution.

The censorship lasted until the end of the Soviet era, but its rules varied depending on the changes in the political climate. After the period of thaw, after the passionate debates in sixties concerning what is acceptable or unacceptable in the Soviet literature, many aesthetic taboos were broken, i.e. no more major restrictions were placed on the form of literary works: unrhymed poetry,

free indirect discourse and other “formalistic” methods were allowed. Political taboos certainly remained – like showing the Republic of Estonia and its elite in a favourable light. Another taboo was the fictional portrayal of Russians in the Estonian literature (in the Stalin era literature there were lots of them, all communists, eager to guide the Estonian life onto the true ideological path). Other sensitive topics were deportation, forest brothers, emigrants, the situation of collective farms or churches, though sometimes some authors somehow managed to treat those sensitive subjects.

However, the censorship was hidden: the lists of forbidden books were classified. No-one else but the personnel of the censorship committee knew all the instructions, allowing or forbidding the publication of books. Editors and their superiors knew general directives and applied more and more self-censorship, in proportion to their growing experience.

The contacts of the society in both time and space were heavily disturbed. In the first decades of the Soviet power Estonia had no connections with the world outside the Soviet Union. Likewise, the people had no connection with the past since the main part of their literary heritage was closed into the special funds (special reserves) that were abolished only in 1988. Normal connections with the outside world were recovered after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

The supervision authority of literature – the Estonian Soviet Writers’ Union – was under the control of the Communist Party itself, being inspected by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Estonia. The leaders of the Writers’ Union (its chairman, secretaries) belonged to the nomenclature of the Estonian Communist Party, so they had to be the party members (there are some exceptions in the eighties, for example the foreign secretary of the Writers’ Union in 1985–1987 Lennart Meri, or the secretary in 1987–1989 Paul-Eerik Rummo).

The specifics of the Soviet ideology have been thoroughly described by Peet Lepik. He underlined that it was typical for the Leninist ideology (which does not coincide with the Marxist ideology) to guide and control intellectual culture for the reason that the Leninist ideology is “right” and as such “the weapon in the hand of the party and the ideologist”¹.

1 Peet Lepik, “Antikultuuri fenomen nõukogude kultuuris” (*The Phenomenon of Anti-culture in Soviet Culture*), *Akadeemia*, Nr. 4, 2000.

To naturalize Estonian people in the Soviet reality the former habitual background and the settings and context of life was first replaced (obviously due to the arrogance or stupidity of the leaders). Everything was controlled and regulated successfully, except the feelings, thoughts and memories of people – it was impossible to nationalize these. By the time of Stalin's death, Estonian literature had been transformed into a bunch of primitive didactic texts, very little in common with what had been generally taken for literature in this country.

In 1950 there took place the 8th plenary session of the Estonian Communist Party where the campaign of disclosing “bourgeois nationalists” gained its climax. Before and after that plenum hundreds of people who had been related to the cultural or academic life in the pre-war Estonia, were deposed from power, and from creative unions and universities, they were even discharged from work. Actually it was nothing but a struggle for power between different clans at the top of the Communist Party where the local collaborationists confronted with the so-called Russian-Estonians who had come to Estonia from Russia after the war. Nikolai Karotamm, losing his post of the Communist Party leader, was forced to leave Estonia. He was replaced by Ivan Kabin who had come from Russia, settled down in Estonia for the rest of his life and became with time more liberal/Estonian-minded. He even changed his name from Ivan to Johannes. Alongside with Karotamm there were deposed from power, often also captured, the so-called liberal national communists who had gained their position in 1940 (Nigol Andresen, Hendrik Allik, Hans Kruus, Johannes Semper and others). In the cultural life it meant the persecution and/or confining of intellectuals with any kind of national background, even (or especially) if they had cooperated with the Soviet power.

The interval 1950–1953 was the period of greatest alienation in the Estonian literature. Tightened requirements and growing paranoia at chasing slips made writers extremely careful, so that the publishing of fiction in Estonian decreased year by year.

All kinds of pre-reviews and concerts required to gain the permission for publishing were so time-consuming and tough that most potential authors just gave up writing. The campaign of disclosing “bourgeois nationalists” made writing impossible for a big part of writers, even theoretically, since it was just forbidden to publish their works. The context has been numerically illustrated by Juhan Smuul in his report “On the situation in the Soviet Estonian literature”

on the plenary session of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Estonia in autumn 1953. He gave the numbers of published fiction for adults (including translations!): 102 books in the year 1946, 101 in 1948, 71 in 1949, 48 in 1950, 42 in 1951 and 45 in 1952². This was the time of getting rid of “the bourgeois literature” when axes were used for chopping books in the libraries, since all what was forbidden had to be destroyed. In consequence of such politics the number of books decreased dramatically during a couple of years. Therefore people read any books they just could get, irrespective of their contents or ideology.

The list of Estonian writers who could have been published in the end of forties and the beginning of fifties was short. At the top of this list were the winners of the Stalin award August Jakobson, Hans Leberecht and Juhan Smuul.

Liberal period in the cultural life of the Soviet Union – the so-called thaw (1954–1968)

The post-Stalin period got its name after the novelette “The Thaw” written by the Soviet writer Ilya Ehrenburg in 1954. The period was coloured by the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the USSR in 1956 where the new First Secretary of the Communist Party Nikita Khrushchev gave a secret speech that exposed and condemned the cult of Stalin. Thereafter something “vernal” happened in the spiritual climate of the Soviet Union – the hope sprang up that the worse was over (for this time?). The people deported and captured begun to return home from Siberia. The leader of the campaign of disclosing “bourgeois nationalists” Magnus Mälk had to leave the Writers’ Union of the Soviet Estonia in 1952, the director of the Board of Arts Max Laosson had to leave his post in 1953. (Later both of them found safe jobs, close to power, in the publishing house “Eesti Raamat”.) In 1955 the membership of Johannes Semper, Friedebert Tuglas, Kersti Merilaas, later also that of Betti Alver, August Sang and other writers who had been expelled from the Writers’ Union in 1950 was renewed.

2 Juhan Smuul, “Eesti Nõukogude Kirjanike Liidu töös ja meie kirjanduse ees seisvatest ülesannetest” (“On Tasks of the Soviet Estonian Writers’ Union and of Our Literature”, in: *Looming*, 1954, Nr. 7, p. 1431.

The end of fifties and the beginning of sixties was the time of softening the tough ideological pressure. It was the time of a general wave of optimism in the Soviet society as on the one hand the hard-labour prison camps were abolished and the political prisoners released, and even more – there was the progress in conquering the cosmos. Within these changes there appeared a new generation in literature related to the Soviet culture in a more ambivalent way. Literature emancipated from ideology considerably but stayed censored anyway. The period of 1956(?)–1988 in the cultural field generally and in literature especially was characterized on the one hand by exploring the borders of the allowed/the forbidden and on the other by chasing after everything that could be interpreted as “anti-Soviet”. The art of allusions, hints and “writing between the lines” developed and became perfect. The literary life was full of different games of power exploring the frames of the allowed and the forbidden. Because of these power-games many writers suffered tragically. Their creative life was spoiled completely (Artur Alliksaar, Uku Masing) or restrained significantly (Betti Alver, Paul-Eerik Rummo, Hando Runnel, Jaan Kaplinski, Heino Kiik and others).

However, the changes were not essential yet, all the restrictions in the intellectual life, so typical of the Soviet regime, remained. When Kersti Merilaas wrote in her poem to characterize these years: “One winter has gone / another’s on its way”, it was quite an adequate judgement of the situation. Another winter came, but this time it was not so brutal and dangerous, just all the more long-lasting and boring.

However, since the Soviet culture was meant to include also national literatures, the earlier draconian restrictions on publishing books were loosened considerably. Literature was not meant to be just a party-agitation any more, purged of anything emotional. Though the doctrine of socialist realism was not directly inverted, it was not reminded of too often or could have been interpreted much more widely.

As an organization, the Writers’ Union of the Soviet Estonia became more liberal, until it changed into the citadel of the public liberality in the Soviet Estonia, at least some people had such an opinion. At the same time the Writers’ Union persisted as a *nomenklatura* power: any writer without its membership had no chance to get published or perform as a writer. By now there have been published memoirs and diaries, revealing the games of power at the top of the

Writers' Union. The management of the union, headed by Juhan Smuul, contrasted with the orthodox communists in the Central Committee of the Communist Party. For literary people the latter were most apparently represented by Endel Sõgel who occupied in 1950–52 the post of an inspector in the Ministry of Education and after that started to work for the Institute of Language and Literature (head of the institute in 1968–1988). Obviously Sõgel was a confidante of the state security apparatus since his power in making decisions on literary matters exceeded noticeably the limits granted him by his post.

In early sixties, after rather big polemics or scandals, there were published the works of several authors whose writings could not be classified as unequivocally Soviet.

Many people returned to literature: Jaan Kross from a Siberian labour camp, Ain Kaalep from prison and internal exile, Ellen Niit (who had just given up writing for many years because of her ideological critics). For the first time it was possible to write almost truthfully (but carefully) about the 1941 deportation (Rudolf Sirge, *Maa ja rahvas (The Land and the People)*, 1956) and about the war-time life of Estonians in the Soviet rear (Lilli Promet *Meesteta küla (A Village Without Men)*, 1960).

The Estonian prose was considerably innovated by Arvo Valton and Enn Vetemaa who made their debut in early sixties. From the year 1962 onwards many youngish poets who gave colour to the whole period (Paul-Erik Rummo, Mats Traat, Jaan Kaplinski, Viivi Luik and others) published their work in a new set called *Noored autorid (The Young Authors)*. Later they were called as the “Cassette Generation” because their small poetry chapbooks were issued first together in small cardboard boxes – termed “*kassett*” in Estonian.

A breakthrough was also made in the very narrow circle of translations. The changes were quite limited, but anyway, in addition to the literature of Russian and other Soviet republics and the so-called “progressive” Russian classics it was now possible to translate also the classics or “progressive” authors from other languages.

In 1957, following the lead of big Russian literary journals and their periodically published fictional supplements, a new publication was founded – “*Loomingu Raamatukogu*” (“The Library of the Journal *Looming*”), which turned out to be the most important channel of translations. Owing to its long-standing editors Otto Samma and Lembe Hiedel it became possible to publish there many

essential authors (Franz Kafka, Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus and others), and at least half of the censorship scandals of that period were related to this publication also.

From the present point of view the liberalization among Estonian writers was quite general. Even their leaders and controllers sometimes took rather “western” attitudes. In these years an image of the Baltic states as “the Soviet West” was shaping among the intellectuals of other parts of the Soviet Union. At the same time there lasted and temporarily even blew up the confrontation between the creative unions and the party *nomenklatura*. The roll of Ivan Kabin still needs some closer investigation. His role as one of the main organisers of the purges in 1950 must not be forgotten. Research on the censorship in Estonia has indicated³ that the Central Committee of the Estonian Communist Party, the first secretary of which Kabin still was, seemed to be quite Stalinist and inflexible if compared with the analogous authorities in Latvia or Lithuania. For instance, in the end of the sixties the list of “totally forbidden authors” was much longer in Estonia than in the neighbourhood, and at least in 1958 the Writers’ Congress was still very strictly controlled by the Communist Party.

Quite peculiar power-games were played in the publishing house “Eesti Raamat” (“Estonian Book”) that was the only one a writer could publish his work at all and so earn his living by writing or translating. Though the legendary editor-in-chief of that time, Aksel Tamm, published first in the Soviet Union M. Bulgakov’s novel *The Master and Margarita* in the book form, he could not (or did not want as some people tended to think) publish the works of Artur Aliksaar at his lifetime. Aksel Tamm manoeuvred cleverly between the party demands and the creative freedom of writers’, but had to resign in 1982 as he had permitted the publication of Hando Runnel’s collection of poems *Punaste õhtute purpur* (*The Purple of the Red Evenings*). Though the book was not taken away from sale, it was forbidden even to point at it, not to mention its reviewing.

At the end of fifties the fact of the existence of such a phenomenon as the literature in exile came to light in the Soviet Estonia. In 1960 there was founded *Välismaaga Sidemete Arendamise Komitee* (The Society for Developing Ties with Foreign Countries) reorganized in 1968 into VEKSA: *Väliseestlastega Kultuurisi-*

3 Kaljo-Olev Veskimägi, *Nõukogude unelaadne elu: Tsensuur Eesti NSV-s ja tema peremehed* (*The Dreamlike Soviet Life: The Censorship in the Soviet Estonia and its Masters*), 1996, Tallinn: Avita, p. 247.

demete Arendamise Komitee (The Society for Developing Cultural Ties with the Exiled Estonians). Though formally a public organisation, it was actually a phantom-organization of the KGB and subordinated to the Department of Propaganda and Agitation of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Estonia, later to the Department of Foreign Relations of the Central Committee.

Since 1958, for about ten years, it was possible to mention the exile literature in the Estonian printed word (however, mostly “revealingly”), and it was even possible to disclose some examples of works, published on the other side of the Iron Curtain. But it was just the tactics, decided on the level of the Central Committee. About ten years later the tactics were changed and the topic disappeared again, though not totally. Meantime, in the liberal period, it was allowed to publish the poetry reprints of Gustav Suits and Marie Under. The anthology *Estonian Poetry* (published in 1967) mentioned some (even still alive!) exile writers. In 1964 it turned out to be possible to publish as a book Karl Ristikivi’s anti-utopia *Imede saar* (*The Island of Wonders*). But when Ristikivi, although invited and manipulated, refused to visit Estonia and made a speech on the ceremony of the Independence Day of the Estonian Republic, he was punished for that – the further bibliographies, published in Estonia, did not mention this book any more.

Only very few reliable authors in the Soviet Estonia were allowed to write about the Estonians in exile. So it was provided that the literature, representing the hostile ideology, was handled from the “Marxist positions”. All texts about the exiles were very tendentious.

In the years of stagnation the previous exile-politics was revised and made tougher again, i.e. the topic was just covered up. The influence of such decisions reached even from the Soviet Estonia to Finland: although the 1966 anthology of Estonian poetry, published in the Finnish language, had included the exile poets, the new one published in 1984 came out without exiles⁴.

4 Sirje Olesk, *Tõdede vankual müüril* (*On the Tottering Wall of Verities*), Tartu: Eesti Kirjandusmuuseum, 2002, p. 147.

Literary life in the hypocritical years of standstill (the stagnation 1970–1987)

The struggle for power in the Communist Party of Estonia became more violent in the seventies. Once again there was the confrontation between on the one hand the communists devoted more or less to Estonia, and on the other the Russians with the so-called “Yestonians”, or the Moscow-minded Estonians, aliens from Russia. Some progress had been made: the former leader of the second group Käbin had changed from Ivan into Johannes and supported now the nationally minded Vaino Väljas as his successor. Vaino Väljas had risen to the *nomenklatura* of the Estonian Communist Party in the seventies, being “the first Estonian party boss who had married a wife of Estonian origin and been in Estonia during the years of the German occupation – a totally unprecedented case for these times!”⁵

But this time the battle was won by the second group: in 1978 the post of the First Secretary of the Communist Party of Estonia was gained by the Russian-minded and Russian-speaking Karl Vaino. This initiated the last “late winter” in the cultural life of Estonia with the Party’s ground line being the active Russification⁶. It is not possible to give here a detailed review, but the resistance to the Russification turned out to be the main obligation for all the Estonian writers and the leaders of Writers’ Union. The occupation regime went on showing its power anyhow, the most striking features of this were the so-called censorship scandals. The greatest of them was the fight around Heino Kiik’s novel *Tondiõmaja*. The novel, describing realistically and grotesquely the life in Estonia in the years when the collective farms were set up, won the novel competition in 1967. But the publication of the book was tangled because of the interference of Glavlit and the Central Committee. A long-standing trial of strength took part between the orthodox communists (Leonid Lentsman, Endel Sõgel, Ants Saar) and the liberal communists (Paul Kuusberg, Aksel Tamm, Villem Gross). Behind the scenes Käbin stepped in personally and gave the order to permit

5 Interview with Aksel Tamm, in: *Eesti Kirjanikkude Liit 75: Koguteos (Estonian Writers’ Union 75. Collection)*, Tallinn: Eesti Kirjanike Liit, 1997, p. 85.

6 Mart Laar, “Eesti ja kommunism” (“Estonia and the Communism”), in: *Kommunismi must raamat: Kuriteod. Terror. Repressioonid (The Black Book of Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repression)*, Tallinn: Varrak, 2000, p. 864–868.

the publication of the novel. (*Tondiöömaja* was published in 1970⁷). Ten years later the same thing happened to another novel by Heino Kiik *Mind armastab jaapanlanna* (*A Japanese Woman Loves Me*), winning the consolation award of the 1979 novel competition, but published only in 1987 (2nd part 1990). Meanwhile, by the kind help of the author himself, the copy of the manuscript circulated among the friends of literature. The third banning, related to the novel competition, happened in 1979. The novel *Rauakolina etüüdid* (*Sketches of Iron Rattle*) by Arvo Valton attracted attention but was not awarded and could not be published until 1988.

In 1972 Paul-Erik Rummo, the most significant poet of the sixties, finished his collection of poems *Saatja aadress* (*Sender's Address*). He had already recited most of the manuscript at literary gatherings, but the book was not published since its author disagreed to make corrections in his text demanded by the “literary watchdogs”. So the creative activity of the talented poet was dragged down for a very long period.

The state of writers was quite schizophrenic. On the one hand there were huge print-runs and guaranteed fees but on the other the publishing processes was very slow and the restrictions made by Glavlit or the Central Committee most absurd. The most laborious task for editors-in-chief of publishing houses and journals that they felt to be responsible for was to “press the book/issue through Glavlit”. The writer had to be able to put allusions in his texts this way these could be understood by at least a part of his readers (it was appreciated as a special and highly valued skill), but take at the same time care that the work could pass the censorship board. Such a practice has its classic example in the text *Lihtne luuletus* (*A Simple Poem*), written by Juhan Viiding who published his poetry under the pseudonym of Jüri Üdi. In the beginning of the fifties there was made an excellent socialist realism style film “Valgus Koordis” (“The Light in Koordi”) containing a scene with the popular singer Georg Ots, playing a roll of a chairman of a recently founded collective farm, ploughing the land and singing: “Önn tuli meie õuele...” (“Happiness came to our yard...”). In his collection of poems *Detsember* (*December*) Üdi writes:

7 Look about it: Aksel Tamm, *op. cit.*

*Kord öeldi õnn tuli õuele
ja õu sai õnne täis
õnn tuli siis ka kambrisse
ja kamber sai õnne täis*

*Viimaks õnn tuli sahvrisse
lauta ja aita ka
rõivad veel mahtusid kohvrisse
siis pidi minema⁸*

Everyone knowing Estonian history even slightly remembered that before and during the founding of collective farms the second great deportation to Siberia took place: this simple poem just did not mention where one had to go. The censors were not able to interpret such complicated allusions and the text was published. As we know now, the novels of Mats Traat *Karukell, kurvameelsuse rohi* (*Small Pasqueflower, the Medicine for Melancholy*), published in 1982, and *Üksi rändan* (*Wandering Alone*), published in 1985, were considerably cut down by censors. The journals had more and more troubles, especially *Looming* (*Creation*) and “*Loomingu Raamatukogu*” (“The Library of the Journal *Looming*”). The editor-in-chief of the latter Jüri Ojamaa was suspended since he had been incautious and permitted publishing Peet Vallak’s short story “Timukas” (“The Hangman”), describing the savagery of the Red Army.

Literature was controlled but the control was automated to such an extent that the officials were responsible for the texts rather than the authors. The authorities communicated with writers indirectly because “their main interest was rather to have writers relatively loyal as persons and citizens, recognized as writers by the public and not criticizing the power openly”⁹.

Since it was obvious that certain texts could probably be never published officially and some writers, due to their biography, had no hope for printing

8 “Once it was said – happiness came to the yard / and the yard was filled up with happiness / then happiness came in the chamber / and the chamber was filled up with happiness // At last happiness came into the larder / and into the barn and the garner / there was just room for the clothes in the suitcase / then one had to go (then it was time to go?).”

9 Kajar Pruul, “Sotsialistliku realismi lõpp” (“The End of the Socialist Realism”), in: *Looming*, 1998, Nr. 4, p. 634.

permission, all over the Soviet Union a unique phenomenon sprang up: self-publishing and self-distribution of literature, called “samizdat” in Russian. In Estonia it concerned mainly literary almanacs. First almanacs, done by hand-writing or typing, were still tolerated by authorities (they were neither “allowed” nor “forbidden”) but by 1980 at the latest any evading of the monopoly of publishing houses was prohibited. The authors of almanacs were persecuted in different ways. However, in the seventies there grew up a new generation of authors, unwilling in principle to get published officially, and therefore since the eighties various almanacs were put together and published.

Apie literatūrinį gyvenimą sovietmečio Estijoje

Santrauka

Sovietmečio Estijos literatūra buvo labai prieštaringas reiškinys. 5–6-ajame dešimtmetyje ji stipriai nukentėjo nuo represijų. Draudimas publikuoti išėivijos rašytojus suardė literatūros tęstinumą bei sugadino geriausius kūrybinius metus rašytojų, kurie pasiliko tėvynėje. 7-ajame dešimtmetyje į literatūrą atėjo nauja karta, šiandien pripažinta gyvais klasikais (Hando Runnel, Paul-Erik Rummo, Mats Traat, Arvo Valton, Jaan Kaplinski, Viivi Luik, Juhhan Viiding ir kt.). Kadangi sovietinėje doktrinoje egzistavo idėja apie „kles-tinčią kultūrą“, valdžia turėjo toleruoti rašytojus, nors drauge stengėsi juos nuolat tiesiogiai kontroliuoti. Nors 1960-aisiais režimas palengvėjo, cenzūra ir partijos vadovavimas tebesitęsė. Dėl šių aplinkybių tuomet negalėjo plėtotis eseistika ar memuaristika, daugeliui autorių ankstyvojoje kūryboje teko parašyti dviprasmiškų tekstų, o estų literatūros raida buvo fragmentiška. Paskutiniaisiais okupacijos dešimtmečiais kūrybinės sąjungos labiau oponavo valdžios institucijoms nei su jomis bendradarbiavo.

Raktažodžiai: estų literatūra, sovietmečio literatūra, literatūrinis gyvenimas, cenzūra.

In *Der Nister's Soviet Years*, author Mikhail Krutikov focuses on the second half of the dramatic writing career of Soviet Yiddish writer Der Nister, pen name of Pinhas Kahanovich (1884-1950). Krutikov follows Der Nister's painful but ultimately successful literary transformation from his symbolist roots to social realism under severe ideological pressure from Soviet critics and authorities. This volume reveals how profoundly Der Nister was affected by the destruction of Jewish life during WWII and his own personal misfortunes. 2. Der Nister's story follows the flourishing of Yiddish literature in Eastern Europe in the early 20th century through to its demise in the Holocaust and post-war Soviet persecution. 3. Author Mikhail Krutikov is a well-respected senior scholar in the field.

Estonia - Estonia - Cultural life: Because Estonia sits along the divide of western and eastern Europe—looking west, across the Baltic, toward Sweden, and east, across Lake Peipus, to Russia—it has long been influenced by both of those cultural traditions. In the 20th century, Estonian writers represented three different epochs: Anton Hansen Tammsaare was the leading novelist of the former Republic of Estonia (1920–40); Jaan Kross wrote in an allegorical style during the period of Soviet occupation; and Tõnu Õnnepalu, whose work fits comfortably in the broader European context, became internationally recognized in the 1990s. Both Estonian classics and the works of contemporary authors have been translated into many languages. Through the natural course of literary evolution, translations may dominate over the original compositions; however, the situation in post-war Estonia cannot be called “natural”. During this period, all spheres of national culture were subject to the powerful influence of Soviet cultural politics, aimed at the full Sovietization of the new republics. 2. * The article was written under the research theme TFLGR 0469 “Reception of Russian Literature in Estonia in the 20th Century: from the Interpretation to Translation”. 1 In the following discussion, the play’s title will be abbreviated as “Misfor