

The Efforts of the KGB to Use the Emigree Organisation Santara-Šviesa to Maintain Contact with Occupied Lithuania¹

KRISTINA BURINSKAITĖ

Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania, Vilnius

kristina.burinskaite@genocid.lt

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1083-6998>

Abstract: Legitimacy at the international level was important for the Soviet occupation regime in Lithuania and they also wanted to achieve it with the help of the emigrants. Cultural relations were dilemma question for soviets and emigration. Culture had to attract emigrants to their side, to distract from resistance activities, to set emigrants against each other and thus to undermine all Lithuanian liberation activities. However, emigrants were seen as a danger due to the possible influence on the locals, but at the same time they were considered an opportunity to achieve political and propaganda goals. Also it influenced negatively relationship with other emigree organizations, but KGB could not make damage to their relationship remarkably. This publication reveals how and by what means Soviet security sought to use the plans of the liberal emigrants to establish personal and cultural relations with Soviet Lithuania for propaganda, agency, and political purposes of the Soviet regime. It is also important to evaluate whether the KGB has achieved its goals. Official cultural contacts were under full control of the soviet side. They were a cover for the KGB agency and propaganda activities. Despite huge efforts soviet security only partially managed to take advantage of closer contacts between emigrants and Lithuania. It can be said that emigrants only partially knew and evaluated the capabilities and methods of the KGB. They did not know how widely the KGB sought to use these connections to harm emigrants. It is believed that personal contacts were safer for emigrants' organizations. Perhaps the KGB was most fortunate to use these contacts while performing discreditation and promoting the achievements of the soviet regime.

Keywords: KGB, émigré, agents, culture, propaganda

The culture was an important part of the implementation of Soviet propaganda. Cultural relations had to attract emigrants to their side, distract them from resistance activities, set them against each other and thus undermine all Lithuanian liberation activities. The intentions of the liberal part of expatriates to communicate with Soviet Lithuania both on personal and cultural levels created preconditions for the Soviet regime and the

¹ This topic is analysed by the author. See: Kristina Burinskaitė, "Face to Lithuania' role of the program in the activities of the KGB against 'Santara-Šviesa,'" *Genocide and Resistance* 27, no. 1 (2010): 106–123.

KGB to use this for their purposes. However, they were aware of emigrants' potential harm and, in principle, considered the emigrants a hostile force.

Legitimacy at the international level was necessary for Lithuania's Soviet occupation regime, and they also wanted to achieve it with the help of the emigrants. The most important goal of Lithuanian emigration was to raise the issue of the occupation of Lithuania on the international level and to deny the myth of voluntary accession to the USSR. Therefore, the position of the expatriates was undesirable and undermined the plans of the Soviet government. The emigrants were the enemy of the Soviet regime throughout the Soviet occupation. This issue was also addressed by the USSR KGB. The activities carried out by the 1st (Intelligence) Division of the LSSR KGB also contributed to the implementation of the political tasks of the USSR and the goals of the USSR KGB in the West, and occupied an exceptional place among other units of the LSSR KGB.

Lithuanians, who fled to the West in the post-war period, did not recognise the Soviet occupation regime. Up to the 6th decade, there were no relations between Lithuanian expatriates and the occupied land due to the Iron Curtain, so the question of contact was irrelevant. However, during the 6th and 7th decades, as the Soviet system gradually opened, the emigrants faced a dilemma regarding relations with occupied Lithuania. There was some variance between the conservative part of the emigrants, who categorically spoke against any official ties, and the representatives of the liberal younger generation of emigrants, who called for closer relations, not limited to personal contacts, with Lithuanians in the occupied country. According to them, cultural ties had to help expatriates get to know Lithuania better and encourage Lithuanians to engage in resistance activities in Lithuania. Different approaches brought some friction to the relations between the emigrants. For the Soviet regime, the strained relationship with the West was also a dilemma. Expatriates were seen as a danger due to the potential influence on the locals, but at the same time, they were considered an opportunity to achieve political and propaganda goals. Although the Communist Party of Lithuania (hereinafter the LCP) regarded all resistance emigrants' organisations as hostile, it wanted to use these opening relations to establish cultural ties and encourage expatriates to form a closer relationship with Soviet Lithuania, thus seeking a certain legitimacy to the end of the isolation. Since the position of the emigrants caused friction between the organisations, which did not last long, the KGB sought to add further discord and division between the emigrants and thus undermine Lithuania's liberation activities. The KGB also wanted to exploit cultural and personal connections to carry out propaganda and recruitment actions.

This publication aims to reveal how and by what means Soviet security attempted to use the plans of the liberal emigrants to establish personal and cultural relations with Soviet Lithuania for propaganda, agency and political purposes of the Soviet regime. It is also important to note whether the KGB has achieved its goals.

The relevance and originality of the topic

The theme of Lithuanian emigrants, in the context of other historical themes concerning the second half of the 20th century, receives a lot of attention from historians. A lot of discussions were sparked by the position of the emigration organisation Santara–Šviesa towards Soviet Lithuania. Did it damage Lithuania's liberation activities, or was it a cunning tactic? To what extent was it vulnerable to the KGB's intentions? Thus, the chosen topic is yet another opportunity to reveal the ideological attitude of the KGB towards the organisation of emigrants considered hostile, including the goals and forms of Soviet propaganda, which could be very subtle, and how the KGB harmed, but at the same time, wanted to use a certain part of the expatriates for its purposes. This article, as opposed to others, pays more attention to the agent activity and shows how close, according to KGB documents, it was to this organisation. Also, new KGB documents reveal its policy and actions from different perspectives because this article focuses not only on the cultural aspect, but also on tourism as a way to implement various KGB propaganda tasks. New documents show that the attitude of this organisation towards Lithuania made the country more vulnerable to the KGB's intentions and recruitments.

The KGB's objectives and forms of activity against the emigration

The objectives and principles of the KGB operation. In the fight against the emigrants, the KGB did not have the same opportunities and resources as the resistance fighters in Lithuania. Therefore, the agency's activities and discrediting, often carried out by agents, were used against the expatriates during the entire period of the Soviet occupation. During the detente period, this was done more intensively and in a more organised fashion because there were more opportunities to develop propaganda activities in the West. These means were employed to divide emigrants among themselves, discredit the activists and their events, and discredit and compromise the liberation movement of Lithuania in the eyes of the international community.

The KGB's fight against resistants and emigrants can also be seen in the context of soviet propaganda and indoctrination. The KGB's contribution to soviet propaganda actions was the application of methods, which in historiography are called "active measures", both by disseminating ideas suitable for the soviet system and discrediting people and organisations hindering the implementation of these plans.

The KGB's actions against emigration organisations were influenced not only by political and ideological goals but also by the situation in the emigration: the nature of the

activities of organisations, historical circumstances (people, who operated in Lithuania during the German occupation and later emigrated to the West, were an excellent target for the KGB's discrediting actions), the relations with Soviet Lithuania. The KGB focused on the VLIK (Supreme Committee for the Liberation of Lithuania), which claimed to lead Lithuania's liberation activities. However, its reticence limited the KGB's ability to carry out recruitment actions or infiltrate it; thus, various acts of discrediting were carried out against it. Another target was Santara–Šviesa. The KGB believed that Santara–Šviesa transferred the “ideological diversion” to Lithuania, supposedly taking care of the Lithuanian nation, but it was hostile towards Soviet Lithuania.² This organisation is a gathering of liberal thinking young generation emigree established in 1957 in the USA. It is unique because it did not have a formal structure or leadership and was not attached to one political ideology. This informality was an obstacle of sorts for the KGB because they did not know its true numbers or leaders, making it harder to plan actions against it. Members of other organisations could be part of Santara–Šviesa. Their position and various attitudes were represented in their magazines *Akiračiai* and *Metmenys*. Even interviews with soviet Lithuanians could be published there. It differed from other more conservative organisations due to its declared idea to maintain relations with Lithuania and the potentially “negative” impact on Lithuanians residing in Lithuania through cultural contacts. This position led to conflict with more conservative organisations that KGB wanted to use to harm the Lithuanian freedom movement.

Why did the KGB target Santara–Šviesa?

The emigrants' activities were seen as an expression of ideological confrontation between the East and the West. Lithuanian expatriates were treated as agents of Western countries and implementers of their policies. In the KGB textbook for chekists, the threat of Santara–Šviesa is explained as follows: “The masked anti-communist activity of Santara–Šviesa is dangerous because it is based on a Marxist–Leninist revision, covered with pseudo-socialist slogans”. However, all the anti-sovietism of the federation leaders is revealed in their statements that “they do not raise a direct task to fight against the Soviet government, because it is doomed to inevitable failure”.³ In the opinion of the LCP, the United States, like the entire Western world, tried to transfer ideological diversion inside

² Plan of KGB measures against emigree organisation Santara–Šviesa in 1972–1974, 1972–08–14, K–41, ap. 1, b. 689, l. 264–265, Structural unit LSSR (NKVD, KGB), Lithuanian Special Archives (LYA), Vilnius.

³ Henrikas Vaigauskas, “Lietuvių nacionalistų kenkėjiška veikla ir kova su ja,” *LTSR KGB Specbiblioteka* 1245, 1986: 11.

the USSR (to have negative ideological and political influence through the support and promotion of resistance forces and thus raise the USSR). At the same time, the desire of Santara–Šviesa to establish relations with Lithuania was viewed as an intention to have ideologically harmful influence⁴ and be hostile towards Soviet Lithuania.⁵ Such an ambivalent position of this organisation complicated the operation of Soviet propaganda against Santara–Šviesa.

Despite such a negative attitude to this emigration organisation, the KGB saw the organisation's position regarding relations with Lithuania as an opportunity to implement its tasks. The Soviet regime sought to exploit tourism and culture for propaganda purposes. Thus, culture was leveraged to maintain relationships with the emigrants, as the propaganda and political motivations are not so blatant there and therefore less likely to provoke resistance and hostility. According to the government and the KGB, involving some expatriates in cultural relations was easier because politics was less important to them than art⁶ and thus encouraged them to form closer ties with Soviet Lithuania.

The tourist, cultural trips of expatriates, excursions to Lithuania or Lithuanian trips abroad were the medium for both dissemination of information about the progress of Soviet Lithuania in various fields and thus encouragement for closer cooperation and distancing from resistance activities. They had to refute the myth spread by emigrants that Lithuanians should not travel to the West and freely communicate with foreigners.⁷ The KGB also solved its problems, i.e. recruiting expatriates, which was easier when they arrived in Lithuania, as shown in the KGB documents.

Culture became a bridge between Lithuanians residing in Lithuania and the emigration. The trips of Lithuanian artists to the USA were a great medium to show the achievements of Lithuanian culture, establish relations between artists and provide an excellent opportunity for propaganda messages. Artists did not travel alone; they were accompanied by officials, agents and undercover staff. They were used for propaganda purposes. For example, in 1985, Lithuanian writers and other artists travelled to the USA at the invitation of Santara–Šviesa. They participated in the congress and literary events. The KGB evaluated their participation as a success because there were no anti-Soviet statements due to their involvement in said congress. And during the literary events, Lithuanians talked about Lithuania's achievements. However, this trip received mixed

⁴ Report about Lithuanian SSR KGB activity in 1969, K-51, ap. 1, b. 372, l. 34, LSSR NKVD (NKGB, MGB, KGB) Secretariat Fund, LYA.

⁵ Plan of KGB measures against emigree organisation Santara–Šviesa, Structural unit LSSR (NKVD, KGB).

⁶ Arūnas Streikus, "Sovietų valdžios darbas su išsivija": manipuliacijos kultūriniais ryšiais," *Naujasis Židinys – Aidai*, no. 4–5 (2006): 166.

⁷ KGB article Santara–Šviesa and others, 1986–10–01, f. K-35, ap. 2, b. 323, l. 67, LSSR KGB 1st (Intelligence) Division Fund, LYA.

reception and criticism. Some articles accused Santara–Šviesa of collaborating, betraying the ideas of the struggle for independence and dividing the emigrants.⁸ During the trip, the artists were accompanied by a reliable emigrant source of the KGB “Mark”.⁹ Agent “Algirdas” also recorded that the concerts of opera soloists Virgilijus Noreika and Nijolė Ambrazaitytė in the USA in 1986 provoked a violent reaction among the expatriates.¹⁰ Seeing such a reaction, the KGB continued to create division among the emigrants to discredit “reactionary” ones. This way, the communist government and the KGB exploited famous artists and public figures, who supposedly did not know what propaganda games they were involved in and sought to divide the emigration organisations and distract the younger generation of the expatriates from political resistance activities.

Tourist trips: from recruitment opportunities to propaganda campaigns. The KGB controlled all contacts with foreign countries. Therefore, the chance to leave or come to Lithuania was a great incentive to force a person to cooperate with the KGB or establish contacts between agents and emigrants. In many cases, expatriates were recruited upon their arrival in Lithuania.

For example, one of the plans of the agency’s operational measures against Santara–Šviesa recorded that a relative of the KGB agent is an active figure of Santara–Šviesa and is close to its leaders. The KGB wanted to invite him to Lithuania through this agent and introduce him to a supposedly existing group that allegedly supported the Santara–Šviesa cause. After the success of this plan, the KGB sought to get closer to the organisation’s leaders.¹¹ Agent “Kalvis” had to take advantage of the trip of Santara–Šviesa member Vytautas Vepštas to Lithuania in 1978. The KGB prepared an action plan and a legend to help approach the necessary person. He had to present himself as a representative of a supposedly existing group of dissidents and ask him to hand over the documents of this organisation to Santara–Šviesa. Model conversations, how to behave and what to answer his questions were prepared. For example, if asked for the names of other members of this group, he would refuse to do so and justify doing so for conspiratorial reasons. If he did not want to communicate with him, Santara–Šviesa should offer another person for further communication.¹² This is how agent „Kalvis” was instructed to act. The KGB considered the operation successful because contacts were made. However, he refused

⁸ KGB report on visits of Lithuanian cultural figures to the USA, 1985–12–18, f. K–35, ap. 2, b. 306, l. 30, LSSR KGB 1st (Intelligence) Division Fund, LYA.

⁹ *Ibid.*, l. 29.

¹⁰ Report of KGB agent „Algirdas”, f. K–35, ap. 2, b. 306, l. 104, LSSR KGB 1st (Intelligence) Division Fund, LYA.

¹¹ Plan of KGB measures against emigree organisation Santara–Šviesa, l. 270–271, Structural unit LSSR (NKVD, KGB).

¹² KGB task for agent “Kalvis”, 1978–03–31, f. K–35, ap. 2, b. 203, l. 44–45, LSSR KGB 1st (Intelligence) Division Fund, LYA.

to take the documents because he was afraid,¹³ so the question is whether it was really a successful action.

It is difficult to evaluate KGB recruitment actions because the agency's employees tended to overestimate their success or even fake them to boast before their leaders. Therefore, it is necessary to be careful while evaluating successful cases of expatriate recruitment since terms such as the agent or the source, which are found in documents, do not necessarily mean that the person was recruited. In most cases, it is believed that informal contacts were maintained without a written pledge, which facilitated the establishment of a relationship. However, there were also cases when a person might not have known that they were being recruited or that the KGB treated them as an agent, but the person was not one. This happened to Violeta Kelertas, a researcher at the University of Illinois. The KGB operative, who worked under the pseudonym "Tėviškė", named her as a person with whom trust-based contacts were established. They agreed that she would send information about Santara–Šviesa events to the given address. However, she cut off contact when she discovered its actual purpose.¹⁴ Thus, although a connection was established, she was not trusted because she was tracked and discriminating information was collected. This is a common practice when communicating with agents.

Not only was the recruitment of emigrant agents important, but also the activities of Lithuanian agents among the expatriates in the West. They were tasked with establishing contacts with people associated with emigration organisations or those from their environment. The main purpose of the KGB was to collect information about the organisation, members and events so that they could be neutralised and discredited. Such information could be obtained by recruiting a person and talking to them without mentioning working for the KGB.

For example, some undercover collaborators were lucky enough to attend the annual Santara–Šviesa congress in Tabor Farm (USA). The agent, who participated in the 1981 event, provided information about people who attended the congress, where prominent participants delivered speeches.¹⁵ Agent "Dekan" was not present at the congress but received information from participants and the press whose speakers were in favour of closer ties with the intelligentsia in Lithuania.¹⁶ The expatriates declared that they suspected persons connected to the KGB but hardly knew all of them. Participation in the congresses of Santara–Šviesa was an excellent opportunity to make acquaintances and

¹³ Letter of LSSR KGB to USSR KGB about agent "Kalvis" actions against emigree Vytautas Vepštas, 1978–04–24, f. K–35, ap. 2, b. 203, l. 53, LSSR KGB 1st (Intelligence) Division Fund, LYA.

¹⁴ Arvydas Anušauskas, *KGB. Visiškai slaptai* (Vilnius: Versus aureus, 2015), 149–150.

¹⁵ KGB agent report, 1981–11–19, f. K–35, b. 302, l. 171–182, LSSR KGB 1st (Intelligence) Division Fund, LYA.

¹⁶ KGB report on information received from agent "Dekan" during his visit to Lithuania, f. K–35, b. 309, l. 117–119, LSSR KGB 1st (Intelligence) Division Fund, LYA.

collect information about their plans and disagreements between emigration organisations to escalate them further.

The tourist trips of expatriates to Lithuania were used as another means of propaganda. They had to refute the negative information about the Soviet system disseminated by the expatriates and increase the number of its supporters. The Soviet government and the KGB wanted famous emigrants with significant influence on the expatriates' community to visit Lithuania. They were especially open to trips by the press. However, it prevented or even forbade fierce critics of the Soviet regime from coming to Lithuania. For example, Zenonas Rekašius and Romas Sakadolskis, expatriates associated with Santara–Šviesa, were not welcome in Lithuania for some time because of their anti-Soviet statements. The expatriates, knowing such cases, would think about what they say about Soviet Lithuania, which is what the Soviets wanted so that there would be as few anti-Soviet statements as possible. However, emigrants and artists, who were not actively involved in resistance activities, were deemed “harmless”, so they had more opportunities to visit Lithuania. However, the KGB was also aware of the threat posed by their trips. The arrival of expatriates was a great opportunity to exchange illegal literature, information and self-indulgence. Therefore, although emigrants were welcome in Lithuania, they were monitored throughout their stay.

The KGB documents clearly show how important it was for them to “lure” famous expatriates to come to Lithuania. The KGB wanted to take advantage of the relatives, friends and acquaintances who lived in Lithuania and encourage the expatriates to go to Lithuania through them. The trips of tourists from the West and especially famous emigrants were specially prepared: various agency, operational and propaganda plans were developed. Soviet security sought to reveal their views and attitudes towards Soviet Lithuania, which determined whether they would be able to come. They had to be tracked throughout the trip (the KGB was particularly interested in potential meetings with “anti-Soviet elements” or the dissemination of literature, what they were talking about and with whom they were communicating). But this did not always work out, especially if trips were personal. The KGB associated certain goals with more famous expatriates, which depended on the person's tendency to communicate their attitude towards the Soviet system with Lithuanians. Recruitment, discrediting or exploiting in propaganda campaigns were the most important tasks of the KGB in relation to every famous expatriate who came to Lithuania.

Father and son, Karolis and Mykolas Drunga came to the attention of the KGB due to their authority among emigrants and their activities. M. Drunga was noticed because of his activities in Santara–Šviesa, his work with *Metmenys* and *Akiračiai* and favourable statements about relations with Soviet Lithuania. In 1987, he and other expatriates planned to come to Lithuania. While preparing for his trip, information about him was

collected. The source, “Mark”, provided information about M. Drunga activities in emigration and contacts with Lithuanians. KGB units in various cities watched him closely when he visited different Lithuanian cities.¹⁷ During his trip, a journalist, who was an agent of influence, was assigned the task of showing the achievements of the Soviet system with specific examples. It was not only during this trip that information about him was collected. Secret collaborators continued to gather information about his family, contacts, attitude to soviet reality and achievements.¹⁸ Agent “Kalytis”, who had been in contact with M. Drunga during his trips to the USA, provided information about them and their opinion about Lithuania in his agency report.¹⁹ The Soviet government was very keen to get favourable feedback and articles about Soviet Lithuania from famous emigrants. Since M. Drunga worked in publishing, they wanted to get an interview with him. The KGB had such plans towards M. Drunga: “If it is not possible to use him in operational actions, at least he will be used in propaganda campaigns, by subduing him to speak to the Soviet press. If this fails, his presence in Lithuania is undesirable.”²⁰

Valdas Adamkus, one of Santara–Šviesa leaders, remembers his trip to Lithuania in 1972 as follows: he was welcomed at the airport by them and then taken to the hotel by their car, not by relatives. He was arrested on the way from Trakai because he was not allowed to go there.²¹

It can be said that the tourist trips of expatriates to Lithuania were vital for implementing the KGB operational plans. They were used to collect information about emigration organisations. When it was possible, emigrants were recruited as agents and provided an opportunity to visit Lithuania more often. However, not every expatriate was recruited. The propaganda effect of these trips was no less important. They had to show the achievements of the Soviet system and encourage further cooperation of expatriates with Lithuania, thus depoliticising, i.e. withdrawing political resistance activities.

The KGB wanted both to take advantage and harm the emigrant press. Both local and emigrant press played a special role in the propaganda plans of the Communist Party and the KGB. Like other mass media, it was a potent tool for shaping public opinion of one kind or another. Expatriates used the press to actualise the issue of the occupation of the Baltic States and to form a favourable view of the international community and receive

¹⁷ KGB plan against tourists from the USA, 1987–05–15, K–35, ap. 2, b. 323, l. 124, LSSR KGB 1st (Intelligence) Division Fund, LYA.

¹⁸ Report of KGB agent “Kazys”, 1987–06–09, f. K–35, ap. 2, b. 72, l. 33–35, LSSR KGB 1st (Intelligence) Division Fund, LYA.

¹⁹ Report of KGB agent “Kalytis”, 1987–10–03, f. K–35, ap. 2, b. 72, l. 39–40, LSSR KGB 1st (Intelligence) Division Fund, LYA.

²⁰ Plan of KGB means against Mykolas Drunga during his trip to Lithuania, 1987–05–21, f. K–35, ap. 2, b. 72, l. 30, LSSR KGB 1st (Intelligence) Division Fund, LYA.

²¹ Valdas Adamkus, *Likimo vardas – Lietuva* (Kaunas: Santara, 1998), 120–129.

its support in the fight for Lithuania's freedom. However, the KGB utilised the press to harm emigrants by discrediting the main emigration organisations, their activists and, finally, all Lithuanian liberation activities. They also looked for opportunities to publish articles in emigration publications favourable to the USSR. To do so, it was necessary to have access to these publications. The KGB closely monitored publishers and collaborators of emigration magazines and gathered information about them. For example, how much and what information was reprinted from illegal Lithuanian press brought from Lithuania. When collecting such information, the KGB was looking for chances to access, infiltrate, influence and control them. They often used advanced, i.e. pro-Soviet, emigration newspapers published in the United States. The fact that the publications attributed to Santara-Šviesa, such as *Akiračiai*, attracted increased attention from the KGB indicates that people related to these publications, such as Zenonas Rekašius, Liūtas Mockūnas, Tomas Remeikis, were monitored in operational cases or otherwise. This press publication declared that it wanted to receive official information from Lithuania but also sought to provide alternating information so that the reader could compare it and draw conclusions. The newspaper *Akiračiai* certainly showed a lot of information about Soviet Lithuania, which, in Mockūnas' opinion, tried to present an objective picture of Lithuania.²² Of course, such articles were not considered propaganda, but it was not excluded that such pieces may have misled the expatriates of the younger generation. Thus, the KGB wanted to use the emigrants' desire to know as much as possible about Lithuania from first-hand sources. But they, i.e. the Soviet side, understood the notion of objective information somewhat differently: "to them (*Akiračiai* – author's note) objective, i.e. *useful to us information* (highlighted by the author) must be placed, which was supposed to prevent the ideological diversion of the members of Santara in the country".²³ Information from Lithuania published in the emigration press was evaluated ambiguously by expatriates. For example, *Laisvoji Lietuva* criticised *Akiračiai* for an interview with P. Anilionis, Commissioner of the Council for Religious Affairs of the LSSR.²⁴ This institution, together with the Communist Party and the KGB, was involved in persecuting the Catholic Church and spreading anti-religious propaganda in Lithuania. Although it cannot be said that *Akiračiai* contained only favourable articles about the Soviet system, there was also a lot of criticism in them. Information is a very powerful weapon, and it is crucial for what purposes it is used. Emigrants' desire to know as many primary sources as possible from Lithuania, which were carefully filtered by Soviet censorship, could have been manipulated to be used for Soviet propaganda.

²² Liūtas Mockūnas, "Lietuvių išėivijos ir krašto santykių dinamika," *Baltų forumas* 2, no. 1 (1985): 56.

²³ KGB article Santara-Šviesa and others, l. 62, LSSR KGB 1st (Intelligence) Division Fund, LYA.

²⁴ Marijus Blynas, "Pasitarnavo sovietų politikai (Apie religiją ir bažnyčią Lietuvoje)," *Laisvoji Lietuva*, August 21, 1980, 3.

The evaluation of the KGB activities and their consequences for emigrants

The documents of the KGB perfectly reveal that the Soviet regime endeavoured to use the intensified contacts not only to improve its image but also to undermine emigrants and liberation activities in Lithuania. The KGB paid more attention to Santara–Šviesa and their programme “Facing Lithuania” (“Veidu į Lietuvą”) because they saw an excellent opportunity to carry out activities against expatriates freely. The KGB turned to the young generation of expatriates because they were not afraid of Soviet security as the older generation, who fled Soviet repressions in the post-war period.²⁵ It is not easy to assess the effectiveness of propaganda, discrediting and agency actions of the Soviet government and the KGB while using “Facing Lithuania”, but the KGB documents, the emigrant press and memoirs allow us to draw certain conclusions.

Official cultural contacts were under complete control of the Soviet side. They were a cover for the KGB and propaganda activities. Of course, these contacts opened new areas of activity for emigrants. Under the disguise of these official relations, expatriates tried to import literature and press illegally, but they did not always succeed. Considerations of former emigree R. Sakadolskis show that they realised the dangers of such activities, possible sanctions and security risks but still attempted to cross those boundaries. The expatriates solved the dilemma. They knew that they must pay some tribute to the authorities and that security agents would supervise them. Romas Sakadolskis admits that there was a threat and danger in these contacts, but these inconveniences were compensated by communication with compatriots.²⁶

It can be said that Soviet security only partially managed to take advantage of closer ties between expatriates and Lithuania. The reviews in the emigration press about the trips of Lithuanian artists to the USA at the invitation of Santara brought suspicion and friction between individual organisations of expatriates representing different generations. Valdas Adamkus remembers that Santara–Šviesa “was called the maid of the Bolsheviks” and was accused of being “seriously ill, infected with the bacillus of communism”.²⁷ Conservative magazine *Dirva* evaluated Santara’s activities harshly: “The federation’s collaboration with agents of occupants neither honours them nor shows their wisdom”.²⁸ The KGB continued only to promote such a negative opinion about this organisation. However, this confrontation was not so great and decisive as finally dividing the emigrants, as the KGB admitted.²⁹

²⁵ Kazys Almenas, “Šiek tiek apie agentus ir jų verbuotojus”, *Akivačiai*, 6/7, 2008, 6, 16.

²⁶ Kristina Burinskaitė, interview by Romas Sakadolskis, December 2, 2009.

²⁷ Adamkus, *Likimo vardas – Lietuva*, 73–74.

²⁸ “Santariečiai ir svečiai iš okupuotos Lietuvos”, *Dirva*, September 26, 1985.

²⁹ Plan of KGB measures against emigree organisation Santara–Šviesa, 1970–03–05, f. K–41, ap. 1, b. 674, l. 66, Structural unit FLSSR (NKVD, KGB), LYA.

Feedback from expatriates about trips to Lithuania shows that the propaganda effect of travel was not very significant.³⁰ Romas Sakadolskis also doubts the effectiveness of Soviet propaganda. People came to Lithuania with a preconceived position about the Soviet system, and participating in various events was a kind of obligation. After all, if you openly refused to participate, you might not be allowed to enter Lithuania next time.³¹ Although it cannot be excluded that there were absolutely no individuals on whom Soviet propaganda would not make any impression. Favourable statements by expatriates in the Soviet and emigrant press about visits to Lithuania can be interpreted differently. Their articles in the Soviet press could only be a gesture of courtesy to have a chance for future trips to Lithuania. However, idyllic-looking publications from Lithuania in the emigration press may have misled emigrants. Of course, not all “honour” is due to Soviet security. Some articles by expatriates indicate that their authors behaved somewhat irresponsibly, frivolously and short-sightedly. The KGB was not omnipotent, but such careless activities created another opportunity, though a small one, to undermine Lithuania’s liberation activities.

It is difficult to say to what extent the security managed to use these connections to recruit and infiltrate agents. Opening contacts was a very favourable medium for the operations of agents and recruitment in emigration. The opportunity to travel abroad was often a considerable motivation for recruitment, which could be tempting to Lithuanians residing in Lithuania and expatriates. The KGB documents reveal that tourism was the most important medium for recruitment. However, organising and carrying out agency activities was much more difficult among emigrants, who were against official contacts. Santara-Šviesa made itself a little more vulnerable than other organisations and advocated only personal connections.

In conclusion, it can be said that emigrants only partially knew and evaluated the capabilities and methods of the KGB. They did not know how widely the KGB sought to use these connections to harm emigrants. It is believed that personal contacts were safer for emigration organisations. Perhaps the KGB was most fortunate to use these contacts while discrediting certain individuals and organisations and promoting the achievements of the Soviet regime.

Conclusions

Legitimacy at the international level was important for the Soviet occupation regime, which wanted to achieve it with the help of cultural relations with expatriates. Various

³⁰ Vytautas Gedrimas, “Gimtasis kraštas ir bumeranginė propaganda,” *Akiračiai*, 1, 1986, 3.

³¹ Burinskaitė, interview by Romas Sakadolskis.

institutions and tools were employed to achieve these objectives. Soviet security, by implementing operational and agency measures, performed the political and ideological tasks of the party. All emigration organisations, except the pro–communist ones, were considered hostile. However, the liberal emigrants intended to communicate with Soviet Lithuania not only on a personal but also cultural level. These ties, despite all threats, were seen by the Soviet regime as a great opportunity to use for propaganda purposes, whereas travels to Lithuania were an excellent recruitment opportunity. Moreover, an equally important goal was to undermine the emigrant activities of liberation by destroying their unity and distracting young people from political resistance. It is difficult to assess the damage caused by the KGB's efforts to exploit these connections and the position of expatriates. The KGB was prone to overestimate its success stories. Although expatriates seemed to understand the threat and for noble goals, they admitted that they had paid some tribute to the regime. The KGB documents show that such a position of expatriates made them more vulnerable and caused even more disagreements among emigrants in addition to those they already had.

References

- Adamkus, Valdas. *Likimo vardas – Lietuva*. Kaunas: Santara, 1998.
- Almenas Kazys. “Šiek tiek apie agentus ir jų verbuotojus.” *Akiračiai*, 6/7, 2008, 6, 16.
- Anušauskas Arvydas. *KGB. Visiškai slaptai*. Vilnius: Versus aureus, 2015.
- Burinskaitė Kristina. “Face to Lithuania’ role of the program in the activities of the KGB against ‘Santara–Šviesa.’” *Genocide and Resistance* 27, no. 1 (2010), 106–123.
- Blynas Marijus. “Pasitarnavo sovietų politikai (Apie religiją ir bažnyčią Lietuvoje).” *Laisvoji Lietuva*, August 21, 1980, 3.
- Gedrimas Vytautas. “Gimtas kraštas ir bumeranginė propaganda.” *Akiračiai*, 1, 1986, 3.
- LSSR KGB 1st (Intelligence) Division Fund, Lithuanian Special Archives (LYA), Vilnius.
- LSSR NKVD (NKGB, MGB, KGB) Secretariat Fund. LSSR NKVD, Lithuanian Special Archives (LYA), Vilnius.
- Mockūnas, Liūtas. “Lietuvių išeivijos ir krašto santykių dinamika.” *Baltų forumas*, 2, no. 1 (1985): 56.
- “Santariečiai ir svečiai iš okupuotos Lietuvos.” *Dirva*, September 26, 1985.
- Streikus Arūnas. “Sovietų valdžios darbas su išeivija’: manipuliavimas kultūriniais ryšiais.” *Naujasis Židinys – Aidai*, no. 4–5 (2006): 166–169.
- Structural unit LSSR (NKVD, KGB), which fought against the Lithuanian national underground and carried out counter–intelligence work, Lithuanian Special Archives (LYA), Vilnius.
- Vaigauskas Henrikas. “Lietuvių nacionalistų kenkėjiška veikla ir kova su ja.” *LTSR KGB Specbiblioteka* 1245, 1986.

