

# UPPSALA LATVIAN LIBRARY AND ITS DONATION TO LATVIA IN 1989

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**Summary.** *In the USSR-reoccupied Latvia (1944–1990), almost all the Latvian literature, published abroad after World War II, was forbidden to the general public. There were only two incomplete and restricted collections of emigration literature, available to prominent scientists and highest Soviet officials. As the Soviet censorship weakened in the late 1980s, libraries could begin start a systematic acquisition of exile books and some periodicals. The donation of the whole library of the Uppsala Latvian society to the State Library of Latvia (now the National Library of Latvia) in 1989, before the renewal of Latvia’s independence, started the flow of emigration books, documents, and artefacts to the memory institutions of Latvia, where the most important cultural heritage from the Latvian exile has found its home. Using the documents of the Uppsala Latvian Society kept at the National Archives of Latvia, the National Library of Latvia, and the Academic Library of the University of Latvia, the history of the library and the importance of its donation in the accumulation of exile cultural heritage in Latvia has been characterized.*

- \* The research has been conducted within the project “The Significance of Documentary Heritage in Creating Synergies between Research and Society” (Project No VPP-IZM-2018/1-0022) of the national research programme “Latvia’s Heritage and Future Challenges for the Sustainability of the State.”

*The study shows that despite the library manager's efforts to provide readers with the best emigrant Latvian literature, the library collection in exile was not properly valued – its readership gradually decreased as Latvians became more and more integrated into Swedish society. After the transfer to Latvia, the library became the basis of the unified collection of Latvian literature, in which exile publications are constantly utilised as an important part of the national cultural heritage.*

**Keywords:** *Soviet censorship, Latvian exile libraries, Uppsala Latvian society, collection of Latvian national literature, National Library of Latvia*

### **Upsalos latvių biblioteka ir jos dovana Latvijai 1989 m.**

**Santrauka.** *Sovietinei valdžiai iš naujo okupavus Latviją (1944–1990), plačiajai visuomenei buvo uždrausta beveik visa po Antrojo pasaulinio karo užsienyje išleista latvių literatūra. Išliko vos pora emigracinės literatūros komplektų, prie kurių priėjimą turėjo ryškiausi to meto mokslininkai ir Sovietų valdžios pareigūnai. XX a. devintojo dešimtmečio pabaigoje susilpnėjus sovietinei cenzūrai, bibliotekos galėjo sistemiškai įsigyti išėivijos knygų ir periodinių leidinių. 1989 m., prieš atkuriant Latvijos valstybingumą, Upsalos latvių bendruomenė padovanojo Latvijos valstybinei bibliotekai (dabar Latvijos nacionalinė biblioteka) savo sukauptą biblioteką ir nuo to prasidėjo knygų, dokumentų ir kitų objektų sklaida į Latvijos atminties institucijas, kuriose didžioji dalis kultūrinio išėivijos palikimo rado namus. Upsalos latvių bendruomenės dovanoti dokumentai, saugomi Latvijos nacionaliniame archyve, Latvijos nacionalinėje bibliotekoje ir Latvijos universiteto akademinėje bibliotekoje, atspindi bibliotekos istorijos ir jos dovanojimo fenomeno reikšmingumą Latvijos išėivijos kultūrinio paveldo kaupimui.*

**Reikšminiai žodžiai:** *sovietinė cenzūra, Latvijos išėivijos bibliotekos, Upsalos latvių bendruomenė, latvių nacionalinės literatūros kolekcija, Latvijos nacionalinė biblioteka.*

## INTRODUCTION

During its re-occupation by the Soviet Union (1944–1990), Latvia was drawn into the Cold War, a confrontation between the USSR and the United States and its allies, which resulted in the division of the nation, not only territorially but also in terms of access to information. Latvians living in the so-called capitalist countries were able to enjoy freedom of expression, but they

had limited access to objective information on the situation in Latvia, as the Soviet security services<sup>1</sup> strictly controlled the media sent abroad. Throughout the occupation, all posted items from both individuals and organisations to/from abroad were secretly examined (perlustrated) at a postal censorship point to remove literature “harmful” to the Soviet regime, unless recipients had certain privileges allowing them to receive it.<sup>2</sup> Most of the exile books and press sent to Latvia were destroyed as “anti-Soviet” information, an insignificant number of copies being kept for counter-propaganda and research purposes.<sup>3</sup> Latvian residents’ knowledge about the lives, cultural and scientific achievements of their compatriots in exile was poor, as exile publications only circulated illegally – passed from hand to hand among small groups of trusted persons. Dissemination of “anti-Soviet” information was punishable severely, by up to ten years’ imprisonment.<sup>4</sup> Officially, it was only in 1988 that the path for politically neutral émigré literature (mainly books) to reach readers in Latvia was opened, while the restricted-access regime was maintained for almost all exile press until the end of 1989. The Uppsala Latvian Library – a large collection of about 900 printed items compiled in Sweden over 30 years, which was received by the Latvian State Library (from March 1991 – the National Library of Latvia) in 1989, half a year before the restoration of independence, became one of the cornerstones of the bridge re-uniting the Latvian nation.

- 1 Initially under the control of the USSR People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs, from 1946 the Ministry of the Interior, from 1954 the State Security Committee of the USSR Ministerial Council, as well as analogous security structures of the Latvian SSR.
- 2 SMYKALIN, Aleksandr. Pochtovaya voyennaya tsenzura i perlyustratsiya korrespondentsii v poslevoennyie gody (1946–1960-ye gody) [Military postal censorship and perlustration of correspondence in the postwar years (1946–1960s)]. In SMYKALIN, Aleksandr. *Perlyustratsiya korrespondentsii i pochtovaya voyennaya tsenzura v Rossii i SSSR*. Sankt-Peterburg : Izd-vo R. Aslanova “Yuridicheskiy tsentr Press”, 2008, pp. 184–220.
- 3 STRODS, Heinrihs. Trimdas izdevumu cenzūra Latvijas PSR 1958.-1989. gadā [Censorship of exile publications in the Latvian SSR, 1958–1989]. In LATVIJAS VĒSTURNIEKU KOMISIJA, LATVIJAS UNIVERSITĀTES LATVIJAS VĒSTURES INSTITŪTS. LATVIJAS KARA MUZEJS. *Latvija un Austrumeiropa 20. gadsimta 60.–80. gados* : starptautiskās konferences referāti 2006. gada 10. oktobris, Rīga = Latvia and Eastern Europe in the 1960s–1980s : Materials of international conference 10 October 2006, Riga. Rīga: Latvijas vēstures institūta apgāds, 2007, pp. 88–95.
- 4 Izvilkumi no Latvijas Padomju Sociālistiskās Republikas Kriminālkodeksa: I. Sevišķi bīstami valsts noziegumi [Extracts from the Criminal Code of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Latvia: I. Extremely Dangerous State Crimes]. In *No NKVD līdz KGB : politiskās prāvas Latvijā, 1940–1986 : noziegumos pret padomju valsti apsūdzēto Latvijas iedzīvotāju rādītājs* [From the NKVD to the KGB: Political Litigation in Latvia, 1940–1986: Index of Latvian residents accused of crimes against the Soviet state]. Rīga: Latvijas vēstures institūta apgāds, 1999, p. 966.

Little research has been undertaken on the history of libraries in Latvian exile communities; it is complicated by the dispersion of historical sources (often one part of a library's documents is held in the archives of their founders in their home countries, while other parts are held by Latvian memory institutions) and the lack of such sources (often libraries' activities were not adequately documented). A broader overview, based mainly on press publications, is limited to the largest exile libraries in Germany, the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, and Australia, which played an important role in preserving the Latvian cultural heritage.<sup>5</sup> The authors of the survey conceptually linked the creation of exile libraries with the desire of refugees to preserve ties with their homeland: "An unbreakable link to the homeland, that Latvians could remotely maintain, was their native language. The link to language is provided by reading. But how was it possible to ensure reading in a native tongue? One of the surest ways was the establishment of libraries."<sup>6</sup> However, the authors of the article have not further analysed the contribution of libraries to the dissemination and strengthening of native language knowledge in exile Latvian society. The survey provides only basic information about libraries: their establishment, collection development and content, catalogues and databases, access and situation after the restoration of independence of Latvia.

Hypothetically, the small exile libraries also played an important role in the cultural life of expatriates. The object of the present study is the small Uppsala Latvian Library, whose operations, unlike many other diaspora libraries, have been relatively well documented. Information about the library can be found not only in the press, but also in the Uppsala Latvian Society files in the National Archives of Latvia,<sup>7</sup> the National Library of Latvia,<sup>8</sup> and the Academic Library of the University of Latvia.<sup>9</sup> The aim of this study is to determine the significance of the Uppsala Latvian Library donation in the acquisition of exile documentary

5 ŠTRĀLE, Aina, AUZIŅA-SMITA, Inese. Latviešu grāmatu krātuves Rietumu pasaulē = *Latvian libraries in the West*. In PASAULES BRĪVO LATVIEŠU KULTŪRAS FONDS, LATVIJAS VALSTS ARHĪVS. *Konferencs "Trimda, kultūra, nacionālā identitāte" referātu krājums* [Proceedings of the conference "Exile, Culture, National Identity"]. Rīga: Nordik, 2004, pp. 231–245.

6 Ibid, p. 231.

7 National Archives of Latvia (LNA), State Archive of Latvia (LVA), Collection (Coll.) 2559. The collection has not been completely processed.

8 *Catalogue of the Uppsala [Latvian] Library*. National Library of Latvia (NLL), Rare Book and Manuscript Collection, RXA 164, 455. The NLL also has books with Uppsala Latvian Society Library stamps.

9 *Uppsala Latvian Library Book Register*. University of Latvia Academic Library, J. Misiņš Library, Latvian National Foundation, № 2.

heritage in Latvia. The study elucidates both the development and composition of the library collection, its availability and utilisation – first in the small Latvian community of Uppsala, then at the National Library of Latvia.

## ESTABLISHMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE UPPSALA LIBRARY

Towards the end of World War II, from the summer of 1944, approximately 180 000 of Latvia's inhabitants went into exile, escaping imminent Soviet occupation.<sup>10</sup> Some 4 000 Latvians arrived in Sweden in refugee boats.<sup>11</sup> After a short time in the refugee camps, most of them settled in Sweden's major cities: Stockholm, Gothenburg, Uppsala, Västerås, etc. Uppsala became the second largest Latvian centre in Sweden with about 200 compatriots. The majority worked in silk and ceramic factories, a small number in hospitals, and archives, but Latvians with academic degrees were able to take up positions at Uppsala University, albeit initially in lower categories.<sup>12</sup> Shortly before the end of World War II, the Uppsala Latvian Society was founded on March 3, 1945,<sup>13</sup> in order to "[...] unite the Latvians in Uppsala and its surrounding area for the purpose of Latvian cultural and social activities in the spirit of democratic ideas."<sup>14</sup> Although its revenue was low,<sup>15</sup> the Society soon rented an apartment for a Latvian Club, providing space for board meetings, an out-patient clinic, dental surgery, hair salon, children's activities, and a library.<sup>16</sup> Leons Čuibe (1915–2010), a pastor and employee of the Uppsala University Library, was elected as the librarian from among the new members.<sup>17</sup> However, the con-

10 PLAKANS, Andrejs. Latviešu trimda pēc Otrā pasaules kara [Latvian exile after World War II]. In: *Nacionālā enciklopēdija* [National Encyclopaedia]. [accessed 25 March 2020]. Access through Internet: <<https://enciklopedija.lv/skirklis/4556-Latviešu-trimda-pēc-Otrā-pasaules-kara>>.

11 DAUKSTE-SILASPROĢE, Inguna. *Gaidot laivu : latviešu rakstnieki bēgļu ceļos Zviedrijā* [Waiting for a Boat: Latvian Writers on Refugee Paths in Sweden]. Rīga : LU Literatūras, folkloras un mākslas institūts, [2019], p. 19.

12 Ibid, p. 220.

13 *Uppsala Latvian Society foundation minutes, 3 March 1945*. LNA, LVA, Coll. 2559.

14 *Articles of Association of the Uppsala Latvian Society, adopted by the General Meeting of 2 June 1946*. LNA, LVA, Coll. 2559.

15 Low entry (SEK 1) and annual membership fees (SEK 3) were set in order to attract new members. See: *Uppsala Latvian Society foundation minutes, 3 March 1945*. LNA, LVA, Coll. 2559.

16 *Minutes of the Uppsala Latvian Society Board meeting, 19 March 1945*. LNA, LVA, Coll. 2559.

17 *Minutes of the Uppsala Latvian Society Board meeting, 22 June 1945*. LNA, LVA, Coll. 2559.

struction of a larger library had to be postponed because, owing to a lack of funds, the Society was obliged to relocate several times and accept sub-tenants in its premises. The issue of establishing a library could only be raised seriously in 1952, when the Society had accrued some savings and the refugees' lives had stabilised. In March 1952, chairman of the society, publicist, library specialist Osvalds Freivalds (1905–1975) and board member, master of economics Vera Skuja (née Kaminska, 1910–1998), urged the establishment of a Latvian library, by requesting books from the main refugee organization – the Latvian Central Committee,<sup>18</sup> which had collected tens of thousands of printed items from soon-to-be closed refugee camps in Germany.<sup>19</sup> Unfortunately, these collections had already been distributed to other Latvian communities, so the library had to be organised without outside help. Less than a year later, the newly elected board entrusted this work to Vice-chair V. Skuja,<sup>20</sup> who urged that the library be established from donations of books by individuals, institutions, publishers, recording the name of the donor on the title page of each book. (Fig. 1) There was no shortage of book donors. The library received its first donation, A. Spekke's *Latvijas vēsture* ("History of Latvia"; Stockholm, Miķelis Goppers, 1948), in an ornate leather binding, from Vera Skuja's husband Heinrihs Leonhards Skuja (1892–1972), a phycologist at Uppsala University, who later also donated the first volume of the *Latvju enciklopēdija* ("Latvian encyclopaedia"; Stockholm: Trīs zvaigznes, 1950–1951). (Fig. 2–4) The board also provided appropriate funding for acquisitions – SEK 400 in the first year.<sup>21</sup> Half of this was used for the purchase of *Latviešu tautas dziesmas* ("Latvian Folk Songs"; 1952–1956, 12 vols.) at the Imanta publishing house in Copenhagen and acquisition of the *Raksti* (Collected Works; Stockholm: Daugava, 1952–1955, 6 vols.) by Kārlis Skalbe (1879–1945), a classic of Latvian literature.<sup>22</sup> In addition, orders were placed for the *Latvju enciklopēdija* and K. Mülenbach's *Latviešu valodas vārdnīca* ("Dictionary of the Latvian Language"; Chicago: Chicago Baltic Philologist Group, 1953–1955, 4 vols., two supplementary volumes 1956) – publications necessary for the Latvian Saturday school curriculum, provided by the Society.<sup>23</sup> Thanks to donations and board-subsidised purchases, the library

18 *Minutes of the Uppsala Latvian Society Board meeting, 4 March 1952*. LNA, LVA, Coll. 2559.

19 Ziņas no Eiropas [News from Europe]. *Latvija-Brīvā Balss*, 1951, № 10, p. 2.

20 *Minutes of the Uppsala Latvian Society Board meeting, 17 February 1953*. LNA, LVA, Coll. 2559.

21 *1953 Annual Report of the Uppsala Latvian Society*. LNA, LVA, Coll. 2559.

22 *Minutes of the Uppsala Latvian Society Board meeting, 8 April 1953*. LNA, LVA, Coll. 2559.

23 *1953 Annual Report of the Uppsala Latvian Society*. LNA, LVA, Coll. 2559.



FIG. 1. Vera Skuja, the long-standing manager of the Uppsala Latvian Library (from left) with folklorist Liene Neiland (1921–2010) in Stockholm. Photo by Fricis Forstmanis (also known as Alant Vils or Fricis Dziesma, 1906–2004)

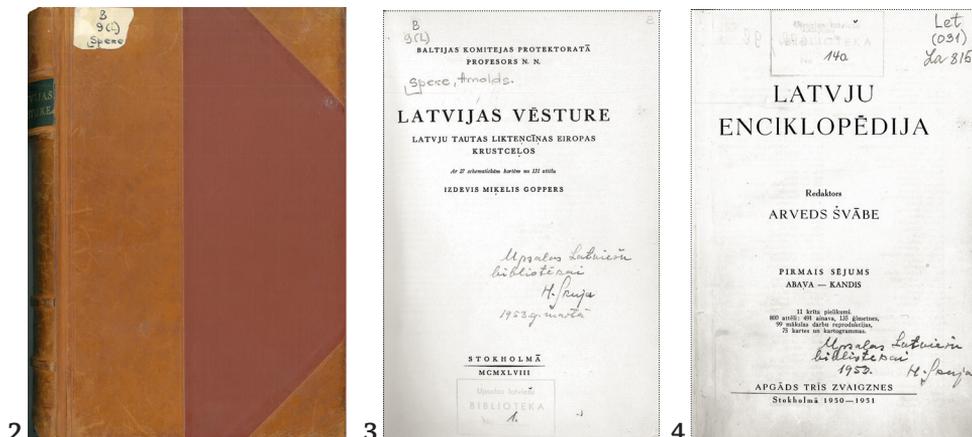


FIG. 2–4. Books donated by H. Skuja to Uppsala Latvian Library: A. Spēke's *Latvijas vēsture* ("History of Latvia"; Stockholm, Miķelis Goppers, 1948) (2, 3). The first volume of the *Latvju enciklopēdija* ("Latvian Encyclopaedia"; Stockholm: Trīs zvaigznes, 1950–1951) (4). National Library of Latvia, Collection of the Lettonica and Baltic Centre



FIG. 5. Teachers and pupils of the Latvian Saturday school at the Magdeburg Uppsala Girls' School in 1955. Photo by F. Forstmanis

First row from the left: Mārīte Vilka, Māra Strautmane, Ieva Veģe, Vaiva Niklāva, Jānis (?) Kursis, Uldis Šins. Second row from the left: Jānis Rudzītis, Jānis Šins, Baiba Hofmane, Laila Freivalde, ? Dreimanis, Artūrs Strautmanis, Jānis Alsiņš. Third row from the left: Aline Strautmane, ? Kursis, Valda Freivalde, Druvaldis Vilks, Milda Ūdre, Ilze Ūdre, ? Lagzdiņš

already comprised 120 books by the end of the year.<sup>24</sup> In the following year, too, donors (including not only members of the Society, but also publishers and various organisations, such as the Uppsala branch of the *Daugavas Vanagi*) played an important role, because the Board's funding of SEK 300 only sufficed for the acquisition of reference books and a subscription to the *Ceļa Zīmes* literary monthly (1948–1987).<sup>25</sup> In 1955, the library was supplemented by the book collection compiled for the Latvian Saturday school, which had been es-

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> *Minutes of the Uppsala Latvian Society Board meeting, 6 April 1954*. LNA, LVA, Coll. 2559.

tablished from various donations in 1952 and was located in the same building as the Uppsala Latvian Library.<sup>26</sup> (Fig. 5) Unfortunately, the books for children and young people had not been bound, so much of this collection was so dilapidated that it could no longer be read.<sup>27</sup>

The Uppsala Latvian Library purchased books both directly from their publishers (*Ziemeļblāzma* in Västerås, owned by Jānis Abučs (1914–1978), *Imanta* by Imants Reitmanis (1919–1966) in Copenhagen, etc.), and from the Latvian Aid Committee bookstore in Stockholm, and book distributors from within the Society, for example, literary critic and journalist Jānis Rudzītis (1909–1970). Nevertheless, from the 1960s, the Board allocated ever smaller amounts – an average of SEK 100 each year – consequently, the library became dependent on donations of money and books. Gradually, these also declined to no more than ten printed items a year. Statistics show that the library grew most rapidly in its early stages: in 1954, it had 240 books,<sup>28</sup> in 1956 – 330,<sup>29</sup> in 1957 – 375,<sup>30</sup> and in 1959, more than 400 books.<sup>31</sup> In the following years, the growth of the library slowed markedly.<sup>32</sup> At the beginning of 1969, the library had 609 books,<sup>33</sup> ten years later – 725,<sup>34</sup> but in January 1988 – 857.<sup>35</sup>

Despite its limited funding, the exile community's most important publications were concentrated in the Uppsala Latvian Library: it contained not only the reference literature mentioned above, specialist publications and academic research, but also fiction. Initially, classics of Latvian literature were actively acquired (collected works by K. Skalbe, Jānis Rainis (1865–1929), Rūdolfs Blaumanis (1863–1908), Jānis Poruks (1871–1911), Eriks Ādamsons

26 T., A. Upsalas latviešu pamatskola. [Uppsala Latvian Elementary School]. *Latvju Vārds*, 1952, No 41, 23 October, p. 4.

27 *Minutes of the Uppsala Latvian Society Board meeting, 16 February 1955*. LNA, LVA, Coll. 2559.

28 GULBĪTIS, J[ānis]. *The Uppsala Latvian Society, 1945-1995*. LNA, LVA, Coll. 2559.

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid.

31 Zviedrijas ziņas [Swedish news]. *Latvija*, 1959, № 48, p. 4.

32 This is evidenced by the fact that in 1961 the library had 427 books. Zviedrijas ziņas [Swedish news]. *Latvija*, 1961, № 10, p 2. Between 1975 and 1978, the Society only purchased six books at its own expense, another six with donated money, and received 22 books as gifts. Consequently, the library had 723 books as of 1 January 1979.

33 *1968 Annual Report of the Uppsala Latvian Society*. LNA, LVA, Coll. 2559.

34 *Uppsala Latvian Library Report for 1975, 1976 and 1978*. LNA, LVA, Coll. 2559.

35 *Minutes of the Uppsala Latvian Society Annual General Meeting, 17 January 1988*. LNA, LVA, Coll. 2559.

(1907–1946) etc.)<sup>36</sup> to provide exiles with the best reading material in their native language, because most of them had arrived in this foreign land without books and other possessions.<sup>37</sup> The most prominent exile poets were also extensively represented in the collection, including Andrejs Eglītis (1912–2006) and Veronika Strēlerte (1912–1995), both residents of Sweden, and those who had travelled further West, such as Zinaīda Lazda (1902–1957), Velta Sniķere (1920), Velta Toma (1912–1999), Elza Ņezbere (1911–2011), Linards Tauns (1922–1963), and others. The library also held many books by the exile community's most prolific prose writers, such as Anšlavs Eglītis (1906–1993), Irma Grebзде (1912–2000), Gunars Janovskis (1916–2000), Alfrēds Dziļums (1907–1976), and the most outstanding essayists – Zenta Mauriņa (1897–1978) and Andrejs Johansons (1922–1983). Specialist publications were dominated by the writings of exile historians, such as the series of monographs on Latvian history (1958–1997) published by the Daugava publishing house (founded in 1945 in Stockholm). *Latvijas māksla, 1800–1914* (“Art of Latvia, 1800–1914,” 1979–1980, 2 vols.) by Jānis Siliņš (1896–1991) and the monograph on the historical development of Latvian farming, *Latvju sēta* (Stockholm: *Daugava*, 1974) by Pauls Kundziņš (1888–1983) are particularly noteworthy – both books featured rich illustrative material.<sup>38</sup> Among the most expensive purchases was the *Latvju Raksti* (“Latvian Ornaments”) in three volumes (Eutina: Andrejs Ozoliņš's publishing house, 1957–1973). Publications about the problems in occupied Latvia were also acquired; for example, the memoirs of Kārlis Strazds, who had fled to Sweden, *Es nāku no dzimtenes: Latvijā 1945–1952* (“I Am from My Homeland: Latvia 1945–1952”; Stockholm: *Daugava*, 1953); *These Names Accuse*, a list of deportees in the years 1940–1941 (Stockholm: The Latvian National Foundation in co-operation with the World Federation of Free Latvians, 1982); *Latvijas 30 gadi: 1918–1948* (“Latvia's 30 Years: 1918–1948”; Stockholm: Latvian National Foundation in Scandinavia, 1948); *Sievietes PSRS cietumos* (“Women in USSR Prisons”; Stockholm: Latviešu Nacionālais fonds, 1980) by Helēna Celmiņa; *Vorkutas gūstekņa stāsts* by Jānis Simsons (1908–1991) (“A Vorkuta Prisoner's Story”; Lincoln: Vaidava, 1965).

36 *Catalogue of the Uppsala Latvian Library*. National Library of Latvia, Rare Book and Manuscript Collection, RXA 164, 455.

37 DAUKSTE-SILASPROĢE, Inguna. *Gaidot laivu : latviešu rakstnieki bēgļu ceļos Zviedrijā* (Waiting for a Boat: Latvian Writers on Refugee Paths in Sweden). Rīga : LU Literatūras, folkloras un mākslas institūts, [2019], pp. 165–166.

38 Latviešu bibliotēka Upsalā [The Latvian Library in Uppsala]. *Latvija : Latvian newspaper : Lettische Wochenzeitung*, 1953, № 44, p. 3.

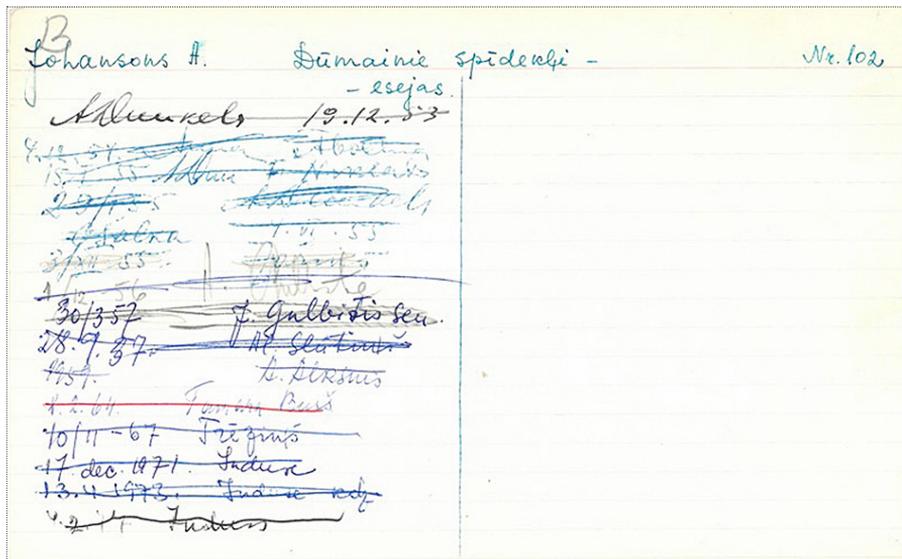


FIG. 6. Catalog card for one of the most borrowed books in the library – Andrejs Johansons' collection of essays *Dūmainie spīdekļi* ("Smoky Lamps"; Stockholm: Daugava, 1953). National Library of Latvia, Rare Book and Manuscript Collection, RXA 164, 455

Library administrator V. Skuja also succeeded in compiling a complete set of the *Archīvs* collected works (Melbourne: 1960–1993, 31 vols.), which included a wealth of information on Latvia's history and life in exile.

The library was opened to readers on 7 November 1953 in the premises of the Latvian Saturday school and was open twice a week. There was no charge for reading, only a request to donate at least one new, bound book per year.<sup>39</sup> In the early years, society members' interest in the library was quite high. In 1953, it was attended by 20 families – as the organisation only had 60 members at the time, this was considered a very good result.<sup>40</sup> The following year, the library visitor numbers increased to 30 families.<sup>41</sup> According to the Uppsala Latvian Library catalogue and the card file of loans, the greatest interest was

39 *Minutes of the Uppsala Latvian Society Board meeting, 9 December 1953*. LNA, LVA, Coll. 2559.

40 In the first year, the library's collection grew to 120 books, see: *1953 Annual Report of the Uppsala Latvian Society*. LNA, LVA, Coll. 2559.

41 GULBĪTIS, J[ānis]. *The Uppsala Latvian Society, 1945–1995*. LNA, LVA, Coll. 2559.

in Latvian fiction – mainly novels<sup>42</sup> as well as the memoirs of Latvian exiles. (Fig. 6) Academic publications (such as A. Spekke's *Latvijas vēsture*) and specialist literature were chosen by only a few readers. Unfortunately, the popularity of the library declined over time: in the 1970s it had an average of 15 readers a year.<sup>43</sup> To a large extent, this can be explained by the slow growth of the collection, which could not then attract readers over a long period. Most probably, readers also purchased literature themselves – soon after its foundation, the Society organised the sale of books (book fairs), because it could supplement its revenue by collecting a small percentage of the profits. Book fairs, with the participation of several vendors, were also organised at larger Society events. Other collections of Latvian printed works in the city may have also dampened readers' interest: from 1959, the Uppsala City Library started a collection (though it grew very slowly),<sup>44</sup> while, from the mid-1950s, Latvian researchers had access to the Latvian National Foundation's deposit of printed items at the Uppsala University Library.<sup>45</sup> However, the Society's documents suggest that the Society's internal crisis, which escalated in the 1970s, was actually to blame. First of all, the numbers of active members became ever smaller, with no newcomers compensating. Writer and educator Jānis Gulbītis (Viesiens, 1916–2011), author of the Society's history, admitted: "Among Uppsalians, there are now no more of the people who diligently attended the once-frequent lecture evenings [...]. Age too prevents one or the other from walking to such meetings."<sup>46</sup> As a result, both the numbers of Society events and their attendances fell sharply, until, by the early 1980s, sometimes only one or two events were held each year. The Society's account ledger (1965–1979) shows that from

42 The most read works included novels about the lives of refugees, such as K. Miķelsons' "Nakts parāde" (Night Parade; Brooklyn: Grāmatu Draugs, 1953) – 11 loans, Ģirts Salnais' "Skrandas vējā" (Tatters in the Wind; Stockholm: Daugava, 1952) – 12 loans, Pastor Kārlis Kundziņš's book of memoirs and reflections, "Laiki un likteņi" (Times and Destinies; Brooklyn: Grāmatu Draugs, 1952) – 11 loans. Works by foreign authors were also popular, such as Archibald Cronin's "Zvaigznes raugās lejup" (The Stars Look Down; published in exile in Copenhagen, *Imanta*, 1952) – issued 13 times. However, the most popular among readers was Andrejs Johansons' collection of essays, "Dūmainie spīdekļi" (Smoky Lamps; Stockholm: Daugava, 1953), being loaned out 15 times.

43 *Uppsala Latvian Library Report for 1975, 1976 and 1978*. LNA, LVA, Coll. 2559.

44 Latvju grāmata Upsalas bibliotēkā [Latvian book in Uppsala library]. *Latvju Vārds*, 1959, № 30, p. 4.

45 BIEZAIS, Haralds. Latviešu grāmatu depozīts Upsalas Universitātes bibliotēkā [Deposit of Latvian books at the Uppsala University Library]. *Latvija*, 1982, № 23, p. 3.

46 GULBĪTIS, J[ānis]. *The Uppsala Latvian Society, 1945–1995*. LNA, LVA, Coll. 2559.

1977, no new books were purchased for the Library, although the Society could afford it because it received an annual state subsidy.<sup>47</sup> Possible reasons: the most active furnishers of new publications had passed away: the critic J. Rudzītis and publisher J. Abučs. The 1988 annual general meeting discussed the dissolution of the Society.<sup>48</sup> Even though the association still had 72 members, the numbers of events and library attendees were negligible. The participants in the meeting acknowledged that the Society's library was a valuable repository of books, but it could no longer serve the Latvian community of Uppsala. It was decided to continue the work of the Society as far as possible, but the fate of the library remained undecided.<sup>49</sup> During the discussions between the board and library manager V. Skuja, the idea was raised of donating the collection to either the Uppsala City Library, the Latvian centre "Abrene" in France, or a library in Latvia.<sup>50</sup> This decision was urgently required because the school in which the library was located was to be reconstructed. In September 1989, Andris Vilks, Director of Latvia's State Library (appointed April 1989), visited Stockholm and called on his compatriots to donate to Latvia previously banned and hard-to-obtain exile publications in order to establish a complete collection of national literature at the State Library and the J. Misiņš Library.<sup>51</sup> The Uppsala Latvian Society decided to hand over its book collection to the State Library. It should be noted that, as early as the 1980s, V. Skuja had donated the biographical materials, official correspondence and personal books – special literature on biology – of her husband H. Skuja to the Fundamental Library of the Latvian SSR Academy of Sciences.

The books and catalogue were packed for the long journey by V. Skuja. Thanks to the efforts of Stockholm-based Latvian journalist Vilnis Zaļkalns (1947–2002) and an Estonian organisation, it soon "[...] became possible [...] to transfer the collection to the Latvian State Library in Riga conveniently and

47 The subsidy was received from 1976, to the amount of SEK 500. *Account ledger of the Uppsala Latvian Society, 1965-1979*. LNA, LVA, Coll. 2559.

48 *Minutes of the Uppsala Latvian Society Annual General Meeting, 17 January 1988*. LNA, LVA, Coll. 2559.

49 *Ibid.*

50 *Report on the activities of the Uppsala Latvian Society since 17 January 1988*. LNA, LVA, 2559. f.

51 At the time, the J. Misiņš Library was part of the Latvian SSR Fundamental Library of the Latvian SSR Academy of Sciences. For A. Vilks' visit to Stockholm, see: V., L. Rietumu grāmatas Latvijai: LV bibliotēkas direktors Stokholmā [Western Books for Latvia: the LV Library Director in Stockholm]. *Brīvā Latvija: Apvienotā "Londonas Avīze" un "Latvija"*, 1989, № 37 (146), p. 5.

quickly via Tallinn. All transport costs were borne by the recipient.”<sup>52</sup> The chosen delivery route – via Tallinn customs – was of great significance, as it did not exert as much control over printed matter as other Soviet border points, so the Latvian Library of Uppsala reached Riga unscathed.<sup>53</sup>

## THE UPPSALA LATVIAN LIBRARY IN LATVIA

On 31 October 1989, an exhibition – *Trimdas grāmata* (“Exile Community Books”) – was opened in the reading room of the Literary Propaganda Department of the State Library of Latvia, the core of which was the carefully preserved book collection of Uppsala’s Latvians. This was the first large-scale exhibition of exile literature in Latvia (about 200 publications by émigré Latgalians<sup>54</sup> had been displayed in August 1989 at the Jasmuiža branch of the J. Rainis Museum of Literary and Art History<sup>55</sup>), which visitors could not only view but also read. From autumn 1986, information on exile literature began to be systematically included in the Latvian press, and as a result there was a rapid increase in public interest.<sup>56</sup> Nevertheless, the access to émigré publications was insignificant – they were accumulated in only two restricted-access collections (the Library of the Institute of History of the Central Committee of the Latvian Communist Party and the Fundamental Library of the Latvian SSR Academy of Sciences), which could only be utilised by readers with special privileges. For its part, the State Library had only been receiving exile literature since March 1988. Furthermore, postal items were still undergoing selective perustration and some literature was even being confiscated.<sup>57</sup> A. Vilks remem-

52 *Report on the activities of the Uppsala Latvian Society since 17 January 1988*. LNA, LVA, Coll. 2559.

53 VILKS, Andris. Interviewed by Jana Dreimane [audio record]. National Library of Latvia, 16.09.2019.

54 The Latgalians are an ethnic group of Latvians who reside predominantly in the Latgale region in eastern Latvia. Here, the spoken and written language is Latgalian, which belongs to the Baltic language family.

55 KAMOLĒNS, Pēteris. Trimdas latgaliešu grāmatu izstāde Latvijā [Exile Latgalian book exhibition in Latvia]. *Laiks*, 1989, № 72, p. 4.

56 One of the first publications: SAMSONS, Vilis. Zentas Mauriņas literārā devuma pārmantošanas jautājumi: sēdes atreferējums [Issues on the inheritance of the literary contribution of Zenta Mauriņa: meeting abstract]. *Karogs*, 1986, № 9, pp. 146–151.

57 MILLERS, Juris. Galvenās Literatūras pārvaldes darbība Latvijā. 1985.-1990.gads = The Operations of the GLP in Latvia, 1985–1990: Dissertation summary. Rīga: Latvijas Universitāte, 2013, pp. 30–31.

Licenc. / Kārovi  
1990.04.04.

Upeškalu pilsētas  
4 Upeškalu pilsētas  
Kafetāla. Koda Nr. 40  
Upeškalu, Cēlošs,  
H. Kuro/29  
1. martā, 1990.

Šrīet sveicināti

, sirsnīgi pa-  
leicos par jūsu p. g. decembra vēstulēm  
un visa laba vēlējumiem ar sveiktām kom-  
tēm, kā arī par skaisto grāmatu un pro-  
ksms arī par aicinājumu apliecināt šādā  
Valsts bibliotēkai.

Absvainojos ka ar ābildi esmu nokavēju-  
sies, bet visus jūsu rīcījumus saņemmu  
ar diezgan lielu nokavēšanos - tikai šī  
gada februārī.

Esmu ļoti apmierināta, ka Upeškalu latviešu  
bibliotēka ir sagādājusi prieku un ir  
tā nodrošina, lai iepazītos ar grāmatām  
kuras jūsu laikā ļoti maz vai nemaz pa-  
rīstomas. Ševiski piecājos ka grāmatas  
esiet iņtādījusi un ar tām var plašāk  
iepazīties, visē bibliotēkas apmeklētāji.

Ļoti piecājos ka manis ierātā un ierātā-  
tētā bibliotēka - dzīvo - un ierātā  
dzīvotenes latviešus, kas ir ļoti mans  
sapnis un notoms jau diezgan sen.  
Jūs esiet ar Upeškalu latviešu bibliotēku

iepažīsti nājis arī citus, tālākus par  
 grāmatām vispārinteresejošus, savā, laika  
 15. februāra radio runā, ko pati gan  
 nedzirdēju, bet man to atstāstīja, kā  
 ļoti ļoti pārskaidrojošu un aptveroši  
 interesantu stāstojumu.

Lasiņu ka īstāde Turpinās un es sa-  
 hēmusi ļoti jūsmīgas grāmas no tiem, kas  
 to ir apmēģējuši. Liels paldies par jūsu  
 ceļiem.

Novēlu jums un visai jūsu Bibliotēkas  
 raiņei gaišu un veiksmīgu šo jaun-  
 iesāto gadu.

Visu laiku vēlos

Jūsu

Verasija

P.S. jāpiebilst ka pēc nosūtītajām  
 grāmatām, bija piekļūlušas nevajadzīgas  
 lietas (daži krāni) kas kopā ar daļām grāma-  
 tām bija piederīgi manai sestdienas latviešu  
 skolai, bet nu nemiet par labu.

vs.

FIG. 7. Letter of V. Skuja to Andris Vilks, director of the National Library of Latvia, on March 1, 1990. National Library of Latvia, Rare Book and Manuscript Collection, RXA 164, № 455

bers that the exhibition was very popular, and people even queued up to read publications from the Latvian history series of the publishing house *Daugava*.<sup>58</sup> The Uppsala Society's board was pleased to note that "[...] the books were released to the public in the homeland, as promised, and will continue to be available to Latvian readers and researchers."<sup>59</sup> Initially, the exhibition was supposed to be open for one month, but the great demand saw its duration extended a number of times (until 31 August 1990). The exile literature began to flow into Latvia in an ever-increasing stream. The total scale of donations is unknown, but its volume can be estimated from certain facts. For example, the National Library of Latvia received more than 28 000 copies of exile literature between 1990 and 1994.<sup>60</sup> On 1 March 1990, in a letter to A. Vilks, V. Skuja acknowledged: "I am very pleased that the Uppsala Latvian Library has brought pleasure and is being so useful for finding out about books that you knew very little or nothing about. I am particularly pleased that you exhibited the books and that every library visitor has access to them. I am very happy that the library that I collected and organised lives on and is giving pleasure to the Latvians of my homeland, this had been my dream and intention for some time. You have also introduced others, beyond those generally interested in books, to the Uppsala Latvian Library in your radio talk of, I believe, 15 February. [...] I read that the exhibition is continuing and I have received very enthusiastic reports from those who have visited it."<sup>61</sup> (Fig. 7)

### Conclusions

The Uppsala Latvian Library was typical of those of small Latvian diaspora communities, in terms of both size and potential for development. It served a practical purpose – strengthening the sense of being Latvian, so through donations and purchases it tried to provide the local Latvian community with the most informative, interesting reading material in their native language. The selection was facilitated by the easy availability of many high-quality works, as

58 VILKS, Andris. Interviewed by Jana Dreimane [audio record]. National Library of Latvia, 16.09.2019. See also: VILKS, Andris. Rinda pie vēstures grāmatām Latvijā [Queues for history books in Latvia]. *Laiks*, 1990, № 50, p. 8.

59 *Report on the activities of the Uppsala Latvian Society since January 17, 1988*. LNA, LVA, Coll. 2559.

60 *Report of the State Library, 1991–1993*. LNA, LVA, Coll. 235, Inventory 8, File 184, p. 11. See also: PREIMANE, Daina. Latvijas Nacionālā bibliotēka [The National Library of Latvia]. *Čikāgas Ziņas*, 1996, № 206, pp. 22–23.

61 National Library of Latvia, Rare Book and Manuscript Collection, RXA 164, 455.

Sweden was one of the exile community's publishing centres.<sup>62</sup> Nevertheless, the potential of this library abroad was never fully realised as Latvians of the middle and younger generations became more and more integrated into Swedish society, and the interest in Latvian literature and, consequently, in the Society's Library waned. In addition, like many other exile libraries, its operation was based on the enthusiasm of a single person. Often, as people leave such roles, collections created over decades become neglected. The timely decision of the board to donate the library to a homeland organisation prevented such a situation from occurring at the Uppsala Latvian Society. It should be emphasised that the donation was widely reported in mass media, encouraging many other exile organisations and individuals to send their book collections, document archives and potential museum artefacts to Latvian memory institutions. Nowadays the collections of exile literature in the country's major academic libraries are relatively complete, lacking ephemera and publications from the early years, which were printed on duplicators and published in small volumes.

Dace Rozenberga, a specialist in Latvian bibliometrics, points out in her doctoral thesis, *The Impact of Latvian exile literature on research in Latvia (1992–2006)*, that today, libraries are the main source of information on exile literature for Latvian researchers.<sup>63</sup> Most often, they visit the J. Misiņš Library at the University of Latvia Academic Library and the National Library of Latvia, where this literature is concentrated.<sup>64</sup> It should be noted that several of the researchers interviewed by D. Rozenberga first encountered exile literature at a library, and two of them actually at the exile book exhibition at the State Library.<sup>65</sup> D. Rozenberga's study, which is not solely based on a survey of researchers, but also on a citation-frequency analysis of émigré literature, shows that Latvian researchers in the humanities continue to actively utilise exile publications. This is indirectly confirmed by the fact that many books from the Uppsala Latvian Library can be found in the open-access collection of the Lettonica and Baltic Reading Room at the National Library of Latvia, which holds the most frequently requested literature on Latvia.

62 ZANDERS, Viesturs. Grāmatniecība Latvijā [Book Publishing in Latvia]. In: *Nacionālā enciklopēdija* [National Encyclopaedia]. [accessed 1 October 2019]. Access through Internet: <<https://enciklopedija.lv/skirklis/22533>>.

63 ROZENBERGA, Dace. *The impact of Latvian exile literature on research in Latvia (1992–2006)*. Doctoral Thesis. [Loughborough University], 2011, p. 237 [accessed 1 October 2019]. Access through Internet: <<https://dspace.lboro.ac.uk>>.

64 Ibid., p. 238.

65 Ibid., p. 231.

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