

## PUBLISHING ACTIVITIES OF ESTONIANS IN ST. PETERSBURG BEFORE THE SECOND WORLD WAR (1918–1937)

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*The article treats the development of Estonian-language publishing in St-Petersburg. The analysis of these activities demonstrates the dependence of ethnic minority publishing from the nationalities policy of the Soviet Union. The favourable political atmosphere and the policy of NEP led to the establishment of two Estonian publishing units: the Estonian Publishing Community and the publishing house "Külvaja". The latter produced the majority of Estonian-language books, issued in the Soviet Union (484 titles). The turn in the national policy resulted in the liquidation of national institutions, including "Külvaja", which was reformed into the Estonian Section of the Publishing Society of Foreign Workers in the USSR. Its production was limited and decreased especially in 1937 when major ethnic cleansing started in St. Petersburg.*

*Key words: publishing in Exile; publishing for ethnic minorities; Estonian-language publishing; publishing in the Soviet Union; exchange of books*

Estonian national minority in Russia was formed as a result of emigration during the second half of the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th century. The Estonian peasants moved to Russia in the hope of obtaining land and becoming free from the oppression of the Baltic German nobility. The nearest big cities, St. Petersburg and Riga, offered wider possibilities for finding a job or for studying. The St. Petersburg institutions of higher education (university, academy of arts, conservatoire etc.) acted as

the main cradle of the Estonian intelligentsia at the beginning of the 20th century.

The Bolshevik revolution in 1917 and the following establishment of the Republic of Estonia in 1918 resulted in the situation where a large number of Estonians occurred to be on the other side of the Estonian border. Although about 40 000 Estonians opted back to Estonia after the conclusion of the Tartu Peace Treaty in 1920, the majority of the Estonian population of Russia stayed at their new homeland. 154 666 Estonians

were living in the Soviet Union according to the census of 1926. The number of people who declared Estonian to be their mother tongue was 139 500 [10, 248]. Around 80 per cent of them were farmers, living in the Estonian villages. This community was numerically the biggest Estonian population abroad. Estonians inhabited mainly four regions: the biggest number of Estonians lived in St. Petersburg region (16 000 in St. Petersburg/Leningrad and another 50 000 in the guberniya), followed by Siberia with the centre in Omsk (more than 30 000 people), the Central region (Nizhni Novgorod) with about 8500 people and Caucasus with more than 5000 Estonian inhabitants. In the other regions the number of Estonians was smaller [19, 195–196].

The national identity – the complex of values and habits as well as communication in Estonian was retained with the help of Estonian-language education, cultural activities and printed matter – books, newspapers and journals – that were published in Russia up to 1937.

#### RESEARCH ON ESTONIAN PUBLISHING ACTIVITIES IN RUSSIA

The publishing activities of Estonians in Russia (Soviet Union) have attracted the attention of book researchers during two periods: for the first time the topic was treated in the 1930s by Oskar Urgart and Richard Antik. Oskar Urgart opened the treatment of Estonian-language publications in the Soviet Union with his article published in the journal “Looming” (Creation) in 1934

[26], which concentrated on the analysis of fiction, discussing its forms, style, content, etc. Richard Antik, who was the head of the Archive Library of the Estonian National Museum had initiated the inclusion of the Estonian-language books acquired from the Soviet publishing houses in the editions of the national bibliography, issued by the Society of Estonian Literature in the journal “Eesti Kirjandus” (Estonian Literature) together with the publications, issued in Estonia. On the basis of the books, which had been received through exchange or bought from Soviet Russia, Antik wrote a voluminous analysis of the Estonian-language book production in the Soviet Union, published in the journal “Eesti Kirjandus” in 1939 [2]. This work includes statistical data on the title production and print runs, the characterisation of production representing various types of literature (propaganda publications, textbooks, fiction). A notable part of the article presents a well-written analysis of the political and propaganda publications, which formed the largest share of title production. Antik points out the different target groups of propaganda and characterises the specific features of the writings by Estonian authors. He closes the article with the conclusion that all the publications issued in the Soviet Union were influenced by the contemporary political events. It should be mentioned that only part of the publications, issued in the Soviet Union reached Estonia and were included in the national bibliography, therefore the statistical data presented by Antik was incomplete, which

also had impact on the quality of analysis and conclusions.

The second wave of research on the topic occurred during the 1960s–1980s. The study of this period concentrated mostly on the statistical analysis of the Estonian-language book production from the Soviet Union on the basis of the lists of books, published in the journal "Eesti Kirjandus" and card files of the Estonian Literary Museum and of the National Library of Estonia.

Two student research projects on the topic were completed in the Tallinn Pedagogical Institute (at the present time the Tallinn University). Ülle Agarmaa's diploma work written in 1967 was devoted to the activities of the Estonian Publishing Community (Eesti Kirjastuse Ühisus) and the publishing house 'Külvaja' (The Sower) [1]. It is noteworthy that besides the other sources the author had an opportunity to interview Villem Reiman who had been the head of "Külvaja" in 1929–1934. L. Kapral's course work included a bibliography of the Estonian-language publications from the Soviet Union [9].

In addition to these student works many articles by scholars were issued in various journals. Philologist Eduard Ertis was the author of an article on the Estonian Section of the Publishing Society of Foreign Workers of the USSR, which included mainly the list of titles, issued by this publishing body with short comments [5]. Meelik Kahu treated the development of Estonian-language periodical publishing in the Soviet Union [8]. Historian Vello Niinoja wrote

two articles concentrating mainly on issuing the journal "Klassivõitlus" (Class Struggle). These articles were issued in the organ of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Estonia "Eesti Kommunist" (The Estonian Communist) [16; 17].

The most notable research works on the topic, which were published during the Soviet period were the articles by Kyra Robert, whose research concentrated on the history of book and culture. The first of the articles treated the Estonian-language publishing activities in Siberia [20]. The most comprehensive treatment of the Estonian-language publishing activities in the Soviet Union was presented in the article "Estonian-language Printed Word in the Soviet Union in 1918–1940: Book Historical Overview", issued in 1975 [21]. It includes an overview of all the publishing bodies, which had taken part in publishing the Estonian-language material as well as statistical data on the publications. According to the ideological requirements of the period the publishing activities in the Soviet Union were treated as the first stage of the Soviet-type publishing in the Estonian language, which had paved the way for the following book production in the Soviet Estonia.

The reason, why this research problem has occurred once again, lies in the concept of the previous treatments: neither the limited range of sources used in the 1930s nor the ideological tendentiousness of the study in the 1960s–1980s allowed the researchers to reach objective conclusions. The book historians from the Tallinn University are

preparing for the publication of the history of the book in Estonia during the 20<sup>th</sup> century at the present time. This raises the need to re-examine the publishing activities of Estonians in Russia, presenting a treatment, grounded in the archival material preserved in the Estonian and Russian archives and presenting contemporary interpretation of the topic.

The present article treats the publishing activity of Estonians in St. Petersburg/Leningrad – the main publishing centre of Estonian books in Exile between the two world wars. It is based on the analysis of research works, statistical sources, various articles issued in the newspapers and the Estonian-language books issued in St. Petersburg. Additional data has been obtained from archival documents stored in the Estonian Cultural History Archive of the Estonian Literary Museum (Eesti Kirjandusmuuseumi Eesti Kultuurilooline Arhiiv) as well as in the Central State Archive of Literature and Art of St. Petersburg. The treatment concentrates on the development of national publishing bodies, setting the goal to follow the political and economical conditions of their establishment and operation as well as the persons, involved in their activities. The article also presents the statistical data and general characterisation of the production of all the publishing units.

#### POLITICAL BACKGROUND OF PUBLISHING ACTIVITIES

The Bolshevik revolution of 1917 ushered into power a new regime that was interest-

ed in developing Russia's ethnic minorities' cultures on its own socialist terms. Soviet ethnic cultures were to be "national in form, socialist in content", as Stalin, Commissar of nationalities from 1917–1924 expressed it. Supporting cultural production in all Soviet languages became official policy at the 12<sup>th</sup> Communist Party Congress in 1923, affirming that the Soviet state would maximally support these "forms" of nationhood that did not conflict with an unitary central state, the forms being national territories, elites, languages and cultures [15, 13]. Thus political and economic support for ethnic minority culture became an obligation of the Soviet state and the Communist Party. Print was the most important means of circulating the new ideas during the 1920s and thus the publishing houses were at the heart of the Soviet cultural production. In the 1920s and during the first half of the 1930s the Soviet state favoured ethnic minorities' publishing as a means of creating a single Soviet socialist state out of a group of diverse nationalities – thus the task of the publications in national languages was propaganda in the broadest sense of the word [24, 198, 200].

The direct supervision of the Communist Party over the Estonian-language book publishing is visible from the first steps of the party after the revolution, demonstrating that communists understood the important role of the printing press in influencing and forming the public opinion. The Communist Party and Soviet authorities became active in publishing because the private

publishing houses had been dissolved, but the new Soviet publishing system had not been created yet. The acute need for publications to support the Soviet propaganda forced them to find a way to continue the publishing activities, which led to the establishment of publishing units by the Soviet and Communist Party institutions.

The first publishers of the Estonian language books in St. Petersburg were the Estonian sections of the Russian Communist (Bolshevik) Party, who issued the series of seven booklets of political content in 1918 [21, 210].

The Publishing Department of the Directorate of Culture and Education of the Estonian Workers' Commune – the Soviet republic that was proclaimed in Narva in November 1918, also produced Estonian language books. The founders of the Commune had to withdraw to Russia during the War of Independence. In the situation where it was difficult to procure paper and printing facilities only the indispensable publications for propagating the new regime were published: political literature to raise the awareness of the army and textbooks to enable Estonian-language education. The publications were drawn together under the thematic series: “The Literature of the Estonian Communist Army” (Eesti kommunistlise sõjawäe kirjandus), “The Workers' Literature” (Tööraha kirjandus), etc. The Publishing Department also planned to publish handbooks for soviet and party activists and literature on agricultural reforms, but these plans did not come

true. When the Estonian Workers' Commune ended its activities in June 1919, the publishing department continued its work under the subordination of the Russian Bureau of the Central Committee of the Estonian Communist Party [16, 46].

#### THE ACTIVITIES OF THE ESTONIAN PUBLISHING COMMUNITY (1922–1926)

In spring 1921 the New Economic Policy (NEP) was introduced in the Soviet Russia: small industries were denationalised, private trade permitted etc. The new possibilities gave birth to two Estonian publishing houses in St. Petersburg in 1922 – Eesti Kirjastuse Ühisus (The Estonian Publishing Community) and “Külvaja” (The Sower). These two publishing houses produced more than a half of the total Estonian-language book production issued in the Soviet Russian territory.

The Estonian Publishing Community was the leading publishing house of the Estonian-language literature in the years 1922–1925. It was democratic by nature, incorporating institutional members and private persons. In 1923 the number of members reached 63, during the following year 19 new members were accepted [1, 9]. The publishing house was led by the top-ranked Estonian communists: Jakob Palvadre (1889–1936), Peeter Peterson (1898–1937), Anna Leetsmann (1888–1942?), Jaan Ikmelt (1885–1953), Georg Teiter (1889–1938) and others [21, 212]. Despite of their enthusiasm the Community had to struggle with economic

difficulties: paper supply was unsteady, the manuscripts did not arrive in time, methodological and ideological specifications were changed so often that the pre-press procedures took much more time than planned. The publishing house tried to keep the prices of the publications low and therefore spared on design and materials, but nevertheless the Community went bankrupt in 1926 [1, 23–24].

During the five years of its activities the Estonian Publishing Community issued 108 books and booklets in Estonian, the most productive years were 1924 and 1925 with 34 and 41 titles [21, 216]. The analysis of the typological and thematic content of the books shows that the main attention was devoted to the publications of political literature. It is very hard to prove the outside influence on the publishing plans, but the protocol of the general meeting, held at the end of 1924 includes the resolution to publish more materials on the Estonian Workers' movement – a special committee was founded for this purpose. The document also stresses the need to increase the publishing of works by Lenin, agricultural literature and textbooks. The meeting of the activists of the ethnic minorities of the Russian Communist Party of the Leningrad gubernyia in 1925 discussed the issues of publishing, pointing out the lack of textbooks and books for peasants in Estonian. It was also mentioned, that the programme and statute of the Young Communist League were not available in the Estonian language [1, 24].

Fiction was represented by quite a large number of titles (37). In addition to Soviet authors (A. Blok, M. Gorki) the novels by M. Andersen-Nexø and J. London were published. J. Liiv and Fr. Tuglas represented the Estonian authors. Special attention was also paid to the publications of plays, which included repertoire for the Estonian amateur theatre groups.

The publishing house edited the newspaper 'Edasi' (Forward) and published journals 'Säde' (Spark), 'Oras' (Sprouts) and 'Põllumees' (The Farmer). The newspaper, although published on the proposition of the Communist Party, was not profitable, as the expenses on editing and printing exceeded the income from subscription and advertising by a third [1, 20–21].

In addition to publishing the Estonian Publishing Community organised the distribution of books and, together with the Department of National Minorities of the Peoples' Commissariat of Education, provision of Estonian schools with textbooks. Dissemination of publications was difficult: books were still too expensive and in the time of economic crisis people had to spend more money on food than on books. The schools could order textbooks according to the instalment plan. The situation improved after the monetary reform in 1924. The publishing house even opened its own bookshop, where in addition to its own production the Estonian-language books from the Soviet Union and Estonia as well as Russian-language books and publications in foreign languages were sold. After

the bankruptcy the bookshop was handed over to the Central Publishing House of the Nations of the Soviet Union [1, 27].

The fate of the leaders of the publishing house was severe: Jakob Palvadre became the first victim of repression in 1936. He was accused of espionage as his brother had formerly been a minister in the Republic of Estonia [22, 133]. He was also accused of the attempt to murder the revolutionary leaders Jaan Anvelt and Hans Pöögelmann. This led to the discovery of the "group of 114 terrorists", who were sentenced to death and drowned in Neva river. Peeter Peterson was accused to be Palvadre's ally and was killed in 1937. Anna Leetsmann was sentenced to a labour camp and the year of her death is not exactly known [25].

#### THE PUBLISHING HOUSE "KÜLVAJA" – THE LARGEST PUBLISHER OF ESTONIAN-LANGUAGE BOOKS

The publishing house named "Külvaja" was established in 1922, but actually the publishing unit, which attributed this name, had existed already since 1918, at first as a department of the Estonian Workers' Commune (1918–1919), which was later attached to various other bodies and acted under the names of the Publishing Department of the Russian Bureau of the Estonian Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party (1919–1920), Publishing House of the Central Committee of the Estonian Communist Party (1920–1921) and Publishing House of the Estonian Section of the Communist International (1921–1923)

[21, 212]. In 1926 "Külvaja" merged with the Estonian Publishing Community and became practically the only Estonian publishing house in the Soviet Union [17, 57]. Tsentroizdat (the Central Publishing Organisation for the Peoples of the USSR) in Moscow also issued some publications in the Estonian language.

Ethnic minorities' publishing houses were regulated by their own institutions; in case of "Külvaja" this was the Leningrad Bureau of the Central Committee of the Estonian Communist Party. The activities of the publishing house were discussed in the bureau meetings where its publishing programme had to be approved [11, 118].

In the years 1919–1928 the director of the publishing house was Juhan Lilienbach, a rather well known poet and publisher. He had started to issue political literature during the revolution of 1905 and had established the publishing house "Mõte" in 1909, being a consistent publisher of Marxist literature. In February 1918 he moved to Petersburg with the Bolsheviks and continued to be active in publishing [12, 294]. Being a professional editor he was able to secure high quality of the editorial work. After his death Villem Reiman was appointed to this position. He had graduated from the Leningrad department of the Communist University for the Western Minorities [1, 29].

During the period of the new economic policy the activities of "Külvaja" were hindered by the typical faults of the Soviet publishing industry – the shortage of paper,

the small number of printing offices, etc. The publisher had a wide correspondence with the suppliers of paper, but this did not alleviate the shortage. For example, during the first nine months of the year 1930 the publishing house received five tons less paper than it had been allocated according to the plan [13, 44]. “Külvaja” experienced economic hardships till the beginning of the 1930s. It was complicated to find printing offices where typesetters could compose text in the Estonian language. The printers often prolonged with fulfilling the orders, as the publishing house was unable to pay for their services. The authors did not receive royalties till 1924, later the publishers attempted to pay the authors small compensation [14, 119]. The management of the publishing house asked help from communist leader Mikhail Kalinin who had worked in Tallinn at the beginning of the century, to organise subsidies for the publishing house in 1929. This request received a positive answer and financial help was allocated to “Külvaja” [23, 67]. After the policy of NEP came to an end in 1928, the property of private entrepreneurs was handed to the state and thus “Külvaja” obtained a small printing office [1, 38]. The so-called socialist offensive in the end of the 1920s and in the beginning of the 1930s brought along the abolition of market and centralisation. The publishing activities were also reformed and the Association of State Publishing Houses (OGIZ) was established in 1930. Due to the reorganisation “Külvaja” became the only publisher of books in the

Estonian language in 1931. But only a couple of years later, in the beginning of 1934 it merged with the Publishing Society of Foreign Workers of the USSR, which had been established in 1931 [28, 2].

The liquidation of the independent national publishing house was due to the change in the Soviet nationalities policy. Its turning point was marked by the Politburo decree from December 14, 1932 on the situation in Ukraine, which initiated the onset of ethnic cleansing among the Soviet Union diaspora nationalities with cross-border ethnic ties to a foreign-nation state and abolition of many national institutions. In St. Petersburg the repressions, targeting among others, diaspora nationalities followed Mikhail Kirov’s murder in 1934 [15, 311]. Among the victims of repressions were also the most well-known authors of “Külvaja” Jaan Anvelt and Hans Pöögemann, who were killed correspondingly in 1937 and in 1938 [25].

#### THE BOOK PRODUCTION BY “KÜLVAJA”

The production of Külvaja enfolds 484 titles, which forms 46 per cent of all the book titles issued in the Estonian language [21, 216]. Chart 1 demonstrates the dynamics of book title production by “Külvaja”. During the first years of its existence the production of the publishing house was rather modest. Since 1927 the title production increased slightly, but the notable rise arrived in 1931 after “Külvaja” became the sole publisher of Estonian-language books.

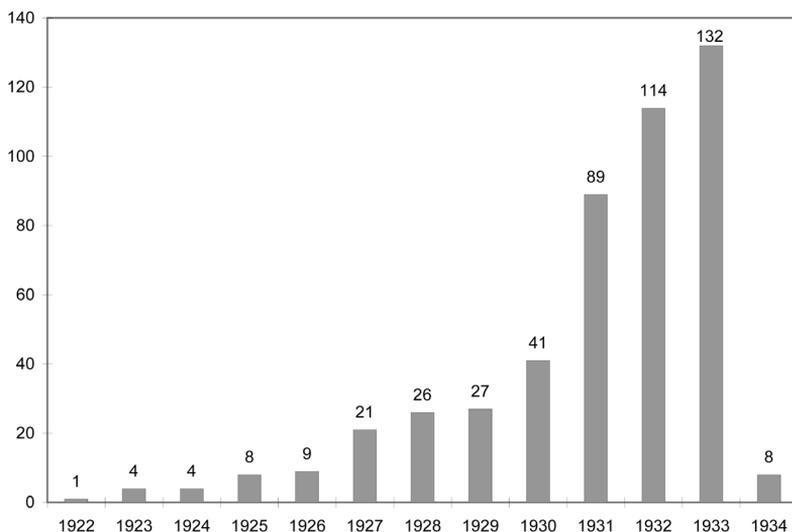


Chart 1. Title production of the publishing house “Külvaja”

The analysis of the production by subjects demonstrates the domination of political literature, forming 20% of all the titles. Works by Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and about their theories form 11%, 17% of the titles treated agriculture, 10% – fiction and another 10% were books on history and on natural sciences. The majority of the titles were translations from the Russian language; still, on every subject a small number of titles by Estonian authors were also issued.

The political literature was targeted to the local Estonian-language inhabitants but also to the population of Estonia. The Soviet Union’s western national minorities were meant to serve as attractive communist examples for their ethnic brethren abroad, official policy attempted to exploit

the ethnic ties to project influence abroad [15, 321]. This included the distribution of propaganda publications.

The political publications issued by “Külvaja” included mostly materials of the Communist Party congresses, conferences and pamphlets for agitation. The publications by Estonian authors on this subject largely criticised the living conditions in the independent Republic of Estonia and idealised the situation in the Soviet Union. This comparison had to demonstrate the Estonian readers in the Soviet Union the horrors of life in Estonia and convince the readers in Estonia in the prosperous future after the communist revolution. For example, the book “The Baltic States and the Preparations of an Anti-Soviet War” (1929) contained outrageous lies about the situa-

tion in Estonia. Even the cultural society Fenno-Ugria was accused in preparing the invasion to the Soviet Union.

The authors of these books were mainly quite well known figures of revolutionary movement, orthodox communists Hans Pöögemann, Jaan Anvelt etc. They were embittered by their loss in 1918 and especially by the failure of the communist armed revolt on December 1, 1924 with the aim to overthrow the Estonian government and to establish the Soviet power. In their books they also treated the development of the Estonian communist movement.

As the Estonian book researcher and bibliographer Richard Antik wrote in his article [2, 172], the number of political and propaganda publications was in fact much larger, because all the Soviet publications were saturated with politics.

Three quarters of the publications on agriculture were published during the period of collectivisation in the years 1930–1933 and gave instructions for organising the collective farms. In addition to these publications practical handbooks on various branches of agriculture were published.

The books on history included the series “Topics of the Estonian Literary History in the Archives of the Russian Autocracy”. The series include publications of archival sources, prepared for publications by Jaan Depman, professor of history. It was, in principle, a valuable series although the material was chosen one-sidedly.

The Historical Board of the Estonian Communist Party had been established in

1925 with the aim to collect and publish material on the history of the communist movement in Estonia [4]. One of the most notable publications from the Historical Board was the collection of memoirs and documents “The Year 1905 in Estonia”, published in 1926. This book is rich in facts and data on the events of the revolution, but suffers from the typical feature of the majority of books, issued in the Soviet Union – one-sidedness of the treatment, intolerance towards all the other political movements and actors than communists.

Since 1928 “Külvaja” started to publish textbooks, which earlier had been published by the central state publishing houses. These had been unable to produce enough books to supply the schools in sufficient quantity. The situation improved since the beginning of the 1930s, when the official publishing policy fostered the publication of textbooks. “Külvaja” issued mostly textbooks for primary schools, but besides that numerous textbooks for adults were also published. The majority of the publications on natural sciences (83%) and on linguistics were textbooks.

Typical of the Soviet publishing system were the large print runs of the publications, the average print-run of Estonian-language books exceeded 2000 copies. The print-runs of political publications were even larger, the largest print-runs reaching 40 000 copies [21, 215]. The publications were distributed in accordance with the orders from schools, education boards, co-operatives, etc. As “Külvaja” did not have

its own bookshop, the rest of the print-run was distributed from the publishing house and temporary kiosks. “Külvaja” also had contracts with other publishers who had bookshops. Although promotion campaigns were organised to increase circulation, a large share of books remained unsold in the 1920s. As a result the debt of “Külvaja” extended to 15 000 roubles in 1929 [1, 38]. Later the dissemination grew wider, new selling points were established and agents recruited in the villages. In 1933 “Külvaja” concluded contracts with more than a hundred collective farms about supplying their libraries [1, 41].

#### THE EXCHANGE OF BOOKS WITH ESTONIA

The production of “Külvaja” was distributed also in Estonia, which was in accordance with the aim to propagate communist ideas in the other countries. But at the same time the publishing house “Külvaja” also bought books from Estonia and organised the exchange of Estonian-language books between the two countries. This was initiated by the head of “Külvaja” Juhan Lilienbach in 1923–1924.

Lilienbach turned to the Estonian publisher “Noor-Eesti”, the Society of Estonian Literature, which was the major publisher of quality books during this period and bookseller and publisher Jaan Leoke. These institutions had been established at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when Lilienbach was in the head of the publishing house “Mõte”. Thus Lilienbach knew them and was aware

of their activities. For example, in the letter addressed to the Society of Estonian Literature from April 21, 1924, Lilienbach asked the society to send him the lists of books with prices as well as samples of books. In his turn he had attached some books by “Külvaja” and the list of “Külvaja’s” publications to the letter [3, 12].

Jaan Leoke was the first to respond and became an active partner of “Külvaja”. But later also “Noor-Eesti” and the Society of Estonian Literature established contacts with Lilienbach. Due to the changes in the management, the Society of Estonian Literature answered Lilienbach only after his following reference in 1926, expressing its willingness to start the business contacts with “Külvaja” [3, 18]. This demonstrates Lilienbach’s tenacity in acquiring new publications from Estonia, his wide interest in its literary development and desire to enrich the repertoire available to the Estonian readers in the Soviet Russia. The books acquired by “Külvaja” were distributed in St. Petersburg, but also in smaller Estonian settlements. Lilienbach was also interested in obtaining books for the archival collection of Estonian and Baltic publications of the publishing house “Külvaja” [6, 20/90].

The content of books which were ordered from Estonia was quite varied, including fiction, scholarly publications, publications on agriculture, textbooks of music, dictionaries and other reference works, books on Estonian grammar, literary journals, etc. But the most popular were the editions of plays, which were used by amateur theatre groups.

Naturally not all the plays published in Estonia were considered suitable for the Soviet stage. Lilienbach gave instructions for the Estonian partners, which kind of content was unsuitable in the Soviet Union: Christian, nationalist, reactionary, anti-Soviet or esoteric [6, 20/88–89], books by the French author A. France and publications treating heredity [18, 12]. Still, it is noteworthy, that the orders contained some books on history and contemporary developments, which were clearly “anti-Soviet” in their nature, for example, “Soviet Russia and the Attempts to Implement Communism in 1917–1934” by Ed. Laamann [3, 28]. This kind of literature was obviously necessary for the “counter-propaganda” and served as a source for the propaganda writings by the Estonian communists.

“Külvaja” either bought the books for foreign currency or exchanged them page-for-page. There were periods, when the supply of foreign currency was limited or lacking, but there were also times, when the orders from “Külvaja” were of great importance for the economic survival of the Estonian partner. For example, the orders from “Külvaja” helped Jaan Leoke to overcome the worst economic hardships for many times, paying him money in advance (in the amount of 200 dollars) [7, 32]. “Külvaja” ordered fiction, especially plays and agricultural literature in quite large quantities, reaching 100–200 copies. The plays published by Jaan Leoke were sold quickly and additional orders were sent to Estonia [6, 9/75, 18/83].

The Estonian publishers ordered fiction and scholarly works on history, philology as well as periodical publications. The Society of Estonian Literature was also interested in Russian-language monographs on writers and history of literature as well as reference works [3, 34, 37]. Jaan Leoke owned a large archival collection of Estonian publications which he had inherited from his father [7, 12]. Thus he wished, in addition to other orders, to acquire one copy of all the Estonian-language publications issued by “Külvaja” in order to complete his collection.

The Estonian publishers were also offered the Estonian-language publications issued at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, before the October revolution in 1917, which were stored in the warehouse of “Külvaja”.

After the death of Juhan Lilienbach in 1928 the most active period in the exchange of books came to an end. The new head of “Külvaja” Villem Reiman had no former ties with the Estonian publishing circles and he was obviously not interested in contacts with “White” Estonia, representing a more orthodox wing of the Estonian communists. For example, Jaan Leoke sent many letters to “Külvaja” after he had learned about the death of Juhan Lilienbach from the newspaper “Edasi”, expressing the wish to continue the exchange of books, but received no answer [7, 32, 34–37]. In the end of the 1920s and in the beginning of the 1930s there were strong collisions between different groups of Estonian com-

munists and intelligentsia, living in the Soviet Russia. Some writers were accused of being “nationalist democrats” by the more orthodox authors. They were condemned for using modern Estonian language, deriving from the “White” Republic of Estonia and for the ties with Estonian “bourgeois” literature and writers [27, 8–11]. This atmosphere obviously had a negative impact on the book-exchange with Estonia.

However, the Estonian publishers made further attempts to restore the contacts in the middle of the 1930s when the publishing house “Külvaja” had already merged with the Publishing Society of Foreign Workers of the USSR. The former printing office of “Külvaja” was still operating under the same name and the Society of Estonian Literature and Jaan Leoke approached the enterprise with the proposition to exchange books in 1935–1936 [7, 27/101; 3, 22]. Both propositions received a positive reaction by the printing office “Külvaja” and exchange of books was carried out until the repressions of 1937.

But the exchange of books with the Estonian institutions in the middle of the 1930s was even wider. The Estonian Section of the Publishing Society of Foreign Workers of the USSR exchanged books with the Estonian National Museum and the Estonian Publishing Community in Tallinn [30, 134].

In addition to the official contacts between the publishers of Estonia and the Soviet Union, the publications treating the issues of communist movement were transported to Estonia illegally.

Thus the Estonian-language publishing centres, which acted under different political regimes, were not totally isolated. The exchange of books benefited both sides: the Estonian diaspora in the Soviet Union was able to follow the renewal of the Estonian language (although it was not accepted by the orthodox communists) and be in touch with the development of the Estonian literature and science, the same applies to the publishing and scholarly circles in Estonia.

#### THE ESTONIAN SECTION OF THE PUBLISHING SOCIETY OF FOREIGN WORKERS OF THE USSR (1934–1937)

On February 1, 1934 the independent publishing house “Külvaja” became part of the Leningrad department of the Publishing Society of Foreign Workers of the USSR. It was reformed into the Estonian Section of this department, led by Villem Reiman [28, 2]. By that time the favourable attitude towards the cultural institutions of ethnic minorities was replaced by suspicions and accusations, leading to ethnic cleansing and repressions.

The Estonian Section issued political and literary periodical publications, including the newspaper “Edasi”. Publishing of Estonian-language textbooks became the task of the Publishing House of Textbooks and Pedagogical Literature (Utchpedgiz) [28, 16].

The department of distribution of “Külvaja” was liquidated and all the book production of the Estonian Section was distributed through the all union book-selling

organisation [28, 21], at the same time the periodical publications were distributed by the special all-union system. Due to the reorganisation of the distribution system the largest share of the print run of books was sold in St. Petersburg and in the surrounding region, the other Estonian settlements received only some copies of the books [30, 13].

In addition to periodical publications the Estonian Section issued 118 titles of books: in 1934 – 27 titles, in 1935 – 37 titles, in 1936 – 38 titles and in 1937 – 16 titles [21, 216]. The book production included literature on Marxism-Leninism, books propagating the Soviet Union as well as publications on agriculture. Due to the deficit of Estonian-language fiction and books for children, the Bureau of the Communist Party Committee of the Leningrad District gave the Estonian Section orders to increase the output of these types of literature in 1935 [28, 60, 77]. The production books for children reached its peak in 1936 when nine titles were issued; eight of them were translations from Russian and one – “Gulliver in Lilliput” by J. Swift – translation from the English language. No books by Estonian authors were published for children, but adult fiction included some titles by Hans Pöögelmann, Valter Juhkum and others.

The Estonian Section had to co-ordinate its publishing plans with the management of the Publishing Society of Foreign Workers of the USSR, the work with a manuscript could not begin without its corroboration. The Moscow officials controlled all the

propositions very thoroughly, especially the future publications of Marxist-Leninist literature. For example, the Estonian Section was forbidden to issue six collections of articles by V. I. Lenin and J. Stalin because no publications with similar composition had been published in the Russian language [31, 78].

The section operated with a planned loss and received subsidies from the management of the Publishing Society of Foreign Workers of the USSR in the amount of 150 000 roubles and from the sector of periodical publications (55 000 roubles) for issuing the newspaper “Edasi”. Despite these subsidies the section felt constant economic hardships and was unable to pay its partners in time. Therefore additional subsidies were required from the Leningrad Soviet of the Deputies of the Working People [31, 36–37]. The soviet donated the section 50 000 roubles for the year 1936 [31, 38], but the requirement of the additional subsidy for the next year resulted in a huge bureaucratic correspondence – neither the communist party organs nor the soviet institutions were willing to support the section. At last the Leningrad Soviet allocated the subsidy in the amount of 65 000 roubles, but annulled it only shortly afterwards. These circumstances led to conflicts with the printing office “Külvaja”, who was unwilling to take orders from the section. The debt of the section to the printing office reached to 52 461 roubles [31, 38]. The Estonian Section found no measures for increasing the income – it was consid-

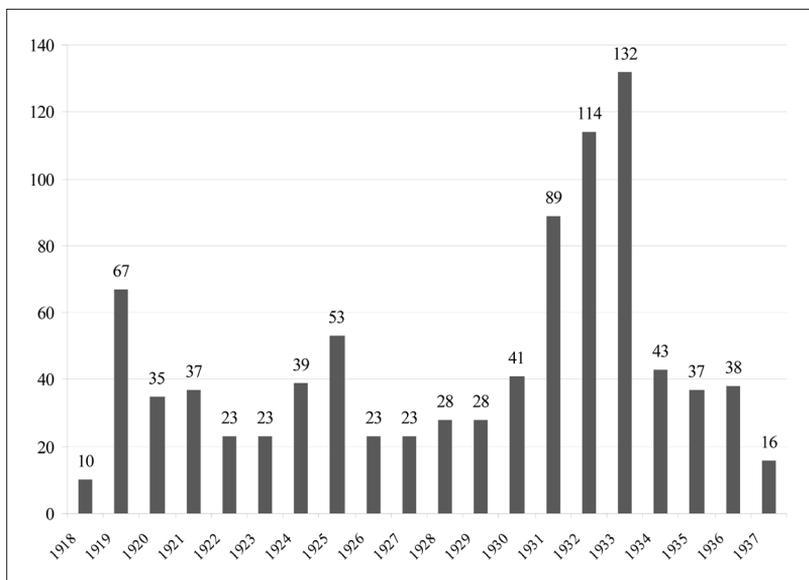


Chart 2. Annual title production of Estonian-language books in St. Petersburg in 1918–1937

ered politically harmful to raise the price of the newspaper “Edasi”, the small number of new book titles issued by the section resulted in limited sales. The economic decay of the section led to the sequestration of its bank account [31, 39–41]. This coincided with the political hostility against the diaspora nationalities and their institutions. Thus publishing of all Estonian-language publications, including the newspaper “Edasi” came to a halt in the beginning of 1938 [29, 25].

The total title production of Estonian-language books in St. Petersburg in 1918–1937 includes 899 titles. The fol-

lowing chart, compiled on the basis of data presented in the article by K. Robert [21, 216] demonstrates the dynamics of annual production.

The presented figures demonstrate fluctuant level of Estonian-language book publishing with certain ascents in 1919 and in 1925 with the following downfalls. The high spot was reached in 1931–1933 when accordingly 114 and 132 titles were issued. Together with the liquidation of the independent publishing house “Külvaja” the annual title production decreased considerably. After 1937 only few Estonian-language publications were printed in all the Soviet Union.

## CONCLUSIONS

The activities of ethnic minorities depended on the general political situation in the country, on the national policy, which moved from favourable disposition in the 1920s to the notion of the “enemy nation” in the 1930s. The books in non-Russian languages were used for propagating the Soviet ideology and the publishing activity of diaspora nationalities was allowed as long as it was considered necessary and useful by the Communist Party and the Soviet authorities.

The content and design of the Estonian-language printed matter issued in the Soviet Union reflects the political, economical and cultural developments in the country.

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The majority of books treated Marxism-Leninism or popularised life in the Soviet Union. In addition to political books fiction, textbooks and practical publications on agriculture were also published. But despite the content of the publications, the publishing and distribution of Estonian-language books helped to maintain the national identity of Estonians, living in the Soviet Union. Textbooks in the Estonian language were inevitable for the existence of the Estonian schools, publications of fiction – a precondition for cultural activities, etc. All these publications enabled the Estonian minority in the Soviet Union to live an active life using their mother tongue, which has helped to preserve the Estonian-language settlements up to the present day.

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## ESTŲ LEIDYBINĖ VEIKLA SANKT PETERBURGE TARPUKARIO LAIKOTARPIU (1918–1937)

AILE MÖLDRE, TIJU REIMO

Santrauka

1926 metų visuotinio gyventojų surašymo duomenimis, Sovietų Sąjungoje gyveno per 150 000 estų. Jie sudarė vieną gausiausių šalies mažumų. Dauguma jų gyveno Sankt Peterburge ir aplinkiniuose regionuose. Todėl Sankt Peterburgas (tuomet – Leningradas) tapo svarbiausiu literatūros estų kalba leidybos centru Sovietų Rusijoje. Trečiajame dešimtmetyje komunistų partija ir sovietų valdžia rėmė kultūros produkciją visomis sovietų kalbomis. Kartu su NEP'o politika tai sukūrė palankias sąlygas steigti nacionalines leidyklas. Estų leidybinė draugija buvo įkurta 1922 m. ir veikė kaip svarbiausia knygų leidybos estų kalba institucija ligi 1925 metų. Jos produkcija apima daugiausia politinius leidinius, vadovėlius ir grožinę literatūrą. Dėl ekonominių sunkumų kompanija bankrutavo 1926 metais.

Po šio bankroto leidykla „Kūlvaja“, veikusi šiuo vardu nuo 1922 m., tapo didžiausia knygų estų kalba leidykla. Jos produkcija 1922–1934 m. sudarė 484 knygos. Produkcija tipiška tam laikotarpiui: marksizmo-leninizmo ir propagandinė literatūra, grožinė literatūra, vadovėliai, praktiniai vadovai ir kt. Būdinga tai, kad sovietinės leidyklos leido knygas dideliais tiražais. Vidutinis knygų estų kalba tiražas buvo 2000 egzempliorių. Abiem leidykloms vadovavo Estijos komunistai – žmonės, kurie pasitraukė į Rusiją, kai komunistai pralaimėjo nepriklausomybės karą. Tą patį galima pasakyti apie pagrindinius autorius ir vertėjus, kurie su jais bendradarbiavo. Jie palaikė marksizmo-leninizmo idėjas ir propagavo sovietinį gyvenimo būdą. Estų leidykloms būdingi bendri sovietinės lei-

dybos sistemos trūkumai – popieriaus ir spaustuvų stygius, bloga medžiagų kokybė, sklaidos sunkumai. Leidėjai negalėjo laiku sumokėti autoriams ar spaustuvėms. Subsidijos dažniausiai buvo vienintelis būdas išspręsti problemą.

Ketvirtojo dešimtmečio viduryje sovietų mažumų politika pasikeitė ir palankų požiūrį išstūmė priešiškus, netgi etninius Sovietų Sąjungos mažumų diasporų valymas ir nacionalinių institucijų draudimas. Dėl to 1934 m. buvo likviduota leidykla „Kūlvaja“. Leidyba estų kalba 1934–1937 m. vyko mažesniu mastu – ja rūpinosi SSRS Užsienio darbininkų leidybinės draugijos Estų sekcija. 1937 m. sekcija buvo uždaryta dėl naujos represijų bangos. Tarp aukų buvo ir pagrindiniai Estijos komunistų vadovai.

Sovietų Rusijoje leistos knygos estų kalba buvo platinamos ir Estijos Respublikoje. Juhanas Liliembachas, pirmasis „Kūlvaja“ vadovas, inicijavo knygų mainus su įvairiais Estijos leidėjais. Jis taip pat pirkė knygas iš Estijos, kad papildytų estų knygų, platinamų per šią leidyklą, asortimentą. Po J. Liliembacho mirties mainai apmirė, bet buvo atgaivinti ketvirtajame dešimtmetyje, kai „Kūlvaja“ spaustuvė ir Estų sekcija pradėjo bendrauti su Estijos kompanijomis.

Leidybą estų kalba Sovietų Sąjungoje veikė politinės sąlygos, o jos buvo palankiausias politinės literatūros leidybai. Kiti literatūros tipai – grožinė literatūra, vadovėliai, praktiniai vadovai – taip pat buvo pažymėti marksistinės-lenininės ideologijos ženklu. Tačiau estų mažumai buvo svarbu skaityti knygas gimtąja kalba, kuri sudarė nacionalinės kultūros pagrindą.

[Iteikta 2008 m. kovo mėn.]