

Andrejs Dripe's Journalism about the Federal Republic of Germany and Its Impact on Societal Change in the 1980s

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This article examines travels outside the Soviet Union by Latvian writers who were recognized by the occupation regime and acclaimed by the public during the Brezhnev Era, as one of the privileges enjoyed by the so-called creative intelligentsia, and how those travels were reflected in their literary and journalistic writings. Journeys abroad elicited conflicting emotions, and writers had to be relatively affluent to travel. Still, they often experienced humiliation when confronted with the reality of their meager financial means outside the U.S.S.R. and the fact that they remained in imprisonment even in the free West. The surge in popularity of literary periodicals in the 1980s played a crucial role in shaping a new culture of the press and journalism, as they provided large masses of readers with essential information about living abroad. Notes on the travels include observations on the socio-economic situation, environment, and political events and documents that have facilitated trips to the West. The case study explores the travelogue by Andrejs Dripe from the 1980s. Dripe's journalism records the rapid transition from the Brezhnev Era to Gorbachev's perestroika. It becomes the first official source of information about the West only a few people among his readers have visited.

Keywords: Latvian literature / journalism / travel writing / Soviet tourism / image of the West / the Brezhnev Era / perestroika

Kathleen Parthé suggests that a thorough examination of the literary process in post-Stalinist Russia, and potentially throughout the entire Soviet era, reveals that, in numerous aspects, the significance of the

text surpasses that of the individual writer (Parthé 295).¹ However, during the period of Stagnation, also called the Breznev Era, the role and choices of a singular writer became more visible and identifiable. A viewpoint regarding the contribution of an individual in the events of a particular era can be corroborated by research done by Dina Fainberg and Artemy M. Kalinovsky, who have stated that “the political, public, and scholarly debate throughout Stagnation in Soviet history is often wedged over the lines of ‘pre-crisis’ or ‘pre-renewal’.” It also has been emphasized that “when the Soviet Union collapsed despite Gorbachev’s reform and attempts to modernize the country, ‘stagnation’ became the primary explanation of the failure of the Soviet socialist project” (Fainberg and Kalinovsky xiv). It is essential to shift the usual, more comfortable research focus from dissidents to writers recognized by official critics and readers. Latvian historian Daina Bleiere has written that historians and other researchers should continue to uncover “uncomfortable topics, such as changes in the value system of society under the influence of the Soviet regime, the relationship of certain groups with the Soviet government, how and whether society was able to influence the Soviet regime” (Bleiere 33).² Bleiere admits that reducing the question to collaboration “moves the problem to a simplified level (co-operation with the occupation regime is by definition evil), and this approach ignores the fact that the Soviet regime also had a certain ideological appeal, at least in its early days” (33).

The methodological basis for this paper is threefold: it derives from the work of Alexei Yurchak, who provides a unique understanding of the concept of “the abroad” in the Soviet Union as demarcating not actual borders or territory but an imagined space; the insights of the Canadian historian Anne E. Gorsuch about Soviet tourism abroad; and the Epp Annus’s concept of the Baltic States as the Western borderlands within postcolonial studies.

The theoretical and historical framework

Latvian writer Zigmunds Skujiņš, after being denied permission for his and his daughter’s trip to Great Britain to visit Latvian exile writer Gunars Janovskis in 1976, writes in a letter to Janovskis on

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² All quotations from the Latvian are translated by the author of the article.

29 September: “Let me tell you a joke. Jānis says: I want to go to England again. Peter: Have you been to England before? Jānis: No, but once I already wanted to go... [...] We have unpacked the suitcases.” (Skujiņš, *Letter 1*)

In this letter, Skujiņš retells a popular anecdote of the Soviet era, the core version of which includes Paris instead of England. Alexei Yurchak discusses this joke as a staple of the era, linking it to another Soviet commonplace, namely, *to see Paris and die*, the author of which is Russian writer Ilya Erenburg. Incidentally, the Khrushchev era got its popular name from the title of one of Erenburg's novels as well, namely *The Thaw* (Оттепель). The title “To See Paris and Die” is given to the extensive studies by Eleonory Gilburd about the Soviet and Western cultural communication in the Khrushchev's era, when peaceful coexistence with the West became the new faith, along with the idea of the universality of human culture and the shared value of world civilization.

With the example of the mentioned anecdote, Yurchak describes the paradox that is included in the unique understanding of the concept of “the abroad” (*заграница*) in the territory of Soviet Union:

Zagranitsa lay at the intersection of these two attitudes toward the wider world, signifying an imaginary place that was simultaneously knowable and unattainable, tangible and abstract, mundane and exotic. This concept was disconnected from any “real” abroad and located in some unspecified place-over there (*tam*), with them (*u nikh*), as opposed to with us (*u nas*)—and although references to it were ubiquitous, its real existence became dubious. [...] These narratives and jokes, of which there were many in late Soviet times, depict *zagranitsa* as a Soviet imaginary “elsewhere” that was not necessarily about any real place. The “West” (*zapad*) was its archetypal manifestation. It was produced locally and existed only at the time when the real West could not be encountered. (Yurchak 159)

Yurchak calls this version of the abroad “the Imaginary West” (159). This concept reflects the paradoxical combination of internationality and isolation regarding Soviet culture's relation to the rest of the world. On the one hand, the Soviet people realized that the communist idea they had represented to the world was based on an internationalist idea that implied belonging to all humankind. On the other hand, the Soviet people were also aware that they had virtually no opportunity to come into direct contact with people beyond Soviet borders or at least beyond Eastern European socialist countries.

Anne E. Gorsuch stresses that Soviet tourism was political, but politics were not its only manifestation. Soviet tourism shows not only

how Soviet citizens internalized Soviet norms and supported Soviet goals but also how Soviet tourists avoided official efforts to regulate their experience and implemented individual travel agendas. Namely, many tourists accepted and even actively promoted the narratives of the superiority of the Soviet state and citizens. Thus, crossing the border, whether the Soviet internal border or the Iron Curtain, challenged the traveler's understanding of things outside the Soviet Union and formed and transformed political and personal identities. "If tourism was olive branch and propaganda tool, it was also an opportunity for personal encounter, private life, and pleasure," Gorsuch writes (Gorsuch 190). The scholar argues that "the tourist experience, no matter how carefully supervised, was unpredictable, however" (190) but this knowledge enables us to look at the writers' touring experience and how it reflects in their work. Latvian scholars Eva Eglāja-Kristšone and Zita Kārkla have studied the travel notes of Latvian writers, the symbolization of the border revealed in them (Eglāja-Kristšone) and analyzing autobiographical and literary works as a case study of the practice of integrating biographical cartography into fiction (see Kārkla and Eglāja-Kristšone, "Liriskās"; Kārkla and Eglāja-Kristšone, "Her Story") while the aspects of orientalism and otherness have been examined by Maija Burima, who emphasizes the close connection of travel notes with the paradigm of colonialism, stating that writing travel notes was an essential part of the construction of the identity narrative in the colonial empires (see Burima).

Estonian and Latvian scholars have also explored travelogues produced in the Soviet and post-Soviet period and covering travels during the occupation time, stating that "biographical narratives reveal a multi-layered criticism of the Soviet system and society, yet generally, travels were recalled in a positive way" (Rattus and Järs 964), or, "versions of [...] writings published in the post-Soviet period and later commentaries bear witness to episodes that could not be described in the Brezhnev Era as well as self-censorship" (Oga 120).

What does it mean for a writer (and, more broadly, a Soviet citizen) to travel abroad (namely, outside the territory of the USSR) in the 1970s and 1980s? Opportunities to leave behind the Iron Curtain arose after the death of Joseph Stalin, during the rule of Khrushchev—first to the nearby socialist countries at the turn of the 1950s and 1960s—and also to the so-called capitalist countries. As Bleiere admits, during Khrushchev's time, the regime's policies were contradictory, and the control over the citizens also included limiting contact with the outside world as much as possible:

Like many other things in the Soviet Union, information about the outside world was in short supply. Access to it was a privilege and a highly valued one at that. A certain number of scientists, intellectuals, and artists could visit foreign countries relatively often. Such an opportunity was given to those who had climbed high enough on the career ladder and whose culture of behavior and communication skills made it possible to think that they would not bring dishonor to the USSR. On the other hand, regular visits abroad helped them maintain their status and gain knowledge that others did not have. (Bleiere 144)

Eleonor Gilburd claims in an interview: “These are artists and writers who traveled abroad and then depicted foreign places in writing, pencil or watercolors. Cultural mediators held positions of eminence that gave them access to mass media. And it was the state’s monopoly on radio, print, and cinema that assured them a country-wide audience. The general Soviet condition of restricted information and closed borders created opportunities for a few commanding voices to have a profound impact. They pursued a self-delegated mission and cared deeply about the reception of their efforts.” (Chernyakhovskaya) This is confirmed by the notes written by Latvian poet Imants Ziedonis to the Soviet literary magazine *Druzhba narodov* in 1972:

But definitely there is one task—whether on a walk or at work—to record our environment truly, to be true for the sake of future generations, because they will no longer have these opportunities—to live in this time that we live in. (qtd. in Rožkalne 456)

The year 1964 marks the end of Khrushchev’s thaw. The Brezhnev Era began with *Détente* of the Cold War and stagnation (1968–1979) and with the so-called second Cold War (1979–1985), when “the space for personal freedom expanded more and more. Especially since the end of the 1960s, the efforts to get into the head of every citizen, to ‘zombify’ have greatly decreased. External behavior was more important—don’t jump out, do not say anything you should not, at least outwardly be a normal Soviet person.” (Bleiere 153; see also Noack)

Tourism outside the USSR required not only status but also financial means. Although wages for a Soviet citizen rose in the 1960s, with daily costs remaining the same, ordinary workers still did not have enough money to travel. For instance, farmers in the 1950s and the 1960s faced this problem. In the 1970s–1980s, as collective farms became richer, the situation changed. The intelligentsia, on the other hand, although not paid more than industrial workers, had opportunities to earn more,

for example, by giving private lessons or renting out additional living space available only to the creative intelligentsia (Gorsuch 84).

Latvian writers' opportunities to travel were provided by various organizations, such as the Union of Latvian Soviet Writers, the Latvian Committee for Cultural Relations with Compatriots Abroad, the Soviet Committee for the Defence of Peace, the Latvian SSR of Sciences and the USSR Academy of Sciences, on behalf of various transnational friendship organizations, in cultural delegations, such as choirs and dance groups, as well as tourists, using the routes offered by the official company "*Inturist*" (Eversone and Oga). In exceptional cases, it was also possible to visit foreign countries by personal invitation. However, with the preconditions for the trip to occur, there was still a high probability that it could be canceled at the last minute. Extensive questionnaires, unpleasant questions, especially when traveling to the West, suspicion, and insecurity; the whole process became very stressful for tourist candidates, and often the travel intentions were not revealed to even the closest people until the day of departure (Gorsuch 111).

In the period of the *Détente* of the Cold War, tensions between the Soviet Union and the United States eased, which had a positive effect on tourism and cultural exchanges. Scientific-technical and cultural cooperation between West Germany and the Soviet Union started in the late 1950s. It flourished in the Brezhnev's Era when the Treaty between Germany and the Soviet Union, was signed in Moscow in August 1970. It launched German policy *vis-à-vis* Eastern Europe (*Ostpolitik*), paving the way for the normalization of diplomatic relations and confirming the peaceful territorial *status quo* between the Soviet Union and the Federal Republic of Germany. The development of Soviet tourism with the West was facilitated by the Helsinki Final Act in 1975.

Researcher Madara Eversone has counted, in the documents at the archives of the Latvian Soviet Writers' Union, that in the 1970s, a total of 606 trips were made abroad, including within the USSR, while in the 1980s, 575. These documents do not contain information on all trips abroad during the period, as writers also traveled within other institutions. In the archive documents, information on trips abroad is relatively systematic until 1985. In later documents, the information is incomplete due to the political and economic changes in the country when opportunities to travel outside the Soviet Union gradually became more available. There are fewer tourist trips to the West among the members of the Latvian Writers' Union, in comparison with trips to the Socialist Bloc countries. The analysis of the documents shows

that trips to the West took place within delegations of various organizations, to Sweden (at least 31 trips), the Federal Republic of Germany (28), Finland (22), Canada (14), Great Britain (12), USA (11), Italy (10), Greece (10), France (10), Denmark (7), and other countries (see Eversone and Oga).

In his memoirs, Andrejs Dripe, writing about traveling as one of his hobbies, similarly compared it to a special kind of *disease*, addiction:

The dullness of writing helped my dullness of travel a lot. And not just in the form of author's fees. Members of the Writers' Union, however, had advantages and greater choices. [...] I didn't travel like an ordinary tourist, but I was assigned, I was part of a small special group. These privileges were given by the status of a member of the Writers' Union [...]. It cannot be denied that we had our advantages. (Dripe, *Bez* 248, 241)

However, writers also had to show their initiative, especially in the competition between the Soviet republics: "A lot came from Central Asia, but very few came from the Baltic republics. If you didn't ask for it yourself, then you were rarely sent anywhere." (Ziedonis 83) Scholar Madara Eversone rightly links the privileges enjoyed by members of the intelligentsia and creative unions to the political goals of the Soviet government:

It was in the interests of the Communist Party to ensure the loyalty of the creative intelligentsia, so the status of a member of the Writers' Union granted several household and material privileges. The material benefit from the Literary Fund gave the members of the Writers' Union the opportunity to go on creative business trips, including to foreign countries, to receive travel tickets to sanatoriums, resorts, etc. (Eversone 19)

Writers' travels abroad, on the one hand, can be seen as a different, unique manifestation, because writers enjoyed a special status as representatives of the intelligentsia. On the other hand, as Mārtiņš Kaprāns admits, "trips to capitalist countries also serve as a context for normalization, as they shed light on the positive experience of the Soviet era and quite often show that despite the limitations and difficulties, people had opportunities to see the world" (Kaprāns 178–179).

In Latvian literature, this period is particularly notable for writers' attempts to talk about nationally important, even decisive, topics in journalism (more directly) and fiction (in figurative language). In journalism, including travel notes, it is increasingly possible to tell, both by directly criticizing (Burima 73) and by comparing—one kolkhoz or Soviet farm with another, aesthetic phenomena or cultural develop-

ments in other republics of the USSR, socialist or capitalist countries with what is happening in the Latvian SSR.

In some cases, the information provided in travelogues created the effect directly or indirectly intended by their authors—to encourage a closer look at what is happening in the country itself, to highlight, continue and nurture national values, traditions, and identity. Analyzing the Tajikistan travelogue *Perpendikulārā karote* (*Perpendicular Spoon*, 1972), the acclaimed collaborative work of Latvian poet Imants Ziedonis, Ukrainian writer Vitalij Korotič and Latvian photographer Gunārs Janaitis, Burima has admitted that “against the Soviet ideal of forming a sense of togetherness, Latvian travelogues strengthened Latvian identity in relation to exotic cultures at the other side of the Soviet empire [...]; the travelogues fostered Latvian national identification as opposed to its exotic others” (Burima 71, 73).

Writers of the Stagnation period valued travel notes and journalism in general, its main task when viewing it alongside fiction. In 1972, Ziedonis wrote that “documentary genres are equal, organically co-growing with other prose genres” (qtd. in Rožkalne 456), while Miervaldis Birze stated: “I also consider pure journalism to be seriously evaluated [along with prose].” (Birze 5)

To a large extent, this is related to the rapid rise in popularity of literary periodicals, which reached its apogee during the National Revival (*Atmoda* in Latvian, *Atgimimo* in Lithuanian), when, as the Lithuanian literary scholar Viktorija Jonkutė wrote, “a new culture of the press and publicistic writing was forming. The literary press and the overall public communication sphere of the time also included manifestations of the changes in historical discourse, sociodynamics, and a new wave of intense (self-)expression. The cultural press was a particularly lively, dynamic sociocultural phenomenon. Literary and cultural periodical publications in Lithuania and Latvia had undoubtedly become an intense, influential and unifying cultural, social and political force [...].” (Jonkutė 9).

Trips can be divided into two main groups: professional (experience exchange) and tourist (leisure) trips. However, travel notes also provide evidence of certain goals. For example, for both Zenta Ērgle and Zigmunds Skujiņš, trips to Africa are closely related to childhood memories, that is, realities or what they read, and the fulfillment of childhood dreams. Skujiņš’s writing about Africa in 1966 is like proof of Yurchak’s thesis about foreign countries as an imaginary space:

As a child, I lived mainly in Africa. [...]. This spring I went to Africa again. Years go by. Not only hair turns gray, but so do dreams. I will not say that

everything remained completely intact in my memory, and yet—I did not come to Africa but returned as if to a childhood yard that I had long known and walked many times. With a trembling heart and curious eyes. What are you really like, Africa? [...] Interesting and a little scary. You want to believe, but doubts also torment you. As if I were not just a tourist, but an auditor. (Skujiņš, *Jūtu* 16)

Zenta Ērgle defined the purpose of the trip similarly:

“In my childhood, a quilt hung next to my bed. It featured a jungle. [...] Falling asleep in the evenings, I wondered: when I grow up, I will go to Africa and walk through a real jungle. [...] Children’s adventure literature was replaced by serious books—stories about Africa by Grzymek, Hunter, and other authors. Longing for southern exoticism could not be quenched even by a double workload and family cares.” (Ērgle 6–7)

The list of goals for foreign trips should also include a specific creative intention—to write notes of a smaller or larger volume, a book, such as Andrejs Dripe, Zenta Ērgle, Miervaldis Birze, or a broader plan, using the foreign trip in a sense only as a background—like Ziedonis’s trip to Japan and the Philippines together with the choir *Ave sol* in 1978 and 1979 to write a book about the choir and its conductor Imants Kokars. Memoirs of Andrejs Dripe testify another purpose of the trip:

In the spring of 1989, Ziga [writer’s wife] and I were both in Finland. I wanted to see this clean, harsh land and its high level of culture (Finnish libraries are unique), so that I could roughly imagine what Latvia would be like if the occupation of 1940 did not take place. (Dripe, *Bez* 248)

This is in line with the opinion of the Estonian scientist Epp Annus about the Baltic States as the Western borderlands and the close connection of the Baltic States with neighboring countries:

Here, the Western borderlands enjoyed the advantage of a still-active pre-Soviet cultural memory, in comparison with those lands where Sovietization processes started immediately in the post-revolutionary years: in the Western borderlands, a living memory kept alive continuities with pre-Soviet times. (Annus 240)

Visits to the neighboring Western countries in a sense, helped to give colors to this continuity, which through the works published in the 1980s, promoted non-violent resistance and a return to the value system of pre-war Latvia, namely, “though cultural events and artefacts such as national festivals, films, songs, and novels did not in themselves

lead to massive resistance against Soviet rule, these, too, together with oral memory, sustained a national layer in cultural imaginaries and preserved the potential for a future decolonial politics” (240–241).

A condition or emotion that seems to be experienced by all travelers, regardless of status or hand, is the lack of money due to the Soviet Union’s restrictions on currency exchange (see Oga). Many authors also testify to this in their notes, speaking as if it were a matter of course, thus identifying with those staying at home. These feelings are often accompanied by shame and even humiliation. Zenta Ērgle does not avoid mentioning the limited funds in the notes as a phenomenon related to travel: “Gorgeous silver products in the showcases—trays, cups, medallions, bracelets. No matter how great our bargaining skills are, they will not be bought for us. But you can have fun, it doesn’t cost anything.” (Ērgle 39) Imants Ziedonis shares his feelings of shame only in his notes about his trip to India, published in the post-Soviet period: “We didn’t have any money, and we were already told in Moscow that our money means nothing to them in India and the currency exchange is so small that we won’t be able to do anything, that there will be many poor people and we can settle with pencils [...]. But I was ashamed to give him pencils for that shell.” (Ziedonis 106)

When traveling abroad, the free time that travelers manage to spend outside the official excursion program and when they can get away from the ever-present “supervisors” is critical—both by walking alone or in small groups and by meeting Latvians in exile in private parties, gaining the above-mentioned unpredictable experience. Testimonies about time outside the official travel program as extraordinary unauthorized activities are recorded (with infrequent exceptions) only in notes published in the post-Soviet period. Usually, it is related to a private experience, breaking out of limitations.

Unauthorized adventures are often also related to intimate life, which was still taboo in the USSR in the 1980s. Dripe recalled in 1994: “I got to know the famous pleasure and entertainment districts, I usually walked alone in Soho in London, Clichy Boulevard, and Pigalle Square in Paris. [...] I was neither condemned nor excited, I just had to see it and realize that this is how life is.” (Dripe, *Bez* 244)

Writers also tried to get acquainted with the limited sex experience in the Soviet Union, and tried to buy and bring home, for example, porn magazines. In the letters and diaries of other prose writers and poets, not considered this time, there is evidence of visits to video salons, and temporary intimate relationships, for example, a Latvian poet with a lady from among the exiled Latvians.

Case study: Andrejs Dripe and his travelogue

The rapid transition from the Brezhnev Era to Gorbachev's perestroika has been recorded in Andrejs Dripe's 1986 book *Līdzatvestais: Pasauli neapturēt* (*What I Have Brought Along: Not to Stop the World*), which contains travelogues and notes from his visits to the Federal Republic of Germany as well as a chapter on his travel to Syria, Yemen, and Morocco.

Andrejs Dripe (1929–2013), Latvian writer, publicist, and pedagogue, gained wide attention with his novel *Pēdējā barjera* (*The Last Barrier*, 1971) and a book of non-fiction *Kolonijas audzinātāja piezīmes* (*Notes of a Colony Educator*, 1975) in which he used his experience as a teacher in a juvenile offender colony. Dripe was one of the first in Latvian Soviet literature to address issues related to re-education, the effectiveness of punishment, and the conditions of imprisonment. In the 1980s, Dripe's popularity was strengthened by other non-fiction books and *Līdzatvestais*. The writer, journalist, and editor Aivars Kļavis has admitted, in 2021, that “thanks to such peaks of this genre as Ziedonis's *Courland* [*Kurzemīte*] or Dripe's *Notes of a Colony Educator*, at that time [in the 1980s in Latvia] [literary] journalism was extremely in demand and popular” (Kļavis 37).

The success of a famous and regime-friendly professional writer allowed Dripe to travel privileges. Dripe also held both paid and public office in the Writers' Union and its primary organization of the Communist Party (a member since 1975) where he was elected, in 1981 and 1983, as the Deputy Secretary and responsible for organizational work (LNA1 99; LNA2 96). In his memoirs, Dripe has repeatedly mentioned the “dullness of travel” and his interest in youth, which made him go on regular trips to the Soviet Union, socialist countries, and the West. It must be admitted that Dripe's travels and travelogues became more intense in the mid-1980s after, in March 1982, he joined the KGB's agents, as shown by his card in the LSSR KGB's document archive (KGBAC).

In his memoirs, in 1994, Dripe remembers that “many people, suffering from the madness of travel like me, have never been to the borders. Either the pedigrees were wrong, or they had ‘sinned’ against the government of the ‘beloved’ workers themselves, but they were consistently denied foreign passports” (Dripe, *Bez* 248). Dripe claims that he has not received permission on several occasions and that his trip to Cuba in the late 1960s may not have taken place because his children built a bunker while playing in the forest in the summer, which

has aroused the interest of the authorities (239). Dripe's trips include both business and leisure trips to socialist satellite countries, Western countries, and the so-called exotic countries, both as part of delegations of organizations and by private invitation. Until the mid-1980s, Dripe had traveled a lot: to the German Democratic Republic and Poland in 1972, Somalia and Yemen in 1975, the United Kingdom (London) in 1975, Morocco and Spain in 1978, France in 1979, East Germany, again, in 1979, Hungary in 1981, Near East in 1982, Romania in 1982, Syria in 1982, West Germany in 1984, Sweden in 1984.

Dripe's memories mention his trips abroad in the 1970s and 1980s: Poland and the GDR (1972, coincides with what is mentioned in the archive documents); Yemeni TDR, Kuwait (1975, on file: Somalia, Yemen); "after some time" Morocco (in archive documents 1978); Syria (in archive documents September 1982); Algeria (not mentioned in documents); England, Spain, FRG, Sweden, France (all mentioned in documents); together with his wife: GDR, Hungary, Romania (all mentioned in the documents; the wife is mentioned only in the records of the Hungarian trip). Dripe writes that the trips to Syria and Algeria were "organized by the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Union of Writers of the USSR" (Dripe, *Bez* 244) (this is also mentioned in the Writers' Union's documents on Syria) and that there were only two or three people in these groups (244).

Summarizing and comparing the Writers' Union's documents and Dripe's journalisms, it can be concluded that there is no evidence of the following Dripe's trips in the archive documents: (1) Algeria (a trip organized by the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Writers' Union of the USSR for a group of three people together with translator Olga Vlasova and Kazakh writer Anuar Alimzhanov; no date clarified); (2) a ship cruise along the Mediterranean Sea (Malta, Tunisia, Spain, France, Italy, date unknown), together with his wife; (3) VFR (1981, together with Latvian actress Dina Kuple, a trip organized by the Cultural Relations Committee); (4) Yugoslavia (date not established); (5) VFR (1984, individual trip "at the invitation of Dzidra Vilka to get to know the life of the local youth"; Dripe, *Bez* 247); (6) Canada (1988); (7) Finland (1989, together with his wife).

Dripe's trip to West Germany took place in the spring of 1984 and lasted about two months. The route of the journey, according to the travel notes, was the following: Riga–Moscow–Hamburg–Essen–[mainly staying in Hamburg and Essen, Dortmund, Münster, Freiburg were also visited]–Hamburg–Moscow–Riga. During the trip, Dripe intended to get acquainted with the youth and the life of young people

in West Germany. He visited schools, talked with students and teachers, and followed young people in their work and free time and their life in farming communities. Dripe's travelogues are complemented by photographs taken by himself, which have been published both in periodicals and in books.

The manuscript of the book was completed and submitted to the publishing house at the end of 1984. It was first published as an article *Pasauli neapturēt (You Can't Stop the World)* with the subtitle *Visit to the youth of VFR* in the magazine *Liesma (Flame)* (run of 174,000 copies) in 1984 (No. 8–11); separate section *Ārākāpēji (Those Who are Stepping Out)* was published in the daily newspaper *Padomju Jaunatne (Soviet Youth)* (circulation 216,000 copies) in February 1985.

An expanded version of the article is included as a separate chapter in *Līdzatvestais*, the manuscript of which was completed and handed over to the publishing house at the end of 1984. Two official reviewers of the publishing house were appointed for the manuscript: former Soviet diplomat in Sweden Ivars Ķezbers and former instructor of the Central Committee of the Communist Party in Latvia, and head of the press sector, and Ēvalds Strods, the organizational secretary of the Writers' Union. In an internal review of the book, Strods wrote: "Dripe's 'bags' contain things that the Latvian reader has seen little by little because until now there are no large-scale works on the life of young people abroad." The Writers' Union's archive documents show that despite the backlash of the reviewers, on September 23, 1987, at the closed meeting of the first organization of the Communist Party of the Writers' Union about Dripe's "personal contribution to the processes of social renewal," he reported on the "problems" of the book, as he had compared the West German youth in Germany with the youth in Soviet Latvia (LNA4 78).

Līdzatvestais was published in the summer of 1986, with a circulation of 40,000 copies. It was recognized as the most popular journalistic book of 1986; this fact was also emphasized by the writer and publicist Māra Svīre in the above-mentioned closed meeting of the communists of the Writers' Union in 1987 (LNA4 78). By the time the first reviews were published in the periodicals in February 1987, and in exile Latvian media abroad even at the end of 1988, the book was already outdated but still relevant. It is confirmed by the publication of the translation of the chapter *You Can't Stop the World* in the very first issues of the monthly *Rodnik*, the Russian version of the popular magazine *Avots (A Spring)*. The editor of *Rodnik* Oleg Mihalevich wrote: "I had already received Andrejs Dripe's voluminous article *Stop this World—I Want*

to Get Out about the youth of the West, and everyone was undeniably interested in how they live there.” (qtd. in Kļavis 221)

The book starts with short impressions from various Western European cities (London, Paris, Marseille, Rome, Madrid, Stockholm, Hamburg), where the author has observed unusual behavior of young people since the 1970s, such as sleeping in parks, playing music in the tunnel, prostitution, etc., with such an account of travels and their routes, causing readers' trust or, on the contrary, suspicions about Dripe's special status compared to other writers and the author's contemporaries. This section is followed by the paragraph that apparently proves the changes of the Soviet colonial traveler's in the last period of the Stagnation:

One fine spring day, the wheels of TU-154 hit the concrete of the runway at Hamburg Airport. A very short moment in the air, and I'm already there—in a completely different world. It should be emphasized right away—it really is a different world. We often forget it, measure and compare it with our yardstick, with what fits here, at our home. (Dripe, *Lidzatvestais* 13)

As it is stated by Eglāja-Kristsons, “the Soviet tourist was like a camera pointing outwards to get pictures to show to armchair tourists and authorities, but the descriptions (publications in the press, books) lacked an ‘inward’ look, a personal encounter with the other, so research. Of course, there is no reason to claim that the tourists did not do it, in the same way, not only the tourists themselves change over time but also the descriptions.” (Eglāja-Kristsons 12)

Dripe represents those travelers who have changed and, besides their notes to “armchair tourists”, provides his own research. He has used a wide range of literature, though his interests were not West German geography but statistical data and the latest periodicals. With quotations from VFR newspaper and magazine publications, the author raised questions already at the beginning of the chapter, to which he seeks answers in the following subsections: how young people imagine the future, what their goals are, why young people are so pessimistic. Most of the answers point to fear of unemployment, war, lack of motivation, and feeling alienated from adult society.

During his trip, Dripe was trying to get acquainted with the youth and life of young people in West Germany from different angles. He talked to students and his contemporaries. Although the author moralizes on the “shadow sides of capitalism” and the “slavery for money,” the well thought advice and undertone of the book are clear: you must work hard and learn hard to succeed. Describing his communication difficulties with locals, Dripe gives good advice to young people in

Latvia—to learn foreign languages: English, French, and German. It is not said, but is clear that people abroad, especially in the West, do not speak and do not understand Russian.

Of course, the lack of language skills also hindered me tremendously, and I always blamed myself for not having learned the same English that the majority of people in the West are familiar with. (Dripe, *Līdzatvestais* 10)

Though it is mentioned directly only in a couple of places, it is also understandable that the author tries to compare the youth of West Germany and their prospects with the youth of Soviet Latvia. Friendly, though often exaggerated, intonation made the book easy to read and allowed it to become extremely popular:

When it comes to guys, the most eye-catching trend is hair toning, coloring, blow-drying and perming. So, strongly feminine orientations. Rarely, each other already paints their lips and wears earrings. If earlier it was only men for sale and homosexuals, now you are no longer sure who is standing in front of you—a person with pathological tendencies or simply a fashionable young man. A girl becomes more masculine in her appearance, a boy becomes more feminine. How long will it be? Come on, guess! [...]

Many of the above have already been taken over by our boys and girls. It shows attentiveness and interest. I wish this attentiveness was just as vividly expressed in other, more serious areas of life! (Dripe, *Līdzatvestais* 189)

Most likely, this was the first book in Soviet Latvia in which it was possible to find out more about the realities of *zagrānīta* or “Imaginary West,” such as unemployment, drug addiction, strikes, TV series, horoscopes, publications on sex in youth magazines, high fuel prices, discrimination from an official source, etc.:

Living in a vain month after month, realizing that time is passing, but you are nothing there, others are working, but you are living at the expense of what they have earned, doesn't that seem terrible to you? (Dripe, *Līdzatvestais* 59); *McDonald*—cheap canteens that young people like to visit” (159); TV is showing the 129th (!!!) episode of the American series *Dallas*. Fashionably dressed millionaires and their offspring roam there, mirrors of villa swimming pools shining, super expensive sports cars gliding by. Even millionaires have their heartaches, love dramas, and family disagreements. (66)

As mentioned, one of the most unpleasant conditions that all travelers, regardless of status and convenience, seem to experience is the lack of money. Dripe claims that he was received by exiled Latvians during his VFR trip, and this also made it possible to compensate for the lack of

financial resources. Dripe formulated it as a peculiar exchange of services, although in his notes, he did not mention by name either Dzidra Vilks, who privately officially invited the writer to the VFR or other West German Latvians:

Furthermore, and this is very important, my friends could help me there. Several of them have also visited us in Latvia. Their hospitality meant a lot because I couldn't afford to pay the fabulous sums for hotel rooms. (Dripe, *Līdzatvestais* 12)

It is possible to define three conditional circles of topics that Andrejs Dripe is interested in: (1) Young people, continuing what was started in previous books. In a letter to a poet Velta Tōma, living in Canada, in 1987, Dripe wrote: "I'm writing this and that, but nothing sane is coming. [...] As usual, young people and their pain are interesting to me. I intend to have a non-fiction book ready, consisting mainly of young people's letters. Many of them are writing to me, the letters are piling up. Don't get me wrong, but young people with all their maximalism and stupidity seem much closer to me than their old and promising contemporaries." (Dripe, *Letter*)

2) A man, a contemporary, or a friend of thoughts and arguments, in the free world. In the book, Dripe has various interlocutors from local Latvian and German circles: Mr. Mauer, Mr. Sauer, and Fritz from Hamburg. Admittedly, Dripe has few associates, but perhaps this is a false maneuver.

3) The common and the differences between the Federal Republic of Germany and Soviet Latvia.

Directly from Dripe's book, most readers first learned about several of the phenomena mentioned above, which already entered the Latvian post-communist space in the early 1990s. This was later, in 1994, acknowledged by the author: "From today's [the early 1990s] point of view, of course, this book has its shortcomings and due to the fees required by the regime (otherwise the work would not have been published at all), but this happened minimally, and in general I am not ashamed of my work. It was the first semi-open book that introduced Latvian youth to the world of their Western peers." (Dripe, *Bez* 247)

Also, in his travel notes, Dripe has repeatedly emphasized that the knowledge of the inhabitants of the VFR about the Soviet Union is little, superficial, and negative. Like in other authors' travelogues, like Ērgle's notes on Africa, Papua New Guinea, and Australia, Dripe

repeatedly mentioned that the people he met in West Germany, likewise people from other continents, had never seen a single tourist from the Soviet Union before.

Conclusion

In the so-called Brezhnev Era, the writers were materially provided and took advantage of the system's advantages and privileges, which, although associated with inconvenience and insecurity, allowed them to go on exchange and tourism trips outside the USSR to the so-called "capitalist countries." Traveling to the West allowed the writers to compare conditions inside and outside the Soviet Union and to draw conclusions about the possibilities of "free Soviet citizens" as tourists entering the free world. The different understanding of it, according to Alexey Yurchak, lay beneath the term *zaganitsa* or "Imaginary West."

Notes on the travels include observations on the socio-economic situation, and environment and reports on the political events and documents that have facilitated trips to the West. Often experience comes as a surprise to the travelers themselves: for example, people of other nationalities, language barrier, the lack of money.

The travelogue by Andrejs Dripe records the rapid transition from Brezhnev's Era to Gorbachev's perestroika and becomes the first official source that informs about the realities of the real West only a few people among readers have visited. Travel notes on a trip to the Federal Republic of Germany, which belongs to the end of the stagnation period, the period of "perestroika" and the National Revival, is one of the texts that characterize these changes, when exactly this look "inward" comes to the fore and personal impressions outside the tourist group routes. It was a private experience that sometimes led to anti-Soviet views or actions—thanks to trips abroad, travelers could return home apparently unchanged on the outside, but having experienced internal changes, both personal and political. Through Dripe's travelogues, a wide audience of Latvian and Russian readers, both in Latvia and in the territory of the former USSR, was informed about the life and views of Western youth in the mid-1980s. Though considering the still slow flow of information at the end of the stagnation period and the beginning of "perestroika," Dripe's writing was relevant and to some extent prepared the readers for upcoming changes in society.

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Novinarstvo Andrejsa Dripeja o Zvezni republikli Nemčiji in njegov vpliv na družbene spremembe v osemdesetih letih 20. stoletja

Ključne besede: latvijska književnost / novinarstvo / potopisi / sovjetski turizem / podoba Zahoda / doba Brežņeva / perestrojka

Članek obravnava potovanja latvijskih pisateljev zunaj Sovjetske zveze, ki jih je v dobi Brežņeva dovoljeval okupacijski režim in jih je odobraval javnost, kot enega od privilegijev, ki jih je uživala t. i. kreativna inteligenca, ter pokaže, kako so se ta potovanja odražala v njihovih literarnih in publicističnih delih. Potovanja v tujino so vzbujala nasprotujoča si čustva, pisatelji pa so morali biti za potovanja razmeroma premožni. Kljub temu so pogosto doživljali ponižanje, ko so se soočali z realnostjo svojih skromnih finančnih sredstev zunaj ZSSR in dejstvom, da so tudi na svobodnem Zahodu dejansko ostajali v zaporu. Porast priljubljenosti literarnih revij v osemdesetih letih je imel ključno vlogo pri oblikovanju nove kulture tiska in novinarstva, saj so velikim množicam bralcev zagotavljale pomembne informacije o življenju v tujini. Zapiski o potovanjih vključujejo opažanja o družbenoekonomskih

razmerah, okolju in političnih dogodkih ter dokumente, ki so olajšali poto-
vanja na Zahod. Študija primera obravnava potopisni dnevnik Andrejsa Dri-
peja iz osemdesetih let prejšnjega stoletja. Dripejeva publicistika beleži hiter
prehod iz dobe Brežnjeva v čas Gorbačovove perestrojke. Tako Dripe postane
prvi uradni vir informacij o Zahodu, ki so ga sicer obiskali le redki izmed
njegovih bralcev.

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