

# Outlines of Soviet Latvian Ethnography: Fieldwork in the Post- War Period

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As they study the material and intangible culture of Latvians and other ethnicities living in Latvia, researchers in humanities, social sciences and the arts look for sources in the Repository of Ethnographic Materials at the Institute of Latvian History, University of Latvia (*Etnogrāfisko materiālu krātuve*, hereinafter—REM). The REM stores historical evidence about traditional buildings, crafts, traditions and the consolidation of the Soviet system in the everyday life and holidays of the rural and urban population of Latvia, visualised in descriptions, photographs, drawings, plans and textile samples. The repository's collections include more than 173 500 documentary and material units, covering the period from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present day, more widely representing the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1</sup> Most of the collections are a result of the work of Soviet ethnographers, who gathered materials during annual ethnographic expeditions (Vanaga 2011: 134).<sup>2</sup> They created a unique set of sources for current and future researchers, but the work of the ethnographers themselves in collecting evidence about the material and intangible culture during the Soviet occupation is still awaiting assessment. With the awareness that this is a subject for a special monograph, the article aims to explore the objective and subjective work conditions faced by Soviet ethnographers during their field research, which also affected the content of the REM collections.

The relevance of the collections for contemporary research is not the only consideration that urged the authors to undertake this study. An important aspect here is the awareness that, in contrast to the history of Latvian folklore (Bula 2011, Kēncis 2019) and relevant studies conducted in the neighbouring countries (Annus 2017; Čepaitienė 2013; Johansen 1996; Jääts 2019; Kapper 2016; Savoniakaitė 2008, 2019; Viies 1991), the history of Latvian ethnography, including that of the period of Soviet Latvian ethnography, has not yet been written. Latvian historiography contains an overview of and research into certain areas of ethnographic research (Boldāne-Zeļenkova 2017, 2019a, 2019b; Karlson 2019a, 2019b, 2019c) as well as personalities and events related to it (Bērziņš 2014; Cimermanis 1995, 1999; Jansone 2015; Vanaga 1999, 2000a, 2000b, 2002, 2006, 2011). The latest summarising work published on the topic, apart from entries in encyclopaedias, is

- 1 Etnogrāfisko materiālu krātuves fondu saraksts. 2016. Etnogrāfisko materiālu krātuve. LU Latvijas Vēstures institūta mājaslapa. Available at: [https://www.lvi.lv/lv/etnokrātuve.htm#fondu\\_saraksts](https://www.lvi.lv/lv/etnokrātuve.htm#fondu_saraksts), [accessed: 24.09.2021.]
- 2 REM stores materials from the expedition held in 1947, although the Soviet ethnographers conducted their first fieldwork in 1946. Report on the work of the Institute of History and Material Culture in 1946. LNA- LVA 2371-1-3: 26.

the collective monograph *Latviešu etnogrāfija* [Latvian Ethnography] (Strods 1969) elaborated under the editorship of Heinrihs Strods (1925–2012). It also contains information about the process, methods and results of the work of the ethnographers of the early Soviet period, the collective monograph itself being one of the latest works from that period.

In the early period of Soviet Latvia, Soviet Latvian ethnography, like one of its research objects—everyday life and culture in the socialist state—was in constant development, caught in the crossfire of the decisions adopted by the General Assembly of the Communist Party and the orders issued by “higher-level authorities” regarding criticism and self-criticism.<sup>3</sup> Before the country’s incorporation into the USSR, the field of ethnology in Latvia, unlike that of folklore, archaeology or history, did not have a strong research tradition or institutional background.<sup>4</sup> In 1946, with the foundation of the Academy of Sciences of the Latvian SSR (hereinafter—LSSR AS) and the institutes under its authority, this discipline, entitled “ethnography”, was given a place within the Institute of History and Material Culture. It was called “ethnography” and not “ethnology” because it was under the former title that the discipline was recognised in the science ecosystem of the USSR. In the Soviet system of science, ethnology was considered a “bourgeois” discipline, a term that had a negative connotation.

Like science in the USSR in general, Soviet ethnography was based on the Marxist-Leninist idea of dialectical (historical) materialism (Lenin’s works on national issues, social relations, a non-capitalist path of development, national culture and its link to social strata).<sup>5</sup> In the Leninist version of Marxism, this acquired the model of five socio-economic formations: primeval society, slave society, feudal society, capitalist society and communist society (which in turn consists of two stages, namely, socialist and communist society) (Bleiere 2021). The 1929 session of Soviet ethnographers and the 1932 joint session of ethnographers and archaeologists “chose” (there being no other option available) this approach as the basis for further research in the field of ethnography. At the time of the emergence of Soviet Latvian ethnography, ethnographers in the USSR were addressing the following issues: research of the history of primitive societies, historical-ethnographic exploration of different peoples (including the Latvians) and the study of the new ethnographic community referred to as the Soviet people (LPE 1983: 234).

- 3 Higher-level authorities, or *visbestoiašbie organizacii*, is a commonly used notion in Soviet terminology for institutions at the top of the administrative pyramid.
- 4 Ethnology as an independent field of science began to develop only at the very end of the 1930s under the leadership of Swedish ethnologist Dag Trotzig (1914–1944). He was an assistant professor at the University of Latvia and, from 1939 until the Soviet occupation, in cooperation with the Board of Monuments (1923–1944) and the Latvian Chamber of Literature and Art (1938–1940), organised expeditions to collect expressions of the spirit and will of the people (Trocigs 1940: 174–175; Boldāne-Zeļenkova 2019b: 37).
- 5 The concept of historical materialism developed by Karl Marx (1818–1883) and Friedrich Engels (1820–1895) is based on the idea that human societies successively go through several stages of socio-economic development, in which a certain type of production (level of development of means of production and economic relations) determines a certain political and social structure and ideology. The progress of society takes a leap forward in a revolutionary way. Revolutions take place when a new type of production and production relations have developed in the depths of the previous system, but the social and ideological body of society has remained the same (Bleiere 2021).

The N. N. Miklukho-Maklai Institute of Ethnography under the USSR Academy of Sciences (hereinafter—the Institute of Ethnography), which qualified as a “higher-level authority”, served as the centre of Soviet ethnography both in ideological and administrative terms.<sup>6</sup> Its task was, among other things, to provide methodological support to the periphery and to monitor the activities of ethnographers in the socialist republics. The Institute of Ethnography provided recommendations and opinions on the annual and five-year plans of the ethnographers from the Soviet republics and also commented on their reports. The Moscow ethnographers organised complex expeditions with the participation of ethnographers from different Soviet republics and representatives of other research disciplines, mainly folklorists, linguists, architects and artists. They conducted methodological seminars and conferences, and the USSR Academy of Sciences provided an opportunity for Latvian SSR ethnographers to conduct post-graduate studies in ethnography at the doctoral level and receive a Candidate of Science degree. The scholarly activities of Latvian SSR ethnographers were supervised by the leading staff of the USSR Institute of Ethnography, notable researchers and leading members of the Communist Party, professors Nikolaj Nikolaevich Cheboksarov (1907–1980) and Pavel Ivanovich Kushner (1889–1968), as well as Lyudmila Nikolaevna Terenteva (1910–1982), who was a specialist in the ethnography of the Baltic peoples. They provided similar consultation to ethnographers of the Estonian SSR and the Lithuanian SSR.

In addition to being subjected to instructions and assistance from the Institute of Ethnography, the research institutes<sup>7</sup> where a group of Soviet Latvian ethnographers worked also had dual subordination in the Latvian SSR. On the one hand, the institutes were subordinate institutions of the Council of Ministers of the Latvian SSR; on the other hand, they, as structural units of the LSSR AS, depended on the decisions of the Presidium and the Department of Social Sciences of the LSSR AS. The work of Soviet Latvian ethnographers—countering criticism and engaging in self-criticism, planning, reporting, and re-planning under the impact of the mutually contradictory instructions issued by various “higher-level authorities”—is reflected in the minutes of the meetings of the Scientific Councils of the institutes and of the Ethnography Department.<sup>8</sup> The results of the ethnographers’ work, which in the early Soviet period in Latvia lagged behind the plan, can be seen in monographs and publications issued in the Latvian SSR and in scholarly journals published in the USSR,<sup>9</sup> as well as in recommendations that they provided to government commissions, industrial

6 In the Stalinist era, this was also a centre for folklore. For details, see the monograph by Toms Ķencis (Ķencis 2019: 42).

7 The Institute of History and Material Culture at the Latvian SSR Academy of Sciences (1946–1950), the Institute of Ethnography and Folklore at the Latvian SSR Academy of Sciences (1951–1955), the Institute of History and Material Culture at the Latvian SSR Academy of Sciences (1956–1958), the Institute of History at the Latvian SSR Academy of Sciences (1959–1990).

8 Minutes of the meetings of the Scientific Councils (SC) of the Institute of History and the Institute of Folklore and Ethnography at the LSSR AS are held in the National Archives of Latvia – the State Archives of Latvia (Riga, hereinafter – LNA–LVA), funds 2371 and 2372.

9 *LPSR Zinātņu akadēmijas Vēstis*, since 1947; *Arheoloģija un etnogrāfija*, since 1957.

enterprises, museums, etc. and in the collections of ethnographic materials included in the REM. Information on the first results of field research can be found in the diaries of ethnographic expeditions<sup>10</sup> and in the annual collections of abstracts of the scientific report sessions of archaeologists and ethnographers.<sup>11</sup>

The goal of Soviet Latvian ethnography was to study the process of origin and formation of the Latvian people (*ethnogenesis*), the areas of habitation of ethnic and ethnographic groups (*ethnic geography*) and the Latvians' material and intangible culture at all stages of their historical development (Strods 1969: 7). Based on the approach of historical materialism and the dialectical method, Soviet Latvian ethnographers studied all relevant phenomena throughout the process of their origin, existence and disappearance. The chronological perspective to the set of explored issues was also dictated by the fact that in the Soviet Union ethnography was a sub-discipline of historical science. Another principle applied by Soviet Latvian ethnographers, and one that made their research more comprehensive, was a complex thematic approach. It prescribed the involvement of representatives of several disciplines—linguists, folklorists, geographers—or the application of their research findings in addressing a specific research issue. Materials obtained during ethnographic expeditions, sources of history and archaeology, anthropology, folklore and linguistics, as well as data from sociological surveys and material cultural objects, formed the base of ethnographic research sources.

The focus of this article is on ethnographic expeditions as a method of collecting ethnographic primary sources, and on the external and internal conditions under which the expeditions took place.

The expeditions and the preparations for them did not differ much in any phase of Soviet Latvian ethnography, either in terms of time-space or in comparison with the relevant activities of other humanitarian sciences, which at that time were termed “border disciplines”. After the expedition was made part of the work plan and approved by the “higher-level authorities”, the director of the institute sent a letter to the executive committee and the Communist Party unit of the respective district informing them about the purpose of the planned expedition and asking them to support it by providing information and other forms of support. Such letters were also sent to the managers of the collective farms, village councils and schools in the planned research areas.

Before the whole team of researchers embarked on the fieldwork, the expedition leader made a pilot trip. As part of this, he or she became acquainted with the representatives of the local administrative apparatus (managers of collective farms, party secretaries, school principals and museum management) and reached agreements with them on cooperation,

10 The diaries of ethnographers written during fieldwork are kept at the REM: E 1, 1–17, 158, 160–185; E 2, 450, 849, 909, E 3, 360; E 13, 634, 1075, 1385, 1554, 3689; E 17, 2956, 3734; E 33, 3673.

11 Zinātniskās atskaites sesijas materiāli par arheologu un etnogrāfu ... gada pētījumu rezultātiem], 1958–1990.

accommodation, etc. Within the first days of the expedition, an article written by a participant of the expedition would appear in the local press describing the aim of the field research trip and urging the local residents to cooperate with the researchers.

Until the second half of the 1950s, the institute followed the practice of holding a research session on the expedition site. These were extensive one-day events that included an exhibition of folk applied art, scholarly readings and a concert by local amateur artists. Materials for the exhibition were provided and the exhibition itself was prepared by the participants of the expedition. The expedition leader was also responsible for preparing at least one report outlining the results of the expedition that was delivered during the scholarly part of the event. Shortly after this event, when the materials of the exhibition were returned to their owners and the business trip certificates were stamped, the participants of the expedition returned to Riga.

Beginning in 1958, the results of ethnographic and archaeological expeditions were made public at an event entitled the Archaeologists' and Ethnographers' Scholarly Reports Session held in Riga. Naturally, the administration of the host municipality and the respondents were also invited. These events were widely attended. The audience comprised specialists working in the LSSR AS system, government and party representatives, colleagues from other institutes and museums, and other interested parties.

## Soviet Latvian Ethnographers in the Academy of Sciences of the Latvian SSR

### The Institute of History and Material Culture: the Beginning

Between 1946, when the Institute of History and Material Culture was founded, and 1951, when the Institute of Ethnography and Folklore was established, only a few ethnographers worked in the system of the Academy of Sciences of the Latvian SSR; their number did not exceed five employees. The ethnographers were headed by Daina Zemzare (1911–1971), a philologist who had earned a doctoral degree at the University of Latvia before the Soviet occupation. She developed instructions for collecting ethnographic materials<sup>12</sup> and organised ethnographic expeditions to districts of Latvia where no collection of relevant materials had

12 The instructions were approved at the meeting of the Department of Material Culture at the Institute of History and Material Culture, LSSR AS, held on June 27, 1949 (Minutes No. 40), with the participation of Lyudmila Terenteva from the Institute of Ethnography.

taken place yet: Straupe (Raiskums, Lielstraupe) and Jaunpiebalga (1946),<sup>13</sup> Ilūkste (1947), Jēkabpils (1948, 1949, 1950), Ludza (1947, 1948, 1949), Piebalga (1947, 1950), Straupe again (1947), Viļaka (1949) and Vecpiebalga (1949). The ethnographers from the Institute of History and Material Culture (Z. Birzniece, A. Ruņģe, R. Zarembo and Anna Zariņa<sup>14</sup>) conducted the fieldwork in close cooperation with specialists from the LSSR History Museum and the State History Cathedral Museum (in Riga) as well with representatives from the Riga School of Arts and Crafts and the Agricultural Academy. Jēkabs Straždiņš (1905–1958), an assistant professor at the Academy of Arts, participated in the expeditions as a draftsman.

Along with the annual replanning of the ethnographers' work, the tasks set for fieldwork also changed. For example, in 1948, the emphasis of the field research was on obtaining information "that is still stored in the memory of the elderly", including village "constitution" in Latgale, old traditions, etc. However, starting from 1949, the focus had to rest on current developments, such as collectivisation and the construction of collective farm (*kolkhoz*) villages in the countryside. It should be added that the deportations carried out by the occupying authorities of the USSR on March 25, 1949, targeted Latvia's rural population with the aim of accelerating the process of collectivisation and reducing popular support for the members of the national resistance movement still hiding in the forests.

The bulk of the ethnographic collection, gathered during the fieldwork conducted in this period, is included in fund No. 20 of the REM (E 20). The E 20 collection contains materials from the period 1948–1950 that were collected in several districts of the Vidzeme (Madona, Cēsis, Valka) and Zemgale-Sēlija regions (Bauska, Ilūkste, Jēkabpils) as well as the then-largest administrative units of Latgale (Abrene, Daugavpils, Ludza and Rēzekne). These materials comprise 9% of all the materials held at the REM from Latgale, 3% of the materials from Vidzeme and 22% of the materials from Zemgale and Sēlija.<sup>15</sup> This collection covers a great variety of themes, including data on the activities of the local residents, tools and other ethnographic objects, buildings, food and traditions. The "collective farm" and "Soviet culture" thematic groups contain statistical data and various narratives and photos documenting life and work on collective farms.

The years 1949 and 1950 saw an increase in the number of materials dedicated to this latter topic, namely, collective farms and Soviet culture. This might be explained by the instructions received from the Institute of Ethnography. In the spring of 1950, a research conference was held in Moscow with the participation of Soviet Latvian ethnographers. At the meeting of the Department of Material Culture it was reported that this conference had set research on ethnogenesis and collective farms as the main work directions for Soviet ethnographers and also

13 The REM collections do not contain materials gathered in this fieldwork. Evidence of this expedition can be found in the minutes of the scientific meeting of the institute, LNA–LVA 2371–1–3–3.

14 Anna Zariņa (1921–2015) was later a well-known archaeologist and researcher of the history of clothing.

15 The calculation is based on figures provided on the website of the Institute of Latvian History, University of Latvia. Available at: [https://www.lvi.lv/lv/etnokrature.htm#fondu\\_saraksts](https://www.lvi.lv/lv/etnokrature.htm#fondu_saraksts) [accessed: 24.09.2021.].

prescribed the relevant research methodology. At the conclusion of the meeting, the department adopted a decision that materials pertaining to the construction of collective farms would be collected more intensively, especially from the best collective farms of the Latvian SSR.<sup>16</sup>

In 1950, the regular meeting of the Coordination Council of the USSR Academy of Sciences and the joint meeting of the Presidium of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR and the Academy of Sciences of the Latvian SSR took place in Moscow. Among other things, the meetings analysed the work of the institutes of the Latvian SSR AS. The following major shortcomings were found in the work of the institutes, including that of the Institute of History and Material Culture: (1) insufficient attention given to Stalin's work on linguistic issues; (2) a lack of focus on comprehensive topics, the research of which would involve several institutes, and (3) a shortage of qualified staff and an absence of creative discussions. In an effort to address these shortcomings, it was decided to establish an Institute of Ethnography and Folklore at the LSSR AS. This institute was founded on January 27, 1951, by decision No. 84 of the Council of Ministers of the Latvian SSR. Consequently, the study of Soviet Latvian ethnography was transferred from under the authority of the Institute of History and Material Culture and for the subsequent five years was carried out under the auspices of the newly established Institute of Ethnography and Folklore.

## The Institute of Ethnography and Folklore: the Formation of a Core

At the Institute of Ethnography and Folklore, the Department of Ethnography was headed by writer Jānis Niedre (1909–1987), although functions of the head of the department were also performed by Anna Krastiņa (1919–?) and Elza Lase. Mirdza Slava (1924–2001) and Antonina Zavarina (1928–2015) worked there from the very foundation of the institute. They were joined by Lidiya Jefremova (1929–2000) in 1952, Ingrida Leinasare (1929–2004) in 1953, and Aina Alsupe (1926–2015) and Saulvedis Cimermanis (born 1929) in 1954. All of these people, after receiving the relevant education and accumulating fieldwork experience, formed the core of Soviet Latvian ethnographers, and their professional contribution to Latvian ethnography is still topical and highly valued.

Following the recommendations of the “higher-level authorities”, the Institute of Ethnography and Folklore began its work by rearranging the research topics and plans of ethnographers' work in accordance with the guidelines set out in Joseph Stalin's (1878–1953) work *Marxism and Linguistic Issues*. But the plans and selection of research themes had to be modified again already in 1952, this time under the influence of the resolution of the 19<sup>th</sup> USSR Communist Party Congress (1952) and another work by Stalin, *Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR*. It commanded Soviet ethnographers to focus on the following topics: national forms of socialist

16 The meeting of the Department of Material Culture at the Institute of History and Material Culture, LSSR AS, held on April 15, 1950 (Minutes No. 4). LNA–LVA 2371–1–3–3.



culture and the lifestyles of the peoples incorporated into the USSR; the favourable influence of the Russians on the other peoples of the USSR; types of development in socialist production; socialist agriculture under the conditions of the development of mechanisation; the gradual elimination of the gap between urban and rural areas; the rapid achievement of material well-being and meeting the cultural needs of the people (LNA–LVA 2372–1–84–2). References to these tasks can also be found in the diaries of expedition participants. For example, based on personal observations made at a social event organised by the Straupe collective farm, Jefremova made the following diary entry dated June 5, 1953: “The cultural difference between the countryside and the city is being erased” (Jefremova 1953: 9). She drew this conclusion from the following three observations: 1) the high number of personal-use vehicles (cars and motorcycles) used by the collective farm workers to get to the event; 2) the reluctance of women to wear national costume as festive dress for the dance party (limiting the use of the national costume to the stage); 3) polite behaviour even from the drunk participants at the event.

The meetings of the Department of Ethnography at the Institute of Ethnography and Folklore were inevitably attended by representatives of the Department of Social Sciences of the Latvian SSR AS and of the Communist Party. Among the participants were also specialists from the institutes dedicated to related research disciplines (history, language) and ethnographers from the museums that collaborated in the development of the department’s plans and the outlines for upcoming fieldwork.<sup>17</sup> At the beginning of the joint expeditions, Niedre, in cooperation with Krastiņa, reminded the participants of the instructions for fieldwork, covering the collection of both ethnographic and folklore material. These instructions had been elaborated at a seminar organised by the Folklore Sector of the Institute of Ethnography and Folklore on May 14, 1952 (LNA–LVA 2372–1–82–32–35).

While working at the Institute of Ethnography and Folklore (1951–1955), Soviet Latvian ethnographers felt special care from their Moscow colleagues in regard to the development of the discipline in the Latvian SSR. At the time, institute specialists Slava and Zavarina launched their studies at the Institute of Ethnography of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR. The experience of Moscow ethnographers was also taken over during joint expeditions conducted with the active participation of Cheboksarov and Terenteva. The ethnographic and folklore expeditions taking place in Latvia between 1952 and 1955 were formally part of the complex Baltic fieldwork organised by the Institute of Ethnography of the USSR Academy of Sciences, under the leadership of Cheboksarov. However, most of the expeditions were organised and run by local researchers.

Under the leadership of Niedre, Krastiņa and Slava, the expeditions covered the following districts of Latvia: Bauska, Baldone and Jaunjelgava (1951); Nereta, Aknīste, Ilūkste (1952); Rūjiena (1953); Cēsis (1953, 1954); Alūksne (1953, 1954); Krustpils and Madona (1954); Viļāni, Preiļi and Varakļāni (1955) and others. The expeditions aimed to document the processes taking place in the lifestyle and culture of the workers of the Latvian SSR, to record the consolidation of the

17 The work of the Institute of Ethnography and Folklore (structure, tasks, expeditions, etc.) is described well in the monograph written by Toms Ķencis (see Ķencis 2019).

Latvian socialist nation in ethnically mixed areas, and to note the agricultural and craftsmanship tools used as well as their development. Specialists from the Central State History Museum and the Architecture Department of the Latvian Open-Air Museum, as well as students from the Latvian State University and the Conservatory, also took part in the expeditions. The relevant material was jointly collected by ethnographers, folklorists, anthropologists and architects.

Toponyms, the typology of ethnographic objects and sets of statistical data collected during the fieldwork allowed ethnographers to address issues of ethnogenesis and study contacts and cultural influences between neighbouring nations and regions. In addition, materials pertaining to the development of collective farms and industrial enterprises were collected in the form of sets of internal- and external-use documents of the enterprises as well as observations by the ethnographers involved in the expedition. The materials gathered during these expeditions make up 1% of the material held at the REM in the Latgale region collection, 9% of the material in the Vidzeme collection, 5% of the material in the Kurzeme collection and 12% of the material in the Zemgale and Sēlija collection.<sup>18</sup>

The Institute of Ethnography and Folklore and the Academy of Sciences of the Latvian SSR were unable to provide for all the material needs of the expeditions; many issues, including catering, had to be “addressed on site”. As we shall see later, the issue of supply presented a problem in subsequent years.

## The Institute of History: Steady Development

According to decision No. 20/351–1 adopted at the November 3, 1955, meeting of the Presidium of the LSSR AS, in 1956 ethnographers were transferred back under the authority of the Institute of History and Material Culture, which in 1959 was renamed the Institute of History at the LSSR AS. Soviet Latvian ethnography continued to be studied in this research institution throughout the subsequent years of the Latvian SSR, despite changes in its name and structural units (Department of Material Culture, Department of Ethnography and Archaeology, Department of Ethnography). From 1956 to 1961, the work of ethnographers at the Institute of History was led by historian Mārgers Štepermanis (1898–1968), for the next ten years the work was led by historian Heinrihs Strods (1925–2012), and from 1971 to 1991 it was led by ethnographer Saulvedis Cimermanis.

While at the Institute of Ethnography and Folklore, the number of ethnographers did not exceed ten. By the early 1980s, the staff of the Ethnography Department of the Institute of

18 The materials are aggregated under the following collection numbers: 1, 2, 3, 4 and 8. The materials from this stage of work by Soviet Latvian ethnographers can also be found in the collections allocated to individual researchers, e.g., collection No. 6 holds Anna Krastiņa's materials, collection No. 9 holds those of Elza Lase, and collection No. 15 holds those of Mirdza Slava.

History had at least doubled. Looking back at the period before the ethnographers' return to the Institute of History and Material Culture, Cimermanis wrote: "Until 1956, the most important task was to staff the Department of Ethnography with graduates from Soviet universities" (Cimermanis 1976: 115). This task was successfully carried out, and among the ethnographers working at the institute were Mirdza Slava (1955),<sup>19</sup> Antonina Zavarina (1956),<sup>20</sup> Ingrida Leinasare (1958)<sup>21</sup> and Linda Dumpe (1965),<sup>22</sup> who defended their theses at the Institute of Ethnography of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR. Saulvedis Cimermanis (1958),<sup>23</sup> Anna Krastiņa (1959),<sup>24</sup> Lidija Jefremova (1960)<sup>25</sup> and Aina Alsupe (1964)<sup>26</sup> defended their dissertations in the LSSR AS system. The Soviet Latvian ethnographers continued to pursue the same research directions as before: the material culture and lifestyle of Latvians, changes in the lifestyle and culture of the Latvian socialist nation, and Latvian ethnic history.

On April 20, 1956, at the meeting of the Scientific Council of the Institute of History, historian Teodors Zeids (1912–1994) expressively described the existing model of cooperation with the Institute of Ethnography of the USSR Academy of Sciences: "The situation is very uncomfortable, because the departments of archaeology and ethnography of the institutes of the Baltic republics have become branches of the institutes of material culture and ethnography of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR" (LNA–LVA 2371–1–202–23). Henceforth, the Institute of History pursued the following principle in its relations with the Institute of Ethnography of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR: the cooperation should continue, but Latvian ethnographers must not forget their work plan, which has been approved by the Presidium of the Academy of Sciences of the Latvian SSR.

From 1959 to 1965, ethnographers of the Latvian SSR participated on a regular basis in complex Baltic-scale expeditions to destinations in Latvia and other republics. While taking part in fieldwork organised by the Institute of Ethnography, and the Museum of Ethnography of the Estonian SSR as well as that organised by the Institute of History of the Lithuanian SSR Academy of Sciences, Soviet Latvian ethnographers also collected materials in the Russian FSSR, Belorussian SSR, Estonian SSR and Lithuanian SSR. In 1966, ethnographers of the Latvian SSR became involved in three major projects: the compilation of

19 Thesis *Latvian Women's Clothing and Its Ornamentation in the 18<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> Century*.

20 Thesis *The Old Believers' Families and Daily Life in Latgale in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and the First Half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*.

21 Thesis *Latvian Agricultural Tools in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century and the First Half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century*.

22 Thesis *Development of Harvesting Tools in Latvia from Ancient Times to the Beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*.

23 Thesis *Lifestyle of Agricultural Workers in Kurzeme and Zemgale in the Second Half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century*.

24 Thesis *Farmers' Dwellings in Vidzeme during the Period of Capitalism's Strengthening*.

25 Thesis *Latgale's Peasant Family and Family Lifestyle in the Second Half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and the First Half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*.

26 Thesis *Textile Production in Vidzeme in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and the First Half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*.

historical-ethnographic atlases of the Baltic nations' agricultural tools, traditional architecture and peasant clothing. In 1968 and 1973, expeditions of the Ethnography Department were organised to the Vitebsk region of the Belarusian SSR and in 1975 to the Pskov region of the USSR. Researchers from other republics also participated in expeditions organised by Latvian SSR ethnographers within the borders of Latvia. Then, as before, along with the ethnographers from the Institute of History, the expeditions involved specialists from museums in the Latvian SSR, university students, students from secondary schools specialising in applied arts, and individuals interested in ethnography.

This phase in the work of Soviet Latvian ethnographers was highly productive, thanks to growing financial allocations and long-term planning (for example, plans were no longer chaotically revised multiple times, sometimes even within a single year, as had been the case during the Stalinist era). The focus fell on the historical-ethnographic regions of Latvia as the primary objects of ethnographic research: first Vidzeme (1956–1961), then Latgale (1962–1968), followed by Sēlija (1969–1970), and finally Zemgale and Kurzeme (1971–1982). The main method applied in the collection of materials remained the same: ethnographic fieldwork and observation (Fig. 1, 2). The expeditions organised at that time were large-scale<sup>27</sup> (Cimermanis 1959a, 1959b, 1960, 1962, 1970, 1971, 1982a, 1982b, 1983, 1987; Krastiņa 1961, 1967, 1969; Kronis 1986; Leinasare 1965; Slava 1960a, 1960b, 1960c, 1963; Strods 1962; Zavarina 1964). The materials collected between 1956 and 1990 comprise 86% of all the materials stored in the REM pertaining to Latgale, 87% of those pertaining to Vidzeme, 64% to Zemgale/Sēlija and 87% to Kurzeme. In fact, they constitute the largest part of the REM's collections.

## Representation of Fieldwork in the Ethnographers' Diaries

In addition to collecting materials to be recorded on forms and in reports or to be handed over to museums, participants in fieldwork were obliged to also keep notes and write expedition diaries. After the 1960s, however, writing (and preserving) expedition diaries was no longer a binding practice for researchers. Obviously, this is why only 15 diaries have been registered in the Repository of Ethnographic Materials at the Institute of Latvian History, University of Latvia. The diaries held in the REM were written by the following researchers: Gundega Ivanova, Jānis Niedre and Aina Klaviņa during an expedition to Bauska district in 1951 (Fig. 3); Anna Krastiņa and Antoņina Zavarina during an expedition to Aknīste

27 The materials collected during this time are held in the REM collections under the following numbers: 11, 12, 13, 17, 18, 21, 22, 27, 28, 29, 31, 32, 33, 35, 38, 39, 40, 44, 45, 49, 53, 57, 58, 59, 61, 62, 63 and 65. The materials gathered during expeditions in this period can also be found in the collections of individual researchers, e.g., the materials gathered by Jefremova are kept in collection No. 14 (E 14) and those by Cimermanis in collection No. 30 (E 30).



Fig. 1. Participants of the ethnographic expedition at work. Gulbene district, Beļava village, farmstead Krūmiņi, 1956. Photo: A. Krastiņa. E 11, f 301-9.

Fig. 2. Participants of the ethnographic expedition at work. Gulbene district, Čipati village, farmstead Podnieki, 1956. Photo: M. Slava. E 11, f 248-1.



and Nereta districts in 1952; Lidija Jefremova during an expedition in Cēsis district in 1953; Aina Alsupe, Maija Mazulāne, Rasma Svārpstone, Olga Zamore and Biruta Zunde during an expedition to Valka, Valmiera and Rūjiena districts in 1958; Aleksandrs Jansons and Ilga Madre during an expedition to Madona and Krustpils districts in 1959; and Anna Krastiņa during her pilot trip to Ilūkste district in 1967. The ethnographers wrote their diary entries late at night, rewriting and systematising the observations made in the field during the day. An example of a diary entry:

In the evening I made a poster for the scholarly meeting in Aknīste (in the Russian language). I made an entry in the diary. Now, at 23.30, I am going to bed. (Krastiņa 1952a: 58)

In terms of style, the diaries registered in the repository of ethnographic materials are very different. Some participants of expeditions only registered the houses and narrators visited and the amount of materials collected on the respective day, adding only a few personal notes, such as “cloth, home-woven in good taste” or “I’m sick”, as in the diaries of Alsupe, Madre and Jansons (Fig. 4). Later, Alsupe repeatedly emphasised that she deliberately kept her notes in the expedition diary laconic so as not to incur any harm to the respondents and her colleagues. However, other participants of expeditions recorded even practical aspects of daily life, narratives on topics disapproved of by the Soviet regime, and personal observations. In this respect, the remarks by ethnographer Krastiņa and those participants of expeditions not employed by the institute are especially valuable.

## Transportation, Accommodation and Catering

Almost all of the diaries begin with an entry made on the date and time when the expedition group left Riga and reached the destination of the fieldwork. The expedition participants mainly travelled by bus or trucks that had been adapted to the transportation of people, sometimes also by train. The expedition diaries also mention rides in the truck owned by the Latvian Open-Air Museum (Krastiņa 1952a: 1) and the truck allocated to them by the LSSR AS (Krastiņa, Čivkule 1967: 1). Moving around within the area chosen for the fieldwork also took place in trucks provided to the expedition by the local collective farm, by bicycle or by horse-drawn cart. But mostly the ethnographers moved around on foot, testing the durability of their shoes (Fig. 5):

Today was a nice morning—neither cold nor hot. Suitable for walking. We took our belongings, which, in spite of our utmost frugality, are quite heavy, and went to the collective farm named after Vilis Lācis. We walked along the road in the hope of hitching a ride, because it is quite difficult to conquer nine kilometres while carrying our belongings on our shoulders. (Jefremova 1953: 36)



18. jūn.  
 Pē. 10<sup>00</sup> atbraucām Bausmā.  
 Pirmajiem diviem rīcīgi nolācām  
 atpūšamies uz Ģintātes iedzīvotāju  
 un sēdīti, kas notika 24. jūn.  
 Pēc pusdienām atbraucām uz Ģintātes  
 dzimtajām Bausmā, jo šeit, uzskaitām  
 kā arī 24. jūn. Bausmā nakti.  
 Te sastapām līdus atbraucētājiem un  
 interesējamies par etnografijas un folkloru  
 materiālu vākšanu. B. Līdus  
 grupa veidojot revolucionāru  
 kustības, partizānu, karavīru, mērķu  
 mērķu, un varētu iegūt vērtīgu  
 materiālu. Viņi mums  
 uzauda. 25. jūn. mums ir Bāle-  
 nes māj. pie kuras "La. Plūmā",  
 (no 1948. g. dzīvotāji nolācām uzaugušas  
 mājas), mums jāpārbauda domas  
 revolucionāru dzīvotājus. Viņi  
 spēj arī lētā rīcī veikt rīcību vienoti.

Fig. 3. G. Ivanova's  
 diary from expedition in  
 Bauska district in 1951.  
 E1, 1.

22. jūnija.  
 Strādājam pie audošanas - ornamentu  
 Mīdas šķautnes Eģēmes c.p.  
 "Pēc katras". Tūlāk labi  
 atāsta par audošanu apmācību.

23. jūnija.  
 Strādājam Eģēmes c.p. "Lapīnā"  
 ziedu un rožu audošanu bagātā  
 mājā. Līdus, fotogrāfi, tautas  
 "Lepastilgālos" varoņus interesantus  
 līdus - mūsu sabiedrību.

24. jūnija.  
 Līd. Līdus materiālus

26. jūnija.  
 Strādājam Eģēmes c.p. "Līdīnā"  
 Tur trīs mēseš Pēcules - ilgzodīgas  
 audošanas. Nīfotogrāfi tīrāi diēlā kora.

Fig. 4. A. Alsupe's diary  
 from expedition in Valka  
 district in 1958. E13,  
 1554.

In the late 1950s and in the following years, a vehicle was allocated to the expedition, which was a great relief and made it easier for the ethnographers to get to their research destinations as well as to collect materials for the exhibition and later return them to their owners. Schools and school dormitories, which in summer, when the fieldwork took place, were vacant due to school holidays, were the most frequent accommodation choice for expedition participants.

Already in spring, the administration of the institute wrote and sent letters to the respective education boards, school principals, village councils, executive committees, etc., asking them to cooperate with the participants of the upcoming expedition, including providing them with accommodation in schools. During his or her pilot trip to the expedition's destination, the expedition leader signed a cooperation agreement with the local municipality. However, the members of the expedition did not always feel comfortable in their accommodation. For example, Jefremova did not enjoy staying in the medieval castle that housed the Straupe School. She described it as gloomy and cold (Jefremova 1953: 1). Mazulāne, in turn, mentioned in her diary that, due to the renovation of the local school building,



Fig. 5. Transportation of the ethnographic expedition in 1956. Photo: M. Slava. E 11, f240-1.

the members of the expedition were allocated four rooms in the building of the Jērcēni village council. She specially stressed the fact that two of the rooms had earlier been used as prison cells (Mazulāne 1958: 10). Zamore, for her part, described the Trikāta school as inhospitable, as the expedition team had to sleep on the floor there, because “all the beds had been taken to the town of Valka for athletes to sleep in” (Zamore 1958: 14). But none of these inconveniences can compare with the experience of sleeping in a hay barn or hayloft, where the sleep of expedition participants was disturbed by great numbers of rats (Jefremova 1953: 35). Those researchers studying the daily life of workers on collective farms had the most difficult time in this regard. Their basic research method was observation, which, among other things, required staying with the respective family. Sleeping under one roof with the research object was not always possible due to several reasons: 1) not all families were willing to provide accommodation to complete strangers (and this was not always expressed in a polite form), and 2) not all families were able provide accommodation due to the very small size of their living quarters (moreover, some homesteads had been converted into communal apartments). In such cases, the only alternative for the ethnographers was to stay in the barn or the hayloft.





Fig. 6. Expedition participants 'swimming in a mud bath' on the way to Paušķene village. Gulbene district, Paušķene village, 1956. Photo: A. Krastiņa E 11, f300-13.

By the following decade, the situation had already changed. The team of the preparatory trip for the 1967 expedition, consisting of Krastiņa, Čivkule, Zavarina and Jefremova, stayed at the *Hotel Leningrad* in the city of Daugavpils. However, an incident arose even in this case. Despite the fact that well ahead of the trip a telegram had been sent to the hotel, asking for a reservation, no rooms were available when the ethnographers arrived. As a result, the four ladies had to share a five-bed room, while the driver slept in the vehicle (Krastiņa 1967: 1).

Matters of personal hygiene are mentioned very little in the diaries. Only two of them contain notes about bathing in a river (Zunde 1958: 32) and in a bath-house (Krastiņa 1952b: 10) (Fig. 6).

As part of the preparations for an expedition, the director of the institute sent a request to the Supply Department of the Latvian SSR AS, listing the items necessary for the expedition, including not only technical supplies such as millimetre paper, pencils, notebooks, cameras and transportation but also the matter of catering. The issue of food was often left to be

addressed “on site”. It was not easy to find solutions, especially in the 1950s, when the rural population, collective farmers included, suffered grave deprivation. Matters of providing food were often mentioned in the notes of expedition leader Krastiņa, who recorded both the purchase of products (milk, eggs) from collective farmers and the hospitality extended by local residents who shared their meals with the team:

[A place to stay for the night was found]. Just one thing left to worry about: there is nothing to eat for dinner. People in this area are very poor. They themselves have to buy bread, but it is not always available in the store. There are no potatoes on the *Pilītes* homestead, either. We went to the neighbouring homesteads. We got potatoes at *Vesēli*, we bought eggs at *Jēči*. (Krastiņa 1952b: 25)

The meals consumed by expedition participants, especially in the early 1950s, lacked diversity: potatoes, eggs, cottage cheese, milk, sandwiches, porridge, honey. The Midsummer Eve meal provided by the hosts in 1952 was highlighted in the diaries of several members of the expedition:

We, the participants of the expedition, were also treated to a dinner. [The hosts] set the table with a variety of “Midsummer evening snacks”: Midsummer cheese, white bread, dried ham, homemade tea cookies, fresh salad and homemade beer. We ate together with the hosts. We also sang *Līgo* songs and folk songs. Later in the night, the hosts received guests from the neighbourhood and went together with them to other homesteads to continue the celebrations. We [ethnographers] were tired, we all stayed [in our accommodations] and went to bed. (Krastiņa 1952a: 15)

Expedition participants also bought food at the local markets and shops. Thus, by describing the ethnographers’ personal experience, which revealed sharing the same everyday problems that the locals faced, the diaries showed the true Soviet reality. This differed very much from the simulacrum that the Soviet regime was creating with the ethnographers’ assistance (Fig. 7).

In the morning we hurried to the Rubene store for bread. The store opens at 9:00, but already at 8:00 there was a long line [of people waiting outside]. One person is allowed to buy only one brick-shaped loaf of rye bread. However, there is not enough bread for everyone. We did not get any bread either, because we were standing at the end of the line. (Krastiņa 1952a: 33-34)

During her pilot trip in 1967, ethnographer Krastiņa tried to reach an agreement with the local canteens on catering for the expedition participants. This required another set of agreements with the “higher-level authorities” of the canteens. Recalling a conversation she had had in the canteen on the Subate collective farm, Krastiņa wrote: “I have to talk to comrade Geidāns, the head of the Subate consumer association, about additional [food] deliveries if we want to have meals for the participants of the expedition” (Krastiņa, Čivkule 1967: 13).



Fig. 7. A meal during fieldwork. Gulbene district, Beļava village, 1956. Photo: A. Krastiņa. E 11, f301-23.

The diaries show the true meaning of the phrase “expedition supplies to be handled on site” mentioned by officials in the Institute’s minutes. In the first decades of its existence, the LSSR Academy of Sciences system was unable to provide much practical support to all the scientific institutions, including the necessary equipment for field research. Although official letters requesting support for ethnographic expeditions were sent to the responsible officials in the area of the expeditions at least a few months before their launch, this support was often merely formal. There were both subjective and objective reasons for this. In the first post-war years, the collective farms as well as the rural population lived in great deprivation and hardship, and even if they wanted to, they could not provide the ethnographers with the necessary material support. The few pieces of machinery or carts and horses that the collective farms had at their disposal were at the time being used for summer agricultural work. In addition, until the mid-1950s, the political situation also played an important role. Whether out of personal conviction or a fear of national partisans, some kolkhoz employees refused to accommodate or share food with participants of ethnographic expeditions, who were regarded as representatives of the Soviet regime. This explains the great enthusiasm with which the diaries describe those respondents whose hospitality and humanity stood above the squalid conditions in which they lived.

By the late 1950s, sleeping in hay barns with rats was a thing of the past, and the ethnographers had a car from the Academy of Sciences at their disposal to take them to the sites in the morning and to pick them up in the evening and return them to their accommodation. Food supply issues also became less and less of a concern as the financial situation of the LSSR AS and the infrastructure on collective farms improved.

## Respondents, Interviews and Rain

According to the examined diaries, each expedition began with a visit to the offices of the local collective farm, the village council, and the local units of the Communist Party and the so-called “cells” of the Young Communist League. These were not just courtesy visits with the purpose of getting the business trip papers stamped. Depending on their research interests, this was where the ethnographers received recommendations on which houses to visit and whom to interview. Families affected by the deportations organised by the regime were often excluded from the list of respondents:

2:00 pm—a conversation with the secretary of the party unit. Some families are [recognised as being] unsuitable for research—from one family a brother was deported in 1940 for anti-Soviet activities. The situation with the other families is similar. (Jefremova 1953: 20)

Schools and local history museums (e.g., in Bauska and Valka) were also an important source of information for compiling lists of potential respondents. During the preparations for an expedition, the ethnographers tried to involve employees from these institutions in the expeditions, but they unfortunately did not always succeed. A second method of getting respondents was to “make a blind selection” (Mazulāne 1958: 14, Zamore 1958: 6). The success rate was similar in both cases. For example, sometimes an interview could not take place due to the absence of the selected respondents. Also, recommended respondents, who were usually among the best workers on the respective collective farm, were not always able to provide information about the homesteads they lived on because they were newcomers there. On the other hand, people chosen by blind selection who happened to have returned from deportation in Siberia did not correspond to the prototype of the ideal collective farmer.

Respondents’ attitudes and, consequently, their degree of openness when talking with ethnographers varied, especially in the immediate post-war decade. In his 1952 expedition report, Niedre wrote: “In their communication with ethnographers, the people maintain a pointedly official ‘neutral stance’, always keeping an eye on every step we make and remembering every word we say. Watching to see if something bad happens to those who talk to us. It seems that the collective farmers are excessively intimidated” (from Vanaga 2004: 149).

People living in the expedition area were under double pressure. On the one hand, the management of the collective farm called on them or ordered them to tell the ethnographers only positive things about collective farms; on the other hand, the instinct of self-preservation (the countryside had been hit hard by the deportations of 1949) made people aloof, distrustful and prone to avoiding others. Such situations are recorded in Krastiņa's notes, for example: "The hostess looks very distrustfully at the participants of the expedition; she is not very talkative" (Krastiņa 1952: 9). Svārpstone reported something similar in her diary: "Together with Dzidra [Feldmane] we arrived at the *Skujas* farmstead. This is the first house [among those visited] where the hostess only said 'There is nothing [here]!' and turned her back on us. Nothing doing, we are on our way to the next house" (Svārpstone 1958: 6). Jefremova and Milda Kazeka (1906–1985), who studied the families of collective farmers, experienced many unpleasant moments during expeditions:

First we had to find a place to sleep. The family of the vice-chairman of the collective farm was recommended. We visited them and reached an agreement with the hostess [wife, woman of the house]. When we came back with our bags, we were made to stand in the yard for a long time until the hostess finished working in the garden. Then we were left sitting in a dark room—neither the hostess nor the host paid any attention to us. The next morning, we decided to move to a different place. (Jefremova 1953: 33)

But the diaries also contain testimonies about people who talked with the ethnographers very willingly and at great length. Some such respondents lived at Omūļi House for Disabled Persons, where "the old ladies like to speak about anything and everything, often talking too much" (Mazulāne 1958: 1). Many entries mention the respondents' hospitality, which, under the conditions of general deprivation in the first post-war years, the ethnographers found admirable:

The hosts treated us to fresh honey, jelly and berry pie, neatly served on plates. We protested in vain, saying that each of us had a sandwich with us. The hostess said that it was a rule in their house that no one ever walked away without having eaten something. Her mother had always adhered to the rule before the time of the collective farm. Now, she said, it was not always possible to do so, because there was not always something to treat her guests to. (..) Now, all the days are just the same. There are no ingredients available with which to cook special Sunday dishes. (Zunde 1958: 44)

An ethnographer's day could be ruined not only by unkind respondents but also by rain. When it rained, the participants of expeditions "did not make the rounds of houses", because this activity definitely required good weather conditions (Jefremova 1953: 19). On such days, ethnographers sorted the acquired materials, made entries in their diaries or extracted data from documents held in the collective farm office or at the village council:

It's raining today. My shoes are torn. We decided to stay in the school, to clean our shoes and clothing, and more or less sort out the material that we have collected. (Krastiņa 1952a: 42).

Sometimes, however, rain could act as a saviour, especially on the morning after a well-celebrated Midsummer night, allowing the celebrants to sleep longer and cure their headaches:

It's raining. I am sorting out the materials. Some of the celebrants who were the last to stay up are still having sweet dreams until lunchtime. (Zunde 1958: 19)

The minutes of the meetings of the Ethnographic Division, the justifications of work plans and the reports show that the choice of location for ethnographic expeditions in the first post-war decades was determined by the level of ethnographic research that had been done in the area. Information about objects and persons in the area of the ethnographic expedition was provided by the administrative staff of the kolkhoz in question or by representatives from the local department of the Communist Party according to their understanding and competence, which to some extent also influenced the cooperation between ethnographers and the local population. Relations between a respondent and ethnographer were determined by various situations, which are reflected in the expedition diaries. For example, a respondent's reserved attitude may have resulted from the fact that the ethnographer, who entered the kolkhoz farmer's home with a mandate of power, was wasting the farmer's time that he needed to spend on completing other tasks delegated by the kolkhoz management. Ethnographers, in turn, sometimes became frustrated when needing to surrender their expectations of obtaining rich ethnographic material and information due to a complete lack of information or the offering of what they considered to be "worthless" objects of material culture. Fatigue also had an effect on the cooperation between respondent and ethnographer. In the first post-war decades, ethnographers often walked several kilometres from site to site. Good weather and decent footwear were their allies, but sometimes both failed them.

## Exhibitions and Scholarly Sessions

Until the late 1950s, each ethnographic expedition culminated with the institute's scholarly session and exhibition of crafts, which took place in the expedition area (Fig. 8). The scholarly session included several reports (some of them had been previously discussed at the Scientific Council of the Institute), one of them focusing on the results of the current expedition and written by the expedition leader in the late evenings after filling out the expedition forms and making entries in his or her diary. Sometimes respondents also took part in the session, sharing their knowledge and experience with a broader audience: "The session opened at 18:00. I liked the speech of respondent Ēksis" (Zamore 1958: 12).





Fig. 8. Folk art exhibition organised during ethnographic expedition in Valka, 1958. Author of the photo unknown. E13, 4422.

In the evenings before the upcoming session, the expedition participants themselves drew and wrote invitations and posters. Gathering materials for the exhibition was a very labour-intensive and stressful process. Fearing thieves, respondents sometimes changed their minds and refused to lend their handicrafts to the exhibition (Krastiņa 1952a: 59). Transportation problems regarding the collection of exhibits and then returning them to their owners had to be addressed. The layout of the exhibition itself (Zamore 1958: 11), as well as the drawing of the exhibits before and after it, was also a laborious and demanding task. In the context of the preparation of exhibitions, a striking episode is mentioned in the 1952 diary of expedition leader Krastiņa. She wrote: “Feldmane, the specialist from the Open-Air Museum, helped us to set up the exhibition. We stayed in the exhibition rooms at the Aknīste cultural centre all night, because the building cannot be locked and we must not leave the collected items unattended” (Krastiņa 1952a: 60). However, Krastiņa had to deliver a lecture at the research session the very next day.

Information about the objects on display and the issues discussed in the scholarly sessions were reported on in the local and national press (Alksnīte 1953; Cimermanis 1955, 1956, 1957, 1959b, 1962; Krastiņa 1958; Līdums 1958; Urtāns 1959).

## Soviet Politics and What Remained Only in the Pages of the Diaries

Fieldwork diaries were part of the set of materials collected during an expedition that had to be submitted to the institute at the end of the expedition. Compared with the number of expedition participants, the number of diaries in the REM collection is disproportionately small. There may be two reasons for this. First, perhaps the ethnographers deliberately did not submit their diaries. Second, the diaries may not have been added to the collections because of the information contained in them. Considering the strict censorship and self-censorship in science and research that existed under Soviet occupation, one must sometimes wonder about the information that does appear in the diaries held in the REM. They contain the ethnographers' attitudes towards political measures, honest and unembellished descriptions of everyday life on collective farms, and the use of terms considered undesirable in Soviet historiography.

During field research, even if acting only as observers, the expedition members had to participate in political meetings together with the members of the local community. They had to listen to reports on relevant topics at collective farm meetings and events organised by propaganda units (Kļaviņa 1951: 6). The diaries show that this was not always met with enthusiasm:

We heard about the Beria [Lavrentiy Beria, 1899–1953] case on the radio in the office of the [collective farm] administration. I was in a terrible mood from all this. (...) At 21:00 we went to a meeting at the collective farm centre dedicated to the Beria case. (Jefremova 1953: 37–38)

These were formal, public events where privately expressed thoughts and emotions were not welcome. In the first post-war decades, there were many topics that were not supposed to be spoken out about. There were also aspects of Soviet reality about which it was not clear whether they could or could not be discussed. If they could be spoken about, what terms applied? In the expedition diaries, the institute's ethnographers very carefully chose the terms they used to refer to the interwar period of the independent state of Latvia. The most common "translation" of the term *Latvijas laiks* ('the time/era of Latvia', meaning the country's period of independence) used by expedition participants was 'pre-collective-farm era'. However, some members of expeditions did not keep to this rule:

In "the time/era of Latvia", agriculture was well developed here. [...] At present, all the deported families have come back, but the collective farm does not allow them to return to their farms. They're leaving. One goes to Valka, another to a different place. (Zunde 1958: 11)

The persons subjected to Stalin's repressions and the restriction of their rights after returning from Siberia presented another inconvenient topic, as testified by expedition diaries. Actually, it was the former homes of such people that revealed their stories and raised accusations. The ethnographers' notes record what happened to farms that had been in a very good condition



in the interwar period—in the post-war years, they were turned into collective farm offices or village councils, converted into communal apartments or used as cattle sheds (Krastiņa 1952a: 6). The diaries also contain information about the moving of apple trees from deportees' farms to collective farm gardens; the apple trees were dug up with their roots and taken away. Likewise, the diaries contain stories about half-demolished houses. For example, the bricks from a residential house on one farm were used to construct a barn for a new collective farm. Another house was planned to be moved to the new collective farm's centre; it was partially demolished but then left standing, because "the concentration of houses in the centre is no longer on the collective farm's agenda" (Zunde 1958:43). Some collective farmers also revealed their life stories to ethnographers, not withholding facts about how working on the collective farm had ruined their health or about the poverty and deprivation they faced:

The farm is in poor condition. The roof of the barn is leaking, so the sheep have been moved to one room of the house. There's a crippled 49-year-old woman, whose spine has been deformed by work, as well as two schoolgirls living here. The woman is now a shepherd, because she can no longer do any hard work. Her husband died four years ago. The room is clean and tidy, albeit poor. She is unable to put a new roof on the barn; the collective farm provides no help. (Zunde 1958: 2–3).

The diaries record many examples of incompetent management, including leaking roofs and half-collapsed barns that led to cattle diseases (cows on collective farms contracting tuberculosis, etc.) and death:

The bath-house on the *Kapūni* farmstead is being converted into a chicken shed for 120 fowl. (..) The little chicks have already been brought from the hatchery and are housed in the finished part of the fowl-shed. It is obvious that they do not feel well here. The floor is wet and dirty. The little chicks are wet and seem cold. [They are] Squeezed into a pile on top of each other and looking for a spot where the sun shines on the floor through the window. The new heating stoves have not yet been built. The chickens cannot be released outside yet, because there is no fowl enclosure, no fence here. (Krastiņa 1952b: 18)

This was the reality that in the public discourse had been replaced by the positive idea of the rapid construction of collective farms, and the ethnographers participated in the formation of this idea. At the same time, this was a reality in which the safety of ethnographers, as members of a profession supported by the authorities, was threatened by members of the national resistance movement hiding in the forests of Latvia and Lithuania. It seems that it was not wolves or wild boars that prevented Krastiņa from travelling eight kilometres by bicycle at night when returning to the town of Aknīste after working at a collective farm house in a rural area:

We found out that next to the *Pilītes* farmstead is the Lithuanian village of Virškopāni. A few days ago, bandits shot the chairman of a collective farm there. (Krastiņa 1952b: 25)

The above examples of diary entries did not fit into the simulacrum of Soviet reality existing in the public space at that time, which ethnographers themselves had to participate in creating. Today, however, they serve as an important source for the study of the establishment and history of collective farms.

## Some Final Remarks

Soviet Latvian ethnography, although founded with the intensive participation of the Institute of Ethnography of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR and having been directly assigned by the occupying regime to study and propagate the Soviet way of life and culture, became a strong branch of science. Ethnographers studied many areas of Latvian tangible and intangible culture and collected very important sources for contemporary researchers of Latvian culture and history.

At this stage of research on Latvian ethnography, the authors believe that there are three phases in the development of Soviet Latvian ethnography that can be linked to the institutional affiliation of the field. Within the system of the Academy of Sciences of the Latvian SSR, ethnographic research was carried out in three (actually two) institutes. In 1946, ethnographers began working in the Department of Material Culture of the Institute of History and Material Culture. Following the criticism of the fields of ethnography and folklore in the late 1940s, they were merged by a decision of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Latvian SSR to form the Institute of Ethnography and Folklore. During this phase of the development of Latvian Soviet ethnography, a core group of researchers was formed that influenced the future direction of the field. From the late 1950s onwards, the financial situation of the scientific system improved for ethnographers conducting research within the Institute of History; in addition, external pressure and unpredictability in the approval of research topics decreased. This was the most productive period in ethnography, both in terms of publications and primary sources collected on expeditions.

In the context of fieldwork, several problems were common to all three stages of the development of Soviet Latvian ethnography. In the first post-war years, as well as in the early 1950s, the respondents (especially from rural populations) did not trust the ethnographers, seeing them as representatives of the occupying regime. In the immediate post-war years, the organisation of expeditions and the working conditions of expedition participants corresponded well with the description given by a female respondent working on a collective farm regarding her working relationship with the collective farm: “The collective farm does not care about your livelihood or your living conditions, it only cares about your work.” Also, at the beginning of the third stage, as can be seen from ethnographers’ notes in the expedition diaries, there were problems with supplies as well as with gaining the trust of respondents. Only in the diaries of some ethnographers does one find uncensored descriptions of living conditions, observations and narratives as well as the ethnographers’

personal attitudes towards the reality they witnessed. It should be noted that the diaries submitted to the REM are self-censored transcripts. As a result, the entries in some have been reduced to dry facts in order to protect the respondents and also the authors of the notes from the reactions of the occupying regime. However, the situation gradually changed and the range of information obtained during expeditions increased significantly, although the expedition diaries written in that period were no longer submitted to the REM. The general population gradually developed a greater appreciation for the work of ethnographers both through ethnographers' direct conversations with respondents on farms and through the scientific reporting sessions.

Ethnographic expeditions organised on a regular basis during the Soviet era provided an opportunity to not only collect significant research material, including material on the reality of Soviet life, but also advance ethnography as a field of science. The activities of ethnographers helped to draw public attention to our cultural heritage, its preservation and research.

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# Padomju Latvijas etnogrāfijas apprises: ekspedīciju darbs pēckara periodā

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**Atslēgvārdi:** ekspedīciju dienasgrāmatas, etnogrāfiskās ekspedīcijas, Etnogrāfisko materiālu krātuve, kolhozi, padomju etnogrāfija

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