Baltic Socialism Remembered
Memory and Life Story Since 1989

Edited by
Ene Kõresaar
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The chapters in this book were originally published in the *Journal of Baltic Studies*, volume 47, issue 4 (December 2016). When citing this material, please use the original page numbering for each article, as follows:

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We were the children of a romantic era: nostalgia and the nonideological everyday through the perspective of a 'Silent Generation'
Kirsti Jõesalu

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Re-educating teachers: ways and consequences of Sovietization in Estonia and Latvia (1940–1960) from the biographical perspective

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ABSTRACT

This article is based on a comparative analysis, juxtaposing archival and oral historical sources, to identify changes that took place in the teaching profession in the annexed Baltic States. Attention is paid to the generation of Estonian and Latvian teachers, born in the 1920s–1930s and trained as Soviet teachers in the 1940s–1950s. Their transformation into ‘Soviet people’ included acceptance of Soviet values and rejecting the inherent ones. Therefore, the research focuses on the course and outcomes of reeducation of teachers pursued by the Soviet authorities up to the early 1960s.

Introduction

Research on, and the interpretation of, the Soviet period, coupled with the activities of individuals under a dictatorship, have not lost relevance to the present and continue to be subjects of discussion. Our research encompasses a number of questions: how the new concepts forced on people by the regime were accepted or rejected; what their life strategies were like, and which measures were taken by the state for influencing people.

The profession of teacher is undoubtedly one of the most demanding and responsible occupations; preparing young people for life requires special knowledge and skills. Teachers are expected to set a personal example, and thus, higher demands are made of them than the general public. Each era imposes its specific demands on teachers (Eacutte and Esteve 2000; Grosvenor, Lawn, and Roumaniere 1999).

The teachers of the Baltic states found themselves needing to meet new demands in the summer of 1940. The political situation had unexpectedly changed overnight and forced the teachers to make a decision about whether or not to comply with the new demands from the Soviet authorities. The teachers encountered problems that caused not only personal dilemmas but also problematic interactions with their students. Responsibility attributed to teachers made them constant objects of supervision,
subjecting them to politically correct patterns of behavior. If these patterns of behavior were ignored, punishment usually followed (Ewing 2002; Fitzpatrick 1999; Gross 2002; Litschitz 2008; Pilve 2013).

This study is concerned with the young teachers who were born in independent states in the 1920s and 1930s, and the processes they went through to become Soviet teachers. Currently, these teachers represent the oldest generation of teachers alive; their memories have been gathered and recorded beginning at the end of the 1980s. This was the first generation of Estonian and Latvian teachers trained as Soviet teacher and their life experiences included the change in political regimes, World War II, the occupation of their native land, terror, and much more. The scope of this study is confined to Estonia and Latvia due to the lack of material on a similar group of Lithuanian teachers. During their reeducation, teachers needed to adapt their previous experience and values systems to a set of very different norms. Often, in order to build up their identity they had to ask themselves 'who we are,' 'who were we,' 'how we should do things in this community' (Bennich-Björkman 2007, 116).

The aim of this research is to concentrate on teachers' strategies measures introduced by the regime during the first decades of Sovietization, when the process of reformation of the society in accordance with the Soviet patterns was taking place. First, this study examines how the generation of teachers born in the 1920s and 1930s described or interpreted the changes in society. Second, this study investigates how both the state and teachers interpreted the control that was established over situations, whether more active or passive strategies were applied, and what compromises were made. The themes dealt with in the research are three interrelated relationships between the state, teachers, and students (Ewing 2002, xi). The students' point of view is used selectively as far as their assessments of teachers' behavior in certain situations is concerned. We combine the research on memories with the analysis of different practices in the institutions that characterized Soviet society (Bassin and Kelly 2012, 8).

Sources and methods

This study is based on several sources. The largest source is the collection of autobiographies of teachers born in the 1920s and 1930s gathered by the association 'Estonian Life Histories' and kept in the culture-historical archives of the Estonian Literary Museum (EKLA). A selection of life stories also appeared in several publications (Hinrikus 2000; Paklar 2009; Hinrikus and Kiiss 2009). The Estonian Life Histories’ Association was founded in 1996 to collect biographical material. In order to do so, a number of life stories competitions on several topics were organized, for example, 'Women's life stories' (1995), 'Life stories of the 20th century' (1998), and 'My life in the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic (ESSR) and the Republic of Estonia' (2000) (Hinrikus and Kööreä 2004, 19–34; Hinrikus 2003, 191–205). Teachers have always been willing to write their life stories; in 1998 a special collection of teachers' stories was issued within the framework of the project 'The Biographies of Teachers of the Baltic States' and was analyzed by Kööreä (2004). The most recent campaign for gathering teachers’ stories in Estonia took place in the spring of 2013 under the title 'Teacher, do you remember what your life was like?' The EKLA has gathered about 200 stories by teachers, and approximately a quarter of these are used in this research.

Another source of memories are the teachers from East Latvia, some of which are

Oral History Centre at Daugavpils University. The Centre has undertaken ten annual (2003–12) oral history expeditions in South-eastern Latvia (Latgale region and South Sēlija) to gather the historical experience of residents of this area who vary both by their ethnic and religious backgrounds. As a result, more than 1000 life histories have been compiled, including about 200 stories of local teachers. These oral narratives are free, unregulated narrations by individuals about themselves, recorded on a voice-operated recorder and transcribed afterwards. Depending on the individual style of the narrator, these were either in a form of a monologue of several hours, or a shorter dialogue between the narrator and the interviewer. In many cases, the interviewers asked the narrators to tell more about the historical events in which they had participated or witnessed.

In addition to the collections described above, we also made use of smaller collections. To more thoroughly evaluate the processes that took place in schools, we asked Tallinn's Gustav Adolf Gymnasium to be allowed to use their archives of life stories that they had gathered from teachers born in the 1920s and 1930s. With their permission, we used the memories of 11 teachers. To broaden our viewpoint, we also used students' memories from the former Tartu 5th Secondary School and Viljandi 2nd Secondary School (Kurs 2009; Mikelsaar 2009; Renno, Jüri, and Arno 2010). Memories of senior students about their teachers were published in school almanacs and as contributions to collections on the students' resistance movement (Josla 2004; Kaska 2008).

Since the teachers did not write their life stories about their development or recall events in their interviews in the form of successive temporal strategies, the material appears as completed narrative biographical texts that do not follow any particular guidelines and are often multilayered (Hinrikus 2003, 171–183). This is why certain events, and their impact on the life stories, emerge through comparisons of different periods. For instance, a number of features of the Stalinist period appeared in the descriptions of more recent times, when the situation became more stable and the years 1940–1950 were looked upon as part of a longer process. As a rule, the period from 1940 to the mid-1950s was characterized by simply trying to survive. By 1960, new standards had become generally established and patterns of behavior had been set.

The period under observation is not homogeneous, therefore the assessments given to those years cannot follow a uniform pattern. The period under investigation can be divided into three stages: pre-war (1940–1941), post-war late-Stalinism (1944–1953), and an era of weakening terror and occasional liberalization (1953–1960). The following period in the Baltics lasted until the end of the 1960s; the time frame of 1960 in this article conditionally denotes the period when Soviet education policy started following the guidelines of the new school reform, thus marking changes in ideological work.

In some life stories, Soviet school was compared to a military-like institution, subjected to totalitarian Communist ideology, where teachers, as representatives of the state, exerted mental terror, and brainwashing on students, and pupils were forbidden any initiative or freedom of thought (Kööreä 2004, 296). Alternatively, others had a much different perspective on school under the Soviet regime: 'I have good memories about the school life of that time. I have no idea where the myth started that school was like a prison where one could not laugh or study, have no fun or go in for no sports. All this was done, no matter
Soviet time today, we can find quite different views or stereotypes that signal plurality of personal opinions, circumstantial situations, and relationships between Soviet theory and practice.

Although teachers have always been active in producing memories, they often do not focus on their reeducation or only make periodic references to what requires an appropriate historical context to recognize the details of the reeducation process itself. The lack of information about teacher's reeducation makes us look for archival materials that would provide a framework for the fragments of teachers' memories. First, we created an overview of the strategies that the Soviet state has used to influence teachers. Creating an events-based framework made it possible to bring forth reactions by the teachers or their families to the actions planned by the state, and to distinguish certain campaigns (e.g. periods when ideological pressure became stronger or weaker). The events-based framework enables researchers to identify strategies, dilemmas, factors, and motives that had influenced individual choices. We agree with Ene Kõresaar and the researcher on religious biographies, Lea Alturmee, who admit that memories about the late Soviet period tend to gradually disappear from biographies, or that the period of the ESSR is described in a simple impersonal style, as if the memorizing took place ‘in a public debate-room’ (Kõresaar 2001, 130; Alturmee 2006, 106–111).

For a comparative analysis we contrast the biographical material with state-designed strategies for reeducating the teaching profession, using various materials from the Estonian National Archives (ERA) and the State Archives of Latvia (LNA LVA). We mainly use materials from the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Latvia (LNA LVA stock R101) and the ESSR Ministry of Education (ERA stock R14) that consisted of reports at both regional and republican levels, which also describe educational policy more broadly than just pointing to problems with schools, teachers, or students.

The following interpretation is based on the method of reconstructive cross-analysis in oral history proposed by Thompson (2000, 268–282). The application of the reconstructive cross-analysis is rooted in the idea that the individual life is the actual vehicle of historical experience, but to make generalizations possible, the evidence extracted from different oral history interviews and written memoirs is compared with data from other types of historical sources. In this way, the overall shape of the reconstruction of the past is not predetermined by life stories, but emerges from the inner logic of argumentation designed by a historian. The reconstructive model of analysis also sets limits on the length of the presentation of life histories within the text.

Contrasting teachers’ experiences to state-planned strategies drawn from the materials stored in various institutions discloses situations brought about by a variety of factors. The folklore researcher Tiitu Jaago analyzed individual choices on the basis of the life stories and explained that individuals sharing the same historical-political framework do not perceive the space identically. In addition, depending on personality traits, an individual can be influenced by numerous other factors, including interpretations and meanings ascribed to events (Jaago 2006, 83–100). Using various sources and contrasting individual memories with materials at the state level enables us to broaden the view of society and learn more about the era under observation, its richness, nuances, and contradictions. From broader view, the distinctive features of the local area can be identified, which are important for an in-depth analysis of the functioning of socialist society.

In order to analyze the various strategies adopted between individuals and the state, we present an overview of the characteristic features of the period, repressions, and mental pressure and, following this, the ‘Thaw era.’ Against this background, different practices and dilemmas are outlined at the individual and state levels, and key factors for understanding the historical-cultural process of this very controversial era can be presented.

The reorganization of education policy

The Sovietization of the Baltic education sector began with institutional changes, which primarily entailed simply implementing the Soviet model (Tannberg 2007; 2010; Zubkova 2008). Education policy management in the Baltic republics, put into practice through the Ministries of Education, was regulated by the school departments of the Communist Party Central Committee (CP CC), and delegated to the party propaganda secretary. As CP reports indicate, the main task for the Ministries of Education until 1953 was to discharge ineligible teachers. The duties of the party school departments ranged from reviewing school programs to ideological supervision. Through these functions, the schools’ ideological-educational work was carried out and inspected when development in the area was monitored (Tarvel 2002, 242–247). The reorganizations to be carried out originated from Moscow and were based on the resolutions and guidelines of the All-Union Communist (Bolshevik) Party Central Committee. Thus, school became one of the main battlefields for the enforcement of the new Soviet ideology. Similar Soviet-style models of education systems, with distinctive features for each country, were imposed throughout Eastern Europe, especially in East Germany, where Soviet officials felt direct responsibility for the introduction of a new cultural and educational system (Connelly 2000, 3–4, 40–42, 58–60).

Major changes were also introduced into programs of study, which were required to follow Soviet standards. Local history with significant patriotic content, religious education, civic education, and ancient languages were removed from the curricula in favor of the Russian language, which began to enjoy a special place in education. Beginning in 1948, school programs gradually became more and more ideologically biased and the teaching of national history was cancelled in Baltic schools and replaced with the history of the Russian people, as had already been done in other union republics.

However, the agents of Sovietization were teachers. Therefore, the question of 'cadres' became one of the most complicated problems for the introduction of the Soviet model of education. The role of the intelligentsia, including teachers (Manheim 1994, 466), was not unimportant in bringing up and educating 'new individuals' and society; thus the process had to begin with reforming the attitudes and mentality of the intellectuals themselves. Bringing up the 'New Man' for the communist society was the focal point of the Soviet education policy, which was based on the idea that human nature can be molded in any way that one would wish (Haflin 2003, 1–2; Sandle 2010, 214). For this purpose, a Soviet person had to develop a new type of socialist self-consciousness in accordance with ruling ideology; through coercive measures and education the Soviet regime hoped to produce 'purified' people, with
Landmarks of the first Soviet year, 1940–1941

Undoubtedly, physical pressure and fear made up the central power strategy which most influenced people's behavior and which supported the introduction of control mechanisms during the period under observation. This is the background against which people's activity was determined.

Those in power were motivated by lasting resistance and divided the population into 'us' and 'them,' and 'good' and 'bad' groups (Gross 2002, 114–122). The first clear division into supporters and opponents of the new regime began to appear in 1940. Local functionaries and employees of executive committees were assigned to control the local people's mentality and find out those among teachers willing to go along with the new regime and those not willing to do so (Pavlait 2009, 47). First, the atmosphere inside schools was controlled with the help of supporters of the new regime and newly established All-Union Leninist Young Communist League, (usually known as Komsomol: Комсомол, a syllabic abbreviation from the Russian Kommunisticheski Soyuz Molodozhyh) organization. At the end of 1940, the pressure of the regime on teachers began to build up, and within 4 months, more than 300 secondary school teachers and headmasters were dismissed (Karjahan and Sirk 2007, 304). Most were allowed to continue their work in other distant regions and headmasters for secondary schools began to be appointed by the party central committee personnel department, which closely scrutinized their curriculum vitae and mentality.

In such circumstances, the majority of teachers decided to distance themselves from ideology. In that period everybody tried to do their best. My Dad's sister, Dad himself, his cousins—all worked as teachers. And everybody worked with the only wish that Latgale would gain education,' remembers Silva Linarte (DU MV, 599). However, this strategy could not last long. Earlier, socially active teachers and their political contacts had belonged to some political party or military organization, such as Estonia's Defense League or Latvia's Alzis organization. This gave the regime sufficient reasons for introducing a more intense penal policy. The struggle against the people's 'past' continued, ever more forcibly. An individual's pronouncements or concrete acts under the new regime actually played a less decisive role than the data that the security organizations gathered about the mentality of that individual, their families, social status, and activity in the period of the independent republic.
was growing. Proportionally, ‘purges’ were similar in the Latvian SSR. Between 1945 and 1949, approximately 1500 teachers were dismissed (LNA LVA. R101-12-74, 59).

Only in 1952 did such actions begin to slow. Only after the 6th Congress of the Estonian C (B) P in April 1951 it had been substantiated that ‘bourgeois nationalists’ had been given a crushing blow and cooperation between party organizations and the intelligentsia had improved. It was admitted that the time had come to develop more differentiated strategies for intellectuals, and also that the party should help intellectuals more (Sirk 2004, 66).

The total number of teachers who were removed for political reasons is unclear. It is known that the data about numerous dismissals in the reports of executive committees were not recorded accurately. Many highly qualified teachers found work as unskilled workers. Martha Marie Aabram, a talented and strict teacher, according to her former students, was forced to give up her professional work in 1950 because she had traveled to England in the 1930s to improve her English, which made her politically unreliable and ineligible to be a teacher. She began work as an unskilled worker at a fertilizer factory, and only in 1959 was she allowed to begin teaching again in a small country school (Renno, Jüri, and Arno 2010, 190).

As far as the ‘purges’ are concerned, it should be noted that their intensity varied considerably across regions, which can also be observed in the respective memories: while most of the stories strongly emphasized the background of terror, there are also stories where this environment is only mentioned in passing. The ferocity of political pressure directly affected both the composition of the teaching profession, which consisted of teachers with considerable teaching experience and inexperienced new teachers. It also affected the quality of education, as well as general mentality in schools. For example, Daugavpils, historically a multiethnic region where many religions were practiced, underwent numerous political operations, and in 1945 lost more than 90% of its pre-war teachers (Salenieke 2003, 201–202). The region had considerable difficulty in finding new teachers.

One of the methods of ‘purifying’ the teaching staff was compulsory certification. In Latvia, teachers had to pass certification between October 1949 and July 1951 (LNA LVA. R101-12-18, 108–109; Bleiere 2012, 125). The process of certification made it possible to assess every individual teacher, not only with regard to their professional qualifications, but also to their moral position and family background. As Olga Spüle (born 1921) recalls,

> it was probably the year 1950 when the teachers’ certification took place. They thoroughly examined whether your parents or relatives appeared somewhere or not (for having been disloyal to the communist regime). It had been checked before and laid in front of you. (DU MV, 28)

Although the post-war political course aimed at mass ‘purification,’ limits were set by the lack of human resources to develop such a society. Obviously, it was not possible to replace the whole teaching profession in one stroke and doing so would clearly not have solved all of the problems. The most direct consequence of the mass ‘purification’ policy was a considerable shortage of teachers and labor turnover. Various measures were taken to compensate for the lack of teachers, such as organizing crash courses for teachers-to-be, looking for teachers from outside the republic, and enrolling demobilized soldiers straight from the army. The last two options failed.

For me the most unpleasant one was the Russian teacher Ivasjuk who had been sent to Estonia to ‘foster culture’, from somewhere in Russia or the Ukraine. Our lessons consisted in reading and translating from the all-union newspaper ‘Prawda.’ Since he did not know any Estonian we could translate it whatever way we pleased. A few words he did know, though... As he was a heavy boozzer, there was always the smell of booze and garlic on his breath. After he had stolen a female teacher’s handbag and got caught with it in the fight on the Town Hall Square, he was sent to Narva to work as the director of a school. (KM EKLA, f 350, Sirje Rätsep)

The simplest way of getting rid of such problematic teachers was to re-appoint them to a new place of work which not only did not solve the problem in the schools, but also put these troublesome individuals off or left them to others to take care of.

The inability of the authorities to solve the problems according to the established principles can be seen very clearly in the way teaching staff was selected. There are several examples of ‘worthless’ teachers with the ‘wrong political past,’ who stayed on in schools until alternates were found. The CP had sufficient information pointing to the fact that former teachers did not adapt to the requirements of the new regime, and they were often stated to be ‘hard to reform and mostly a backward part of the profession’ (ERA. R14-1-258, 157). Thus, the state had to make compromises and be flexible in selecting its teachers. Such revision of the education policy sent a message to the people about the range of opportunities and the selective implementation of requirements.

It was typical of the post-war period of confusion that teachers were not able to work out definite behavioral strategies. The ‘purification’ message to the population was overwhelmingly threatening. The accusations made against people became more drastic and refined year by year, containing more and more details, not only from the last war, like service in the German army or occupation-related crimes, but also from earlier periods (Weiner and Rahi-Tamm 2012, 24–26). People could not guess what issues from their past would emerge as politically unacceptable and when they would be punished for them. Where could these people go to escape from their past? Many of the teachers who foresaw impending dangers of arrest or dismissal, moved from one place and post to another for years and eventually gave up their professional work altogether. Yet, the majority of former teachers kept working as teachers as long as they were allowed to. Some students’ memories state ‘in some subjects we had a new teacher every year.’ This happened in country schools in particular, as it was easier to employ teachers for city schools.

A continuous sense of fear taught people to conform to circumstances and forced them to make more compromises (Mertelsmann and Rahi-Tamm 2009). To speed up the process of adaptation to the circumstances, the Soviet regime offered the teachers a solution – the option of Ideological reeducation wherein they had to renounce their earlier life and past. Guidelines dictated by Stalin for the given situation in school were ‘simple’ – teachers could best protect themselves by modifying their own thinking, thus the Soviet authorities were coercing teachers into believing that their best hope for self-protection would be found in the new authoritarianism (Ewing 2002, 8–9). The Manist-Leninist purgatory gave intellectuals the possibility of rebirth to become a Soviet person.

I ideological confrontation and the teaching of Soviet consciousness

I ideological educational work was always a topic in Soviet schools, both during periods of consolidation and when reforms were in progress. But the extent of such work varied between different schools and regions. In some regions, the emphasis was on ideological education, while in others it was more on practical skills. This was due to the fact that the authorities had different ideas about how to educate the young generation. Some believed that ideological education was important for the future of the country, while others believed that practical skills were more important. This caused tensions between the schools, and often led to conflicts between the teachers and the authorities. However, the teachers had to follow the instructions of the authorities and teach the students according to the syllabus. This meant that they had to spend a lot of time on ideological education, which could be very difficult for them.
education was a powerful tool, along with 'purification,' to reeducate society. In the schools, teachers were put in a contradictory position - they were simultaneously both victims and instruments of power. In practice, this contradiction meant being caught in the crossfire when earlier conventions had to be forgotten and the Soviet facade put on.

Beliefs held during the period of independence were stigmatized, and all views expressed in the classroom had to be in line with the established CP directions and vocabulary. The entire period of independence was to be presented only in terms of negative comparisons: reactionary, backward, fascist, bourgeois, etc (Kreegpuu 2007, 65-68).

Wherever possible teachers attempted to spare both themselves and their students from excessive ideology. Such attempts could easily lead to the teacher being dismissed. Numerous regulations were fulfilled only ostensibly, just as numerous political circles for reeducating teachers were theoretical rather than practical. A 1947 report by the Ministry of Education admits that teachers knew the Marxist theory but this did not prevent them from apolitical teaching at school. There were schools where 'teaching is connected with the present-day only when some stranger is visiting the class, where "cultural movements" are not organized... or they are boring and formal, reminding one of onetime morning prayers... Teaching is not related to contemporary events and phenomena, students often know nothing or very little about what is going on around them' (ERA. R14-3-258, 162, 163).

Similar double-standard situations were more clearly illustrated by an event in the Tallinn 10th Secondary School. When a city party committee instructor appeared to inspect the school, a teacher shouted to her students across the corridor: 'Girls, quick! Take off the crosses from around your necks! A communist has come to the school!' (Vesikmägi 1996, 145). Wearing crosses, rings, badges, and other adornments decorated with tricolor (blue, black and white in Estonia and red, white, and red in Latvia) national symbols had always been strictly forbidden and wearing one was a punishable offense in schools during the Soviet era. Despite the ban, the youth daringly wore forbidden symbolic decorations and teachers were in no hurry to veto this action. 'At that time there were numerous teachers among us [students who had organized resistance movement] who thought the same as us, we often recognized them by a hidden smile or wink when hearing some communist crap,' an active participant in the youth movement, Jaan Isotamm recalled (Isotamm 2004, 289, 290). While teachers did not pay attention to their students' 'silent' opposition to the regime, we cannot speak about the Soviet triumph in schools. Reeducation of teachers did not proceed at the pace expected by the regime.

During the early post-war years, ideological attacks were somewhat restrained and the party functionaries shared the opinion that intellectuals, including the old intelligentsia, could be reformed and reeducated, even if it took time. Later it became obvious that the 'wait-and-see' strategy did not show the expected results. The majority of teachers, as with the population as a whole, tried to live two lives simultaneously: the 'former times' continued to exist in their private lives and the 'Soviet times' existed only when dealing with government offices (Aareland 2000, 765). The campaign, which began in 1947 and 1948, against 'bourgeois-nationalist remnants' had to put a stop to such a phenomenon.

One component of the teachers' reeducation process was related to performing duties for the state. To persuade the party of change in their communities, BALTIC SOCIALISM REMEMBERED

their loyalty and persuasiveness as propagandists for the regime. Teachers were given a number of socio-political tasks, like organizing elections, taking part in local Soviet institutions, being closely connected with environmental issues, etc (ERA. 1-4-669, 62-66; LNA LVA. R.101-12-74, 60).

My Mum was a country school teacher and had to obey not only the headmaster's orders but also those given by the village executive committee. In 1948 teachers were ordered to go into the villages and canvass farmers for joining into collective farms. My Mum had to explain the advantages of collective farming to the people. She was quite unhappy and confused because she herself did not think it necessary to organize collective farms. But she did do it, although not believing in the tales she had to retell. She wasn't actually thrown out of any house because she was a teacher and the farmers' kids went to the same school where my Mum taught (Tarto 2010, 60).

It was obvious that teachers could not fulfill all the tasks successfully. These duties caused shame and embarrassment, particularly in rural areas, where people mixed more closely with one another and so being 'the tool of the regime' caused negative feelings and distrust of teachers.

Another area of ideological struggle, where teachers had to demonstrate their eagerness that often resulting in embarrassment, was anti-religious activity, which became more intense at the end of the 1940s. As was stated at the 2nd Congress of the ESSR Intelligentsia, the 'teachers' task is to show how moral degrading and hypocritical religion practice and church activity had always been and still is and how it is directed to fulfilling the working people's consciousness' (Branch of Estonian State Archives ERA. 1-4-669, 62-66). Atheist propaganda began to outline negative stereotypes of believers. They were described as deceived, uneducated, crazy people, disloyal to the state. In the Soviet concept, decent people did not go to church. The demolition of religion took place, together with establishing a so-called 'red religion,' creating new rituals and symbols and, thus, attempting to create an apology for religion (Altnurme 2006, 69). Both extracurricular and cultural-educational work building on from these goals became part of the teachers' duties.

As a result of this pressure, people began to withdraw from church. Today, numerous memories tell of the ways in which, in spite of the prohibition of religious rites, going to the church and other ceremonial activity were secretly practiced, and how religious holidays were celebrated in secret. Olga Spõle (born 1921) recalled:

My children were also baptized, they had been born in 1952 and in 1954. Well then, that was how Luberts was. He brought for me a priest on a motorcycle from Rõuge in the middle of the night. The window was tightly covered, and so my kids were baptized. Anyway, I just asked the priest not to record this event in the parish register, for I am a teacher, and such things are not allowed. (DU MV, 28)

To have the courage of one's convictions required strength of mind, but the majority of people chose double standards and adaptation. Now, decades later, one hears more and more often bitterness about the spiritual retreat committed many years ago. Many blame themselves for not persevering with their faith, nor being able to communicate their religious beliefs to their children, or the values and thoughts acquired earlier in the pre-war society, which were replaced by Marxist dogmas under the pressure of Communist propaganda. The children and grandchildren of
responsibility: ‘When I worked as a teacher, I definitely worked under Soviet rule; I did not teach the children anything about God’ (DU MV, 244).

Although teachers attempted to ignore or ostensibly fulfill instructions, they had to surrender to Soviet requirements designed for actual collaboration with the authorities. As the comparison of the various sources has indicated, the extensive resistance of society to Sovietization in the 1950s was gradually replaced by adaptation to the circumstances.

In 1952, when the campaign against ‘bourgeois-nationalists’ had abated somewhat and the party changed its political course by replacing the persecution strategy with more differentiated approaches toward intellectuals, ideological pressure, also partly slackened. The moves toward the liberalization of society after the death of Stalin in 1953 did not prove radical. Discussions about innovating education policy dealt primarily with the ideological education of the young, and in this light, the emphasis was shifted to the need to increase the significance of the humanities, like history, literature, and art, so as to teach Soviet patriotism and civic duty to students. At the same time, however, the youth's negative attitudes to Soviet ideology became more apparent. The resistance of society toward Soviet ideology increased after the Hungarian uprising was suppressed in 1956, and pressure on the youth and schools was building up once again.

Use of ideological vocabulary became an everyday occurrence. When teachers today consider the past, they attach no special significance to this, regarding ideological vocabulary as a requirement they had to get used to. As Lehte Rein (born 1930), who worked as an Estonian language and literature teacher for over 30 years, recalls:

Endless communist propaganda characterized the Soviet time – boring. But one gets used to anything. In general, politics was not talked about. [...] When some kind of a report had to be compiled – and teachers had to do it quite often – it was simple: you found a suitable paragraph in the works by Lenin or Stalin, later by Brezhnev, extended it with your own ideas and ended up with another wise thought by one of our political leaders. One got used to it. Reeducationists did their work, and got paid for it, acting teachers tried to teach their subjects as well as possible and thus earned their bread. (Lehte Rein, private collection of Rahi-Tamm)

Making school serve the party

The most important indicator of the growth of teachers' political awareness was the rise in the number of CP members, 'candidate-members' of the CPSU (Communist Party Soviet Union), and Komsomol members.Success in political reeducation mainly depended on the number of communists in schools and their mentality; great emphasis was put on organizing primary party organizations in schools. Despite all of the efforts, the number of teachers who became communists remained low. In 1949 only 4% of Estonian and 4.8% of Latvian teachers were either members or candidate members of the CP; only 8% of Estonian teachers were Komsomol members and in Latvia less than 10% of teachers were Komsomol members (ERA. R.14-3-568, 190; LNA LVA. R.101-12-74, 59, 62).

Since it was harder to persuade older teachers to join the CP, younger teachers were put under increasing pressure to do so until the end of the 1950s. Malle Purje (born 1939) recalls, ‘School leaders were required to find as many people as possible as the youngest and unqualified teacher would not dare to resist’ (KM EKLA, f 350, Malle Purje).

As public figures, the pressure on teachers to join the CP was quite intense throughout the Soviet period. This is referred to in all of the teachers' memoirs, whether they joined the CP or not. Gunnar Karu (born 1930) was skillful in avoiding the ‘obligation’:

The first time I was proposed to join the party happened in Põltsamaa in the 1950s. There were only two party members at school, the headmaster and the history teacher who was the wife of the ideology secretary of the local party committee. The headmaster motivated his proposition by the fact that together with me there would be three members and so we could form a primary organization and the example of the deputy head would inspire colleagues to join the party as well. Our talk remained unfinished and luckily for me one of the teachers agreed to become a candidate member. [...] Some time later the headmaster returned to the question of my joining the party, saying, 'You will not get away with it,' however, I did get away with it. (KM EKLA, f 350, Gunnar Karu)

From the CP position, it was essential that each school had a primary party organization to show that the CP had gained control of the school. The CP had to be in control of everything, directly participating in local affairs as well as administering all social processes. In reality, the aim of reeducation was transformed by self-regulation in accordance with locally operating social contacts over the years and the level of control began to vary across different regions.

Despite the stiff opposition at the beginning, the number of CP members among teachers increased. By 1961, the number of teachers in the Estonian CP had grown to 17%, and to 36% by 1966. Particular pressure was exerted on history teachers, and by 1965, 55% of all Estonian history teachers were CP members (Raudsepp 2005, 36, 39). The figure was not as high in the population as a whole; by 1988 CP membership reached an all-time high in the Estonian SSR with only 10% of the population (Palumets and Titma 2001, 101). In the Latvian SSR it was even lower – the Latvian CP membership was about 6.5% of the whole population (http://www.letonika.lv/groups/title=Lavijas%20komparkija/32445 (23 August 2013)).

How do the teachers explain their attitude toward joining the CP at that time? Economic considerations were the primary motivation to join the party. The teachers wished to improve their living standards and the promise of career and further study options or other welfare benefits were strong incentives to become members. When a decision was made required about party membership, low living standards often pushed ideology-related questions to the background. The history teacher, Imbi-Sirje Torm (born 1940), explained her choice as follows:

I did not fight back when the proposition to join the CP was made to me for I hoped to get more information, a wider circle of interaction, a possibility of working as a teacher of civic studies. At home my father (who had survived a Soviet prison camp) became quite serious at my message. There was not a single communist in my parents' families or their circle of friends. [...] My father had well informed me about Estonian history. In my lessons I followed the principle 'Better be quiet but do not lie.' (IKM EKLA, f 350, Imbi-Sirje Torm)

By way of generalization one could add that ‘keeping quiet’ became one of the main strategies of behavior under Soviet rule, which is also discussed in most of the teachers' stories.

Not many people explained that their choice was a result of coercion or pressure.
was an organizer of extracurricular activities at the same time), is very frank in her statements:

I am writing on the topic because today one can come across a lot of tasteless chat-chat about how people joined the CP to undermine the position of the Russian (Soviet) state and how they were almost physically forced to join it. For one cannot boast about any of it and I don’t even want to. I could not even dream any longer about the re-establishment of the Independent Republic of Estonia, even less could I imagine how to undermine the Soviet state and act in the name of it. I was not coerced to the CP, if I had responsibly opposed it, I could have gone to work somewhere else. At that moment I chose the most suitable variant because my elderly parents who had made it possible for me to go to the university deserved it that I was close to them when they passed away. (KM EKLA, f 350, Malle Punje)

It is important to mention that some teachers decided to join the party because they became convinced that the communist ideology was correct:

In 1956, a new headmaster, a young man Hillar Hansoo came to our school. [...] The truth of the matter is, he was a genuine communist, among the communists whom I ever saw or met during my long school life he was the only one who was of the kind as a communist was ideally described: unselfish, self-sacrificing, committed to his aim and steadfast, but condemning foolishness. Partly he had remained in the era where those ideals first originated from but in many ways his thinking was far advanced in comparison to others. (KM EKLA, f 350, Helgi Pilir)

This is how Helgi Pilir (born 1940) characterized her former teacher. Similarly, there were teachers who regarded communism as the best model, but nevertheless did not agree to join the CP. Latvian teacher, Raisa Zilinska (born 1934), recalls:

I was no pioneer, no Komsomol, nothing... I was a communist by my heart, even not having the party membership card. I strongly believed and thought that everything was happening in such a bad and wrong way (stealing, drinking, flinging away) because those in power (CP and Soviet government) did not know what in fact was going on. (DU MV, 54, Raisa Zilinska)

Focus on work

Because this article is based on the memories of teachers born in the 1920s and 1930s, it is interesting to note that the topic of work came up in all of the teachers’ life stories. As Kõrresaar points out, the teachers’ life stories were distinguished by selective approach to the remembered events and strong professional identity. These elements were expressed in detailed descriptions of their careers and work: being a good teacher served as the focus in the autobiographies (Kõrresaar 2004, 293–294). Work can be looked upon as mechanism of escape, where one does not even think of what they are doing, or why. Ninety-two-year-old Konstantin (born 1921) stated the essence of being a teacher as follows: "The main problem in the teaching work is... whether it makes me happy, ...and whether I will be regarded as their "own teacher." ... If I succeed in this then the political background does not play any significant role" (Konstantin Rein, private collection of Rahi-Tamm, 2013).

Although today it is important for us to know how people behaved in frightening situations, how they managed to cope with absurd orders, ideological brainwashing, and the many other horrors that took place between 1940 and 1960, the life stories individually do not provide sufficient support for an in-depth analysis of all of these topics. In retrospect, the stories have mainly focused on self-realization and descriptions of the level of circumstantial difficulties within which
This slogan could also be seen as one of the teachers' central life strategies to which so many of them were clinging when facing various problems in their teaching careers. Thus, focusing on work became a model of control that outwardly fit in with the standards suggested by the regime and also helped teachers cope with the system. Only the individual, or the people very close to the individual, knew what the actual effect of this focus on work was. It is difficult to open up one's private sphere of life, even in memories, although in some of the memories, traces of the double-thinking which inevitably accompanied the adaptation process can be observed.

By 1960, the teaching profession realized that school and teaching in general were subordinated to and coordinated by the central and ideology. How and to what extent the requirements were observed depended not only on a teacher's personality and courage, but also on the school leadership and the school mentality, and on the mutual confidence and skills in finding appropriate compromises among the teaching staff.

**Conclusion**

A retrospective cross-analysis of personal strategies of activity manifested in teachers' biographies, on one hand, and state-designed strategies of activity issued in institutional documents, on the other, disclosed numerous processes that characterized the society from the 1940s to the 1960s. First of all, these were decades of major changes and confusion, concentrating on the reformation of the mentality and attitudes of the citizens of the former independent states to make them appropriate to those of Stalinism and the socialist era.

Although Moscow's policy envisaged the application of the Soviet model to the Baltic education system, it was not possible to realize this in its ideal form, which made the authorities experiment with various approaches and seek certain compromises. For reeducating teachers and reforming schools, various components were introduced by the state, from paralyzing the whole society through a sense of fear and ideological pressure, to enticing people to collaborate by offering them favored places in the ranks of power and better living and working conditions.

The main counter-strategy teachers used was to distance themselves from what was going on through passiveness, double thinking, and conservatism. At times, depending on the situation, these distance-producing strategies combined with somewhat more active strategies, such as looking for a more suitable environment, changing schools, hidden sympathy for students' anti-government activity, sparing them from excessive ideology, and so on.

The generation born in the 1920s and 1930s, who were reeducated after the state's failure to find suitable teaching staff, and who had to fill the gaps left by the teachers dislodged from schools, remained relatively vague in their biographical retrospect of the years from 1940 to 1960; they do not discuss clear-cut typical strategies of coping with Communism. It seems as if the confusion typical of those years is still partly characteristic of many individuals who were young at that time. The different phases of Sovietization were often not clearly perceived by the teachers who wrote about the years of terror (1940–1950). In their treatment of complicated situations, the authors referred to the contradictory nature of their profession – that they felt caught in the crossfire, but they mostly yielded in depth situations that had to be dealt with in the framework of the official ideology and its applications, without attempting to reflect on the historical and social context of the Soviet period.
Without knowing the strategies exercised by the state and referring to additional sources, the life stories alone cannot disclose all of the strategies characteristic of the era. Attention should also be drawn to a certain paradox—although the teachers’ generation under observation had to live through various twists and turns, and even if they radically changed their views over the course of their lives, the teachers of the Soviet period remain somewhat dogmatic and are not particularly ready to acknowledge a point of view different from their own. In many ways, those teachers resemble the personalities who, during challenging times, would know what they expected from life, combining the difficulties of adaptation in their experience (and life stories) with the creation of new identities (Laanest 2009, 51–53).

The teachers’ reeducation process could not be declared complete by 1960, although schools were under the control of the party. Behind the appearance of loyalty, reticence, and the development of a new society, a lot of legacy and values belonging to the old society were preserved. The legacy and values determined the characteristics of a region and its social relationships. In turn, characteristics and relationships provided the basis for quite different, often uncontrollable tendencies and these could be analyzed by comparing the interactions of the students’ strategies and orientations with teachers of different generations, both older and younger.

Notes

1. South-eastern Latvia (Latgale and South Sēlija region) is historically a multi-ethnic community, where a number of religions are practiced. It has stable traditions of ethnic and religious tolerance and mutual cultural enrichment. For centuries it has been inhabited by Latvians, Lithuanians, Belo-Russians, Russians, Germans, Polish, and Jewish people, with the major religious groups being Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Russian Orthodox, Old-Believers and Judaic. Everyday life was marked by mutual interaction and the enrichment of various cultures that gave rise to a particular culture and conduct. Tolerant treatment of ‘others’ was considered polite and was understood.

2. Since 2011 the State Archives of Latvia has been a structural department of the Latvian National Archives.

3. The use of the proper names of Republic of Latvia or Republic of Latvia were also forbidden, according to Soviet historical treatment the period was called the ‘ruling of bourgeois dictatorship.’

4. After the war, 97% of the Estonian education system used Estonian as the study language; by 1955/57 there were only 77% of Estonian-based general-education schools left. The policy favoring immigration reduced the native population; At the beginning of the 1980s Russian- based education formed one-third of the entire educational sphere in Estonia. In the 1937/ 1938 study year, Latvian as the language of instruction was used in 78.7% of schools, but in 1993/1994 only 49.2% of school children attended Latvian schools and about 50% attended schools with Russian as the language of instruction. Russian-based schools used Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic study programs, so the contact with the native population and its culture remained weak; teaching the Estonian and Latvian languages was often formal, giving rise to two different languages— and culture-barred communities (Kajamäe and Sirk 2007, 82–84; Salenie and Kuznetsova 1999, 244–246).

5. Local history began to be taught in Estonia again in the 1957/1958 study year when a new history textbook was issued, and Estonian history was also unofficially taught in some schools earlier than this. In 1957, a new program for the history of the CPSU was worked out (Raudsepp 2005, 71, 54).

6. In the autumn of 1941, an organization of ZEV – Zentralstelle zur Erfassung der Verschleppten Esten (Center for Registration and Retrieval of Deported and Mobilized Estonians) – was setup in Nazi-occupied Estonia to register those deported, arrested or mobilized by the Red Army

7. About 90,000 citizens from Estonia and 130,000 from Latvia escaped to the West.

8. Stringent punishments were meted out for wearing national symbolic decorations from the first months of Soviet rule. For public use of the Estonian national flag and other symbols in the summer of 1940, a number of schoolboys were among the first arrested. It was absurd because the national flag was not officially banned at that time and so on many houses the Soviet red flag and Estonian tricolor were hanging side by side (Kasikam and Hiili 2006, 309).

9. As the activities of the forest brothers declined, underground youth organizations continued their resistance movement, primarily during the years 1955–1962. Numerous school and university students were participants in the resistance movement of that period and they assessed the struggle of the years 1940–1966 as one process. The death of Stalin and the following events changed the youth’s aspirations and activity in quantity but the quality remained the same: disseminating anti-Soviet leaflets, raising national flags, destroying Soviet symbols of power, helping those in active resistance, collecting weapons to be used at the x-hour etc. (Issatamm 2004, 287–294).

10. Ene Kõesära has underlined the fact typical of teachers’ memories, that the whole of a teacher’s life story is actually the biography of their working life (Kõesära 2004, 293).

Acknowledgments

Aigi Rahi-Tamm’s research for this article was supported in the framework of the project ‘Estonia in the Cold War’ (SF0180050s09) and ‘Practices of Memory: Continuities and Discontinuities of Remembering the 20th Century’ (ETF8190).

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Funding

This work was supported by target funding project no SF0180050s09 and ETF8190 of Estonian Ministry of Education and Science.

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Points of memory in the narrative of a ‘Mnemonic Warrior’: gender, displacement, and the anti-Soviet war of resistance in Lithuania

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ABSTRACT
Drawing on feminist theories on memory and memory work, this article analyzes the biographical narrative of Aldona Vilutienė (née Sabaitytė), a former partisan messenger and deportee, who created the first museum commemorating the anti-Soviet resistance and the deportations carried out under Stalin in post-Soviet Lithuania. The analysis is focused on points of memory, a theoretical concept developed by Marianne Hirsch who defined them as 'points of intersection between past and present, memory and post-memory, personal remembrance and cultural recall.' This approach helps us to better understand the complex processes of memory production and reconstruct the lived experiences associated with remembering war and displacement. In addition, it challenges the portrayal of partisan war and deportations as monumental national traumas.

Introduction
As astutely stated by Marianne Hirsch (2012), current debates among those who study memory in various fields include questions about 'the ethics and aesthetics of remembrance' in the aftermath of traumatic events (2012, 2). What are the proper ways to remember the pain and trauma experienced by others, without trivializing or appropriating their experiences? How do we ensure that various experiences are represented fairly? Which traumatic events are memorialized by governments and how? Additionally, there are questions related to the aesthetics of the remembrance of traumatic events, such as: which representations make it to the public sphere and which stories and images are likely to be marginalized or even silenced? What should be done with memories that are rarely voiced or shown and are considered to be too mundane, inappropriate, or even shameful, to be shared in public? These questions pertain to the construction and survival of memory regimes that consist of a set of visible, constructed memories that are institutionalized and attract at least some support from the public (Langenbacher 2008).
To gain insight into processes of memory production, this essay analyzes a biographical narrative of a memory entrepreneur; a political actor who, as theorized by