

International Research Conference

Commemorating the 25th anniversary of the dissolution of the KGB in Latvia caused by the Soviet coup d'état attempt in 1991:

"BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU: KGB and its Front Organizations"

11-13 August 2016, Riga, Latvia

The security services were a key element within all countries of the Soviet bloc. The Soviet regime was supported by the Soviet political secret police, the so-called Cheka, founded in 1917 as The All-Russian Extraordinary Commission. In 1940, when the USSR occupied the Baltic states, the functions of the Cheka were transferred to the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (*NKVD*). This oppressive state agency used its existent apparatus to search for and physically eliminate opponents and suspected opponents of Bolshevik power until the restoration of Baltic independence in 1991. Soviet political persecutions affected hundreds of thousands of inhabitants of the Republic of Latvia. Society can be described as *NKVD-NKGB-MGB-MVD-KGB Cheka* controlled as it was held in horror and fear due to the systematic terror used as a method to govern by the Soviet regime. Now, as Latvia celebrates 25 years since it regained its independence from the Soviet Union, public pressure to publish the lists of the KGB agents who spied on their family, neighbors, colleagues and countrymen is growing. Between the end of the World War Two and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, it can be said that thirty thousand have operated as covert agents and informers in Latvia. The conference theme, however, extends beyond the totalitarian context and encourages its participants to reflect on the question of how commemoration and communication practices in post-totalitarian society, media, art, and communication are involved in generating social memories of the past, selves, related narratives of shame, guilt, fear, nostalgia, cultural trauma and post-totalitarian national identity (re)building.

The conference is organized by the **University of Latvia and the Government Commission for KGB Research**. The Commission has been established by the Cabinet of Ministers on August 5, 2014 to carry out scientific research as it is specified under the law "On maintenance, use of documents of the former Committee for State Security (KGB) and establishing the fact of collaboration of a person with the KGB". The commission is expected to publish its conclusions by May 31, 2018 on the Soviet totalitarian and bureaucratic authoritarian regime and its crimes, as well as on the KGB as the main tool for ensuring the occupation regime. These conclusions must enable full public access to the KGB documents.

The languages of the conference will be Latvian, English and Russian. All those interested in the conference are encouraged to participate – both as presenters and as auditors. The organizers will cover the accommodation and travel expenses for presenters. Participation is free of charge. Abstracts will be published in a PDF Book.

Full papers should be submitted by September 1, 2016 and will thereafter be published.

Topics

Topics of interest include, but are not limited to:

- The emerging and evolution of the Soviet NKVD-NKGB-MGB-MVD-KGB system, its transplantation to Baltics and the evolution of the security services management of their counterparts in other countries;
- The everyday functioning of the security services community in Soviet bloc countries, their ideological, political, legal and social narratives; their methods of control in the Soviet bloc totalitarian society;
- Case studies of covert operations by the secret services of the USSR and the Soviet satellite states in the field of intelligence, counterintelligence, antireligious matters, suppression of the Church, so called ideological subversion, infiltration into Western societies, etc.;
- The digitization of the secret services archives; the social and political impacts of declassifying and revealing the Soviet-era archive files open to the public;
- The influence of the communist parties, especially the Communist Party of the Soviet Union on the operations of the security services community of the Soviet bloc countries.

Submission

Participants may submit more than one proposal, but only one paper by the same author may be accepted. Abstracts should contain a clear outline of the argument, the theoretical framework, and, where applicable, the methodology and results. An abstract of your paper of 1500-2500 characters with spaces in Latvian, Russian or English (as well as, in exceptional cases, in German) and a Curriculum Vitae (both *.pdf or *.doc file format) should be sent to vdk@lu.lv until March 15, 2016.

Timeline

The deadline for paper proposals is March 15, 2016.

The notification of acceptance will be March 31, 2016.

The conference program will be available by April 15, 2016.

The deadline for submission of the full papers (optional) is September 1, 2016.

Information

University of Latvia: www.lu.lv/vdkkomisija/eng/