

Jūratė Kavaliauskaitė, Ainė Ramonaitė, *Sąjūdžio ištakų beiškant: Nepaklusniųjų tinklaveikos galia*, Vilnius: Baltos lankos. 2011. 440 p. ISBN 978-9955-23-532-3

Sąjūdžio ištakų beiškant, a collective monograph edited by Jūratė Kavaliauskaitė and Ainė Ramonaitė, explores networks of various informal cultural circles and popular and professional groups to explain the rise of Sąjūdis, initially, the Reform Movement of Lithuania in support of Perestroika, which transformed into a political movement for Lithuanians independence. The authors ask how Sąjūdis was able to emerge in a totalitarian society. They argue against the popular and historical notions which claim that the Lithuanian nation was dormant, and waiting for a moment to reemerge, or that dissident networks were important in the rise of Sąjūdis.

The volume consists of three parts. The chapters in Part I focus on the 1960s and 1980s, and analyse social groups and circles of the disobedient, such as the Catholic dissident movement, the ethnocultural movement (A. Ramonaitė), and youth subcultures (J. Kavaliauskaitė, Ž. Mikailienė). Vilius Ivanauskas explores groups and circles of writers, artists, composers, and other cultural elites, as well as scholars. In Part II the chapters focus on two Perestroika period movements, the Green movement (J. Kavaliauskaitė) and the heritage protection movement (S. Kulevičius). This part also has a chapter on philosopher circles, who were the ideologists of Sąjūdis (A. Jankauskas). In chapter 8 in Part III, Ainė Ramonaitė, Jūratė Kavaliauskaitė, Algimantas Jankauskas and Justinas Dementavičius provide a theoretical framework and an overview of the movements, groups and circles analysed in Part I and Part II, and discuss their interconnections and contribution to the rise of Sąjūdis. The last chapters focus on social networks, and the emergence of Sąjūdis groups in the cities of Kaunas (K. Bartkevičius, R. Bulota), Klaipėda (L. Kraniauskas) and Lithuania's regions (A. Ramonaitė, J. Kavaliauskaitė).

The authors are interested in the genesis of popular opposition, which transcends dissident networks to include a variety of popular informal groups, which, according to the editors, played a major role in the rise of Sąjūdis. These informal groups included the ethnocultural movement, hippie and punk subcultures, academic clubs, the Catholic opposition, and heritage preservation enthusiasts, among others. The density of the interconnections of networks between these groups increased from the 1960s to the Sąjūdis period, with the highest density just before the emergence of Sąjūdis. These networks constituted *savaimi visuomenė* (an independent emerging society),

a concept accepted by the editors to emphasise autonomy from the state and the independent activities of these networks. While the networks were diverse, they all shared their opposition to the existing official culture and the officially supported lifestyle. Based on the type of activities and the 'strength of its anti-systemic position' (p. 274), the authors distinguish four types of opposition: open opposition (the Catholic Church and dissident organisations), the underground sphere (political organisations, underground media distribution networks), the informal anti-systemic sphere (hippie and punk subcultures, some cultural circles), and the legal anti-systemic sphere (organisations and groups that were official). There was a constant search for self-expression, escape and freedom among the members of these groups (p. 24). According to the editors, dissidents were in direct conflict with the system, while independent society created its *own* reality (p. 58). The concept of *independent society*, thus, expands the popular understanding of opposition as a direct confrontation with the regime associated with dissident activities, to include a variety of indirect confrontations and challenges of the official ideology and institutions through informal network activities.

The volume also contributes to former studies on the rise of Sąjūdis, which deemphasised its grassroots origins, in favour of political and structural reasons or the geopolitical situation. Some of the leaders of independent society were the main organisers of the Sąjūdis Initiative Group, including Zigmās Vaišvila, Alvydas Medalinskas, Artūras Skučas, Gintaras Songaila (who became members of the Initiative Group), and Eigirdas Gudžinskas and Saulius Lapienis (who did not become members). They not only conceived the idea encouraged by the Estonian People's Front member Ivar Raig, who visited Vilnius in May 1988, but organised the historic meeting of 3 June 1988, the founding date of Sąjūdis. The authors argue against the 'top down' hypothesis, and deny that Sąjūdis was created by the Communist Party or the KGB. They claim that 'our research has shown that the power of networks was stronger than the totalitarian regime' (p. 419).

The volume's empirical sophistication and its scope are notable. All the chapters are based on deep empirical analysis of numerous interviews, memoirs, historical documents, media and archival sources. The authors explore the major cities and several regions, accounting for the variety of independent society: from dissident activities (see chapter 1) to networks of people with the protection of the Communist Party (chapter 10), with the core of this society lying somewhere in between. The reconstructed networks include 1,699 people, and 140 groups, organisations and circles discussed in the volume.

The volume opens the way for various questions for future exploration, including the question of the nature and boundaries of independent society. The editors argue that the core of independent society was not 'Soviet' society, and emphasise its members' identification with an anti- or non-

official sphere, their non-involvement in institutionalised structures (such as independent rock, rather than popular rock supported by the state), alternative institutional engagements (such as self-education [chapter 1]) and an alternative value system (such as temperance in the case of the ethnocultural movement). ‘Soviet society’ is associated with the state and its institutions, ideologies and policies. How did these societies manage to coexist, especially, as we learn, some members of independent society belonged to both, and even established their organisations or groups as official Soviet institutions, such as professional networks in Klaipėda, or Hana Šumilaitė’s theatre group? There are also various important contributions that the authors make, exploring and conceptualising the nature and boundaries of independent society. Liutauras Kraniuskas (chapter 10) argues in the case of Klaipėda that ‘social circles were usually united not by a common national rebirth idea, or forms of subcultural resistance, which were common in Vilnius and Kaunas, but professional institutional activities (with the exception of Klaipėda’s Vydūnas club)’ (p. 374). Vilius Ivanauskas suggests a dialectical approach to the Soviet cultural elite and the state, by underlining that ‘alternative spheres’ existed within the official space, and created a ‘legal zone of disobedience’ (*legali nepaklusniųjų zona*). He illustrates how the opposition of writers and artists was sanctioned by the system. The majority of them, with the exception of those who emigrated, such as T. Venclova and J. Jurašas, were able to stay within the official cultural sphere, and even transformed it. In some cases, members of the government had to ‘keep their mouths shut’ (*sedėjo sukandę dantis*) (p. 108); in others, critical works were published because the censors were not sophisticated enough to capture the hidden meanings (p. 113). Ivanauskas quotes M. Martinaitis, who tells us that ‘there was a certain form of protest to do something that was not allowed’ (p. 111). The quotation from Martinaitis indicates that certain forms of opposition were integrated into everyday life. According to Arvydas Anušauskas, the KGB labelled the cultural elite discussed in Ivanauskas’ chapter as ‘constructive opposition’ (cited in Ivanauskas, p. 130). Kęstutis Bartkevičius and Rytis Bulota in chapter 9 cite A. Patackas, who was a member of the anti-Soviet dissident movement, who defined himself against some members of independent society (hikers and bohemian cultural circles), because they were part of the system (p. 324). As Salvijus Kulevičius (chapter 6) poignantly points out, alternative subcultures were also able to shape the ‘state’, and it responded to their needs and concerns by co-opting certain activities, but also by providing for the needs of those subcultures.

In this context of diverse evidence, independent society seems to have a certain imagined quality to it: projected as a community that existed in the past, and that united these members, despite their participation in the

official Soviet sphere.¹ In this society, interviewees identify with smaller communities, they remember their engagements as more authentic, as sites of freedom, an escape from boring and dull Soviet life, this way suggesting a boundary between Soviet and non-Soviet society themselves. How accurate is this memory about the past? How much is it shaped by the present?

Explaining related social processes, Alexei Yurchak argues in the case of late socialist Leningrad that some groups of people existed ‘*vnye*’ (inside themselves), in a deterritorialised milieu, trying to escape from the state. ‘These styles of living generated multiple new temporalities, spatialities, social relations and meanings that were not necessarily anticipated or controlled by the state, although they were made fully possible by it.’² Deterritorialisation of late Soviet culture, Yurchak argues, was not a ‘form of opposition to the system. It was enabled by the Soviet state itself, without being determined by or even visible to it.’³ Yurchak provides various pieces of evidence of life in a deterritorialised milieu. Some members worked in boiler rooms (*kochegarka* or *kotel’naia*) as technicians, where they could write poetry and be largely disengaged from the Soviet lifestyle, since the job allowed a large amount of free time.⁴ The Leningrad poet Joseph Brodsky, persecuted for being a ‘loafer’, ‘lived not in a proletarian state, but in a monastery of his own spirit. He did not struggle with the regime. He simply did not notice it. He was not really aware of its existence. His lack of knowledge in the sphere of Soviet life could appear feigned.’⁵

Giorgio Agamben’s work would suggest another way to interpret political processes in Soviet times. In his study *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, Agamben argues that ‘the inclusion of bare life in the political realm constitutes the original – if concealed – nucleus of sovereign power.’⁶ According to Agamben, bare life (the simple fact of living) is included in political life. From Agamben’s perspective, independent society would be within the state, not outside it or in a deterritorialised milieu. Hippies, ethnoculturalists and others would be in conversation with the state, its dominant ideologies, and its official culture. From this perspective, the opposition embodied in groups of independent society is part of the dynamics of Soviet society.

The Deleuzian perspective of becoming could be another theoretical venue to think about processes related to independent society. This

¹ Cf. B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1983).

² A. Yurchak, *Everything was Forever; Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton-Oxford, 2005), p. 128.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 127.

⁶ G. Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. D. Heller-Roazen (Stanford, CA, 1998) [1995], p. 6.

perspective would challenge the distinction between the state and society, Soviet and non-Soviet, and invite exploring mutual interconnections, which evolve in the recurring process of becoming. In Deleuze and Guattari, becoming is not a stage through which bodies or events pass to reach a certain end or outcome. Rather, it is a change in itself, a constant movement towards no particular goal or state. Events and people are constituted through becomings, in a continual production of changes.⁷ Societies, according to Deleuze and Guattari, are defined by lines of flight that lead away from centres of power. According to Deleuze, there are small-scale events, and events like the May 1968 civil unrest in France, which are 'becomings that break through into history'.⁸ Lithuanian Sajūdis was such a movement as well.

Neringa Klumbytė

⁷ G. Deleuze, F. Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis, 1987).

⁸ G. Deleuze, *Negotiations, 1972–1990* (New York, 1995), p. 153.