

selbst von höchsten Funktionären des litauischen Kulturbetriebs genutzt werden konnten.

Diese strukturelle Durchlässigkeit machte deutlich, dass die kulturelle Transformation der Stalinzeit keine bloße Gleichschaltung, sondern vielmehr eine Übergangsphase mit fließenden Grenzen war. Dieser Gedanke wird auch dadurch unterstützt, dass die bereits in der Vorkriegszeit zur Blüte gekommenen Grundelemente der sowjetischen Kultur wie das Massenlied oder die *самодетельность* in der Litauischen SSR erst in den 1940ern und 1950ern Fuß fassen konnten. Gerade in dieser Verspätung unterschied sich die stalinistische Kultur der Litauischen SSR – wie die ihrer nördlichen Nachbarn – sehr stark von der der älteren Sowjetrepubliken. Darüber hinaus trugen der stetige Wachstum des Laiennetzwerkes und dessen Massenaufläufe während der Liederfeste dazu bei, dass die Folkloreindustrie Sowjet-Litauens nicht nur die Werte des Sozialistischen Realismus transportierte, sondern auch das nationale Bewusstsein der Litauer wach hielt.

SUMMARY

“Singing Stalinism”: On the Emergence of Folklore Mass Culture in the Lithuanian SSR

The article demonstrates the rise and early development of a musical folklore culture in the Lithuanian SSR during the Stalin era. Following established Soviet practice, the regime immediately after annexation in 1940 made Lithuanian folklore into its political tool. The foundation of institutions like the State Song and Dance Ensemble and the House of Folk Arts imported the main elements of the Stalinist folklore industry to Lithuania. Thus, for the first time in Lithuanian history, folklore received the highest attention of the state. In this situation, the career of Jonas Švedas, the leader of the State Song and Dance Ensemble, who had been a leading cultural activist not only in independent Lithuania, but also during German occupation, seems to be, at first glance, unbelievable. However, his rise in influence demonstrated that in the years of cultural transformation after 1944 even persons with what from the Soviets' perspective were dubious backgrounds could rise to leading positions under the new regime. In fact, the promotion of people like Švedas initially made possible some space for more liberally minded activity, as illustrated by the development of the State Ensemble's repertoire in the early years – material that in from the point of view of Soviet ideology left much to be desired.

However, the mass song campaign of the late 1940s demonstrated that the creation of a new Soviet genre of folklore was problematic in the Lithuanian SSR. Throughout the Stalin years Lithuanian composers tried to avoid making ideological compromises. Therefore, it was Švedas in particular, a former nationalist, who became the leading figure in the production of Soviet mass songs, not the least because his position as leader of the State Ensemble required him to comply. Yet during the Stalinist years it was still possible to agitate openly against official artistic discourse as can be proved with the example of Juozas Banaitis, one of the leading Communists supervising Soviet Lithuanian art. This structural penetrability in the field of cultural politics proves that the Stalin-era transformation in the Lithuanian SSR cannot be seen as a total *Gleichschaltung*, but rather as a transitional period with diffuse boundaries. Obviously, this has to do with the fact that the concept of mass songs and the idea of *samodeiatel'nost'* (amateur performance), phenomena that originated in the Soviet Union in 1920s, were imported to Lithuania only during the 1940s and 1950s. This delay in particular made the Stalinist culture of the Lithuanian SSR very different from Soviet culture in the older republics of the USSR. Moreover, the permanently growing network of laymen in the field of folklore, and the impressive presentations made during the large Song Festivals, communicated not only the concept and ideas of Socialist Realism, but at the same time made apparent that it was the Soviet cultural industry that was keeping Lithuanian national sentiments alive.