Inventory of the Jānis Jahimovičs papers

Finding aid prepared by Hoover Institution Archives Staff

Hoover Institution Archives
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Title: Jānis Jahimovičs papers
Date (inclusive): 1940-2001
Collection Number: 2017C1
Contributing Institution: Hoover Institution Archives
Language of the Materials: Latvian and Russian
Physical Description: 3 manuscript boxes, 1 oversize box (2.3 linear feet)
Abstract: Diaries, memoirs, other writings, personal and legal documents, printed matter, and photographs relating to dissidence in the Soviet Union and the movement for Latvian independence.
Physical Location: Hoover Institution Archives
Creator: Jahimovičs, Jānis, 1931-2014.
Access
The collection is open for research; materials must be requested at least two business days in advance of intended use.
Publication Rights
For copyright status, please contact the Hoover Institution Archives.
Preferred Citation
[Identification of item], Jānis Jahimovičs papers, [Box no., Folder no. or title], Hoover Institution Archives.
Acquisition Information
Materials were acquired by the Hoover Institution Archives in 2016.
Accruals
Materials may have been added to the collection since this finding aid was prepared. To determine if this has occurred, find the collection in Stanford University's online catalog at https://searchworks.stanford.edu. Materials have been added to the collection if the number of boxes listed in the online catalog is larger than the number of boxes listed in this finding aid.
Related Collections
Latvijas PSR Valsts Drošības Komiteja selected records, Hoover Institution Archives
Boris Ravdin collection, Hoover Institution Archives
Mavriks Vulfsons papers, Hoover Institution Archives
Biographical Note
Jānis Jahimovičs, a Soviet dissident and Latvian independence activist, was born in 1931, near Daugavpils, as Jan Jachimowicz, the tenth child of a Polish forester’s family. The population of this part of southeastern Latvia was made up of Latvian, Polish, Russian, Belarusian, and Jewish communities, each with its own schools as well as religious and cultural institutions. When the Soviets occupied the country in 1940, a consequence of the Soviet-Nazi pact partitioning East Central Europe, Jahimovičs’ Polish school was closed and, as he noted in his autobiography, “if you wanted to study, you had to change your nationality,” and so he did. His remaining education was in Latvian and Russian, his name changed to Ivan Iakhimovich or Jānis Jahimovičs, and Russian became his first language. His family survived the war relatively intact, save for two older brothers, one drafted into the Red Army and killed near Moscow in 1941, and another, mobilized into the Waffen-SS Latvian Legion, whose fate remains unknown.
After years of communist indoctrination in government schools, Jahimovičs became a politically active true believer in his younger days. From 1951 to 1956 he studied in the historical-philological faculty of the Soviet university in Riga. Soon after, he became a teacher of Russian language and literature and a local school inspector. He joined the Communist Party in 1961. A serious Communist, he tried to work in accord with his convictions in the areas of economics, culture, and “socialist freedom.” The authorities, appreciating his ideological commitment and administrative skills, appointed him chairman of the model collective farm "Jaunā gvarde" (Young Guard). During his years directing the farm, Jahimovičs continued to study the classics of Marxism-Leninism, which gradually led him to the realization that the ideals professed by the writers were a far cry from the Soviet reality.
In January 1968, inspired by Czechoslovak Communists led by Alexander Dubček and their slogan of “socialism with a human face,” Jahimovičs wrote to Mikhail Suslov, the chief ideologue of the Soviet party, condemning the trials of Soviet dissidents as “a great harm...to our party and the cause of communism...” Two months later he was expelled from the Communist Party; in May he was dismissed as chairman of the collective farm. Jahimovičs grew close to the faction of human rights activists who were Communists or former Communists whose most prominent member was former Soviet general Pyotr Grigorenko who aimed at the “restoration...of Leninist norms of party life.” In July 1968, the group signed an open letter in support of the Czechoslovak reform movement of Alexander Dubček. A few months later, after the Soviet-led Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia, Jahimovičs and Grigorenko issued an address “To the Citizens of the Soviet Union” that was critical of the Soviet suppression of the Prague Spring and demanded the withdrawal of Soviet troops from the...
country.

On March 24, 1969, Jahimovičs was arrested and subjected to an "expert judicial-psychiatric evaluation" in Riga and in Moscow, the results of which called for compulsory "treatment." He became one of the first Soviet dissidents subjected to such measures of "social defense." His wife, a schoolteacher, was banned from working with children. While in a Riga psychiatric hospital, where he spent more than two years, he became friends with Ilja Ripss (now Eliyahu Rips, a prominent Israeli mathematician and Bible code authority) who was incarcerated for attempted self-immolation in protest over the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia.

After his release in 1971, Jahimovičs was banned from Riga, so he returned to his hometown of Daugavpils. Effectively silenced and isolated, he kept his views to himself, working for many years as a nurseryman in the municipal parks department. He returned to political prominence in the late 1980s, during Gorbachev’s perestroika, as a supporter of the Latvian National Front (Latvijas Tautas fronte) and independence. He ran for public office but did not get elected. After retiring, Jahimovičs devoted his time to social work among the unemployed of Daugavpils. He died in his hometown on August 5, 2014.

**Scope and Content of Collection**

The Jānis Jahimovičs papers include personal and legal documents, photographs, diaries, memoirs, poetry, a notebook with materials on the poet and singer Vladimir Vysotskii, legal documents, and numerous samizdat materials relating to dissidence in the Soviet Union and the movement for Latvian independence.

**Subjects and Indexing Terms**

- Dissenters--Soviet Union.
- Latvia--History.

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**Boxes 1-3**

**Russian Language Contents List**

[Downloadable PDF file of the Russian Language Contents List]

**Box 4**

**Pins, banners, armbands, and tickets**

- Scope and Contents note

  Materials were originally housed in Box 3.