The Russian Population in Latvia - Puppets of Moscow?

Latvian integration policy concerns a complex of issues such as citizenship, school language and minority status. The policy has let Latvia become an accepted member of the international community, but it is challenged by domestic Russian-speaking groups and by the Russian Federation. The disagreements originate in the interpretation of Latvian 20th century history and the definition of a national minority, based on the actual Latvian situation.

A crucial question is whether Russia exercises any influence on the Latvia-Russian community, giving it an improper impact on Latvian interior affairs. Official Russian compatriot policy seems to have had little success in this, but it has still been able to keep the ethnic question in the Baltic states alive at the international level. Radical Russian free-lancers in ethnic policymaking might be a bigger nuisance for Latvia, but without official Russian support, they are in all likelihood easier to come to terms with.

As a group, the Latvia-Russians seem to have reached a critical level of internal organisation with several political parties, NGOs and competing mass media. They have therefore turned into a self-sufficient actor capable of setting its own agenda instead of implementing the agenda of others. Thus the Latvia-Russians are hardly remote-controlled from Moscow, which, of course, does not prevent them from cooperating with different Russian actors when their interests coincide.

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Abstract

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Den ryska befolkningen i Lettland - Moskvas marionetter?

Sammanfattning

Lettisk integrationspolitik berör ett flertal områden såsom medborgarskap, undervisningsspråk i skolorna och minoritetsstatus. Politiken har inte hindrat Lettland från att bli en accepterad medlem av världssamfundet, men den har utmanats av inhemska rysktalande grupper och av den Ryska Federationen.

En central fråga är ifall Ryssland utövar någon form av inflytande över den lettiskryska folkgruppen, varigenom det skulle få ett otillbörligt inflytande över lettisk inrikespolitik. Den officiella ryska så kallade landsmannapolitiken verkar ha varit mindre framgångsrik med det senare, men har lyckats hålla de etniska frågorna i Baltikum aktuella på det internationella planet. Radikala ryska frilansare i etnisk politik kan vara ett större besvär för Lettland, men utan något officiellt ryskt stöd är dessa förmodligen enklare att ta itu med.

Som grupp betraktad verkar lettlandsryssarna ha nått en kritisk nivå beträffande intern organisationsgrad med ett flertal politiska partier, NGO:s och konkurrensutsatta medier. De har blivit en självständig aktör med kapacitet att fastställa sin egen agenda i stället för att implementera andras. Enligt rapportens resultat är den lettiskryska folkgruppen knappast fjärrstyrd från Moskva, men detta utesluter naturligtvis inte att den samarbetar med olika ryska aktörer då intressena sammanfaller.

Nyckelord

Lettland, Ryssland, minoritet, demografi, historia, medborgarskap, skolor, partier, företag, media

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Ryska elever demonstrerar mot skolreformen 2004.
Foto: Ilmars Znotins

Preface

Since independence the Baltic states have played an important role in Nordic and Swedish security policy, and Russian policy towards them is also of great interest to Sweden. When the three states became members of NATO and the EU in 2004, the security situation in the Baltic Sea region was improved, which also benefited Sweden. However, some domestic problems with international ramifications remain in the Baltic states, among them the position of the Russian-speaking population in Latvia.

This report follows up on earlier reports on this and related topics, published by FOA/FOI (see in particular Westerholm (1997), Moshes (1999), Oldberg et al. (1999), Oldberg (2003) and Ljung (2005) in the list at the end of the report), and puts focus on one particular country.

The report builds on a wide array of printed sources and on interviews carried out in Latvia. A preliminary version was presented at an FOI review seminar on 12 December 2005, where Major General Karlis Neretnieks was the discussant and Carolina Vendil Pallin acted as chair. They and other participants of the seminar are hereby thanked for valuable comments and suggestions. Still, the responsibility for the analysis and conclusions of the report rests as always with the author.

The author is a Master of Political Science and Economy (pol.mag.), who among several appointments has headed a Swedish business centre in Russia. His work on this report was mainly financed by the Nordic Security Policy Research Programme, which was set up by the four Nordic defence ministries. The report was finalised with support from an FOI project on Nordic security and stability.

Bo Ljung Ingmar Oldberg

Acronyms

BITE	Free Choice in Peoples' Europe (Latvian acronym)
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
EU	European Union
FIDH	International Federation of Human Rights
LAPRYaL	Latvian Association of Russian Language and Literature Teachers
LARM	Latvian Association of Russian Youth
LAShOR	Latvian Association for Support of Schools with Russian Language of Instruction
LAT	Latvian Academy for Thai Kick-Boxing
LKPCh	Latvian Human Rights Committee
LVASA	Latvian Association of Language Teachers
MKL	Youth Club of Latvia
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OKROL	United Congress of Russian Communities of Latvia
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PACE	Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
PCTVL	For Human Rights in a United Latvia (Latvian acronym)
ROL	Russian Community of Latvia
ROvL	Russian Society of Latvia
RSFSR	Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic
Shtab	Headquarters for the Defence of Russian Schools in Latvia
SRPL	Union of Russian Private Entrepreneurs
UN	United Nations
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
Zapchel	For Human Rights in a United Latvia (Russian acronym)

Contents

1. Introduction

When the OSCE office in Riga closed down in 2001, it forecast that 2004 would see a new wave of protest activities in Latvia, once the Education Law reached the stage of implementation.[1] The prediction started to come true already in April 2003, when some of the most well-known radical Latvia-Russian NGOs and political parties began to coordinate their protests against the reform through the so-called 'Headquarters for the Defence of Russian Schools in Latvia '. In December 2003, the unofficial battle song of the protest movement, *Cherny Karlis*, based on Pink Floyd's *The Wall*, was heard for the first time. At the end of January 2004, a large-scale street demonstration against the school reform was held in the centre of Riga, which was to be followed by other protest actions, culminating in spring and in August – September as the new school year began.

At the same time, Russia's critique against the Latvian state and its treatment of its Russian-speaking population gained renewed strength. The State Duma petitioned their Latvian colleagues, urging them to reconsider their position on the school reform. Russian representatives and diplomats also turned to the international community looking for allies in an effort to pressure the Latvians into making concessions on the reform. Russia also voiced some last minute protests against Latvia's admission to NATO and the European Union, which was scheduled to take place in April and May 2004.[2]

The Latvian school reform did indeed catch some attention from the international community, but in general, the latter did not share the view of the Russian-speaking protesters in Latvia or the Russian position. If anything, the events in 2004 raised questions about the degree of Russian interference into Latvian interior affairs. The correlation in time between protest activities within Latvia and Russian moves on the international scene raised suspicions that they had been coordinated and agreed upon in advance. Accepting this interpretation, the attendant question is who the real organizer behind the school protests was. The most frequent answer circulating in Latvian media has been 'the hand of Moscow', meaning that the school protests were initiated and orchestrated by

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1 Parliamentary Assembly of Europe 'Progress report of the Bureau of the Assembly and of the Standing Committee', Doc. 10212, June 21, 2004, Appendix 1: 'Draft Opinion on the Reopening of Monitoring Procedure as Regards Latvia'. The OSCE mission to Latvia was established September 23, 1993 and was closed December 31, 2001. Source: *www.osce.org*.

2 Ivanov (2004). For an account of how Russia has used the issue of the Russian-speaking population in the Baltic states *per se*, or intertwined it with other questions like border issues, economic relations and especially the NATO enlargement, see also, for instance, Oldberg (2003).

Russia. Strengthening this thesis is the fact that some radical Latvia-Russian leaders have good connections in Moscow, and that certain Russian politicians from one time to another have shown an active interest in Latvian politics – bordering on an impermissible interference into the interior affairs of a foreign state.

This explanation is nevertheless not satisfying as it just gives birth to a new question, namely, what forces are concealing behind this anonymous 'hand of Moscow'. As a political centre, Moscow is – in concordance with other political centres – nothing more and nothing less than a conglomerate of different and sometimes disparate political wills despite the power concentration under Putin. So, when talking about 'the hand of Moscow', does one refer to a secret state agenda at an aggregated level, aiming at Latvian destabilization? If so, what would be the purpose of that kind of politics? Alternatively, should the causes of Russian interest in Latvian integration policies be searched for at a lower level, within the political conglomerate itself? What forces are then at play and on what incentives do they base their interest in Latvian integration politics?

Yet it is also possible to completely reverse the causal explanation, stating that Russian reactions were just triggered by actual events in Latvia and by the activities of the radical Latvia-Russians themselves. In fact, gone are the days when Latvia-Russians solely turned to Russia for support. By their own merits, nowadays they approach European structures in order to put extra pressure on the Latvian authorities. Until February 2005 for instance, the 'Headquarters for the Defence of Russian Schools in Latvia' had sent no less than five delegations consisting of Russian-speaking schoolchildren to Strasbourg in order to get attention for their cause from the EU parliamentarians. Radicals are also exploring their possibilities for getting EU financing for their activities. The question to be answered in this context then is if this development means that the radical Latvia-Russian movement has reached a critical mass, which has turned it into an independent political actor in its own right. If so, the events in 2004 could not be interpreted as a firmly directed Russian defamation campaign against Latvia, but as an occasion when Russian and Latvia-Russian interests coincided, making temporary cooperation possible.

The ethnic issues in the Baltic states matter, as they can no longer be considered as internal questions in the Baltic states or in the bilateral relations of these states with Russia. Today, the Baltic states have become full members of NATO as well as the EU , which in turn affect European geopolitical and geo-economic balances. Through their accession to the EU and NATO, any remaining ethnic issues in the Baltic states will have a direct impact on all other member states in these organisations, as respect for democracy and human rights are among the membership criteria in both organisations. An aggravation of ethnic tensions in Estonia, Latvia or Lithuania therefore ought to lead to the painful suspension of membership rights, with possible incalculable consequences for the organisations themselves, unless the criteria for democracy and human rights are given a

less stringent interpretation. On the other hand, a very liberal reinterpretation of the meaning of democracy and human rights would probably give rise to very harsh critique from Russia and accusations about the use of double standards. Not only would NATO and EU influence in Russia diminish in this case, but the attraction that the EU exerts on its other closest neighbour countries would disappear as well. At least, they would not find any further reasons why they ought to reach the EU level of norms for democracy and human rights.

1.1. Aim and method

The aim of this study is to analyze the present essence of the Latvia-Russian radical movement against Latvian integration strategies and to give some clues to why the national question in Latvia has not been settled so far. The crucial question to be answered is whether the radical protest movement within Latvia against the actual citizenship and language policies is a locally initiated process or if it is guided from abroad, *i.e.* by Russia. The study is written with a neoclassical realist paradigm in mind. Given the behaviour of individual states as the dependent variable, it is realist as it recognizes that the scope and ambition of foreign policy of any given state is driven first and foremost by its place in the international system and specifically by its relative material power capabilities. At the same time, the impact of such power capabilities on foreign policy is seen as complex, as systemic pressures must be translated through intervening variables at the unit level, i.e. special interests within the state such as the state administration, the political system and civil society. That is why the paradigm is also neoclassical.

As for method, it could be described as a test of two hypotheses, formulated as *pro et contra* arguments over two possible approaches. The first approach is a bottom-up perspective implying that the Latvia-Russian protest movement is a locally initiated process. The second approach is a top-down perspective according to which Russia is presumed never to have given up its ambitions to control its Baltic near abroad and that it uses whatever opportunities there are to influence Baltic politics or to discredit a specific Baltic state in the eyes of the international community.

Naturally, reality is more complex and richer in nuances than what has been outlined in these two theoretical approaches. Even if they might be helpful as models in order to sort out a complicated reality, they should not be taken as giving a correct description of the situation in Latvia down to the last letter. On the contrary, they signify extreme cases on a sliding scale with reality somewhere in between. Thus, proven high credibility for one of the models does not automatically falsify the other or exclude its relevance. To some extent, they might also cross-fertilize each other.

Nevertheless, it is not without importance which one of the two models that dominates over time. The bottom-up approach with domestic pressure groups and NGO’s is a normal phenomenon in any democratic country, and it is best

processed through ordinary democratic procedures and institutions. If all people stick to democratic rules and procedures in order to express their political views, this case would not normally constitute any security problem for a democratic country. In Latvia, things are a bit more complicated as any ethnic protests may put its political security at risk. This kind of security concerns the organizational stability of states, systems of government and the ideologies that give them legitimacy.[3] Besides a certain size and sovereignty, a state can be said to consist of a physical base, institutions and an idea of the state that in some way is shared by all citizens, a kind of super-ideology.[4] Applied to Latvia, it is foremost the idea of the state that is at stake. The bond keeping the Latvian state together is the idea of a Latvian ethno-democratic statehood, the creation of a Latvian nation-state that can protect the Latvian culture and language from an otherwise possible impoverishment and slow extinction.[5] The occurrence of other large ethnic groups on Latvian territory challenges this idea, not only in the eyes of Latvian extreme nationalists who oppose their sheer presence, but also in the eyes of more moderate forces, although the latter have accepted the challenge with a more human approach. Instead of demanding expulsion, they strive for a better integration or a possible 'latvianisation' of the Latvia-Russians. In a bottom-up scenario, the Latvian state faces the challenge of a value conflict. How can one preserve the ethnic character of Latvian statehood without giving up democratic values and the defence of human rights?

On the other hand, a top-down approach with Russia as the driving force behind ethnic unrest in Latvia would imply a flagrant violation of the concept of state sovereignty, as first defined in the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. As the concept is usually understood, this would also compose a real threat to Latvian state security.

1.2. Latvia-Russians and other Russians

The collapse of Soviet Union in 1991 terminated a centuries-old Russian territorial expansion. During the building of new states in place of the ethnically de-

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3 Buzan (1991) p. 19.

4 Buzan (1991) p. 65.

5 See for instance, article 18 of the revised and revitalized Constitution from 1922: "The Saeima itself shall review the qualifications of its members. A person elected to the Saeima shall acquire the mandate of a Member of the Saeima if such person gives the following solemn promise: 'I, upon assuming the duties of a Member of the Saeima, before the people of Latvia, do swear (solemnly promise) to be loyal to Latvia, to strengthen its sovereignty and the Latvian language as the only official language, to defend Latvia as an independent and democratic State, and to fulfil my duties honestly and conscientiously. I undertake to observe the Constitution and laws of Latvia.'" (The Republic of Latvia Constitution, 1922 With amendments promulgated before 30 April 2002; English translation from *www.minelres.lv*).

fined constituent republics of the Soviet federation, as much as 43 million people found themselves living outside their political units.[6] Of these, over 25 million people were ethnic Russians, who were left as 'beached diasporas' when the state withdrew.[7] As for actual figures, the Russian diaspora today consists of 25 million people worldwide, of which 17 million live in CIS countries or the Baltic states, making it the second biggest diaspora after the Chinese.[8]

In contrast to other nations, the Russian nation did not have a constituent republic of its own in the Soviet Union.[9] From this fact, two different views have emerged from the Russian debate over the form and substance of a 'Russian homeland'. On one side stand Russian democrats who have accepted the break-up of the Soviet Union and therefore define contemporary Russia as identical to the Russian Federation. On the other side stand nationalists, communists and imperialists who, from different points of departure, still identify their homeland with the Soviet Union. According to the latter, non-Russian successor states are illegitimate state buildings. Consequently, the Russian diasporas living in these states ought to become full-fledged members of the Russian Federation, like all ethnic Russians already living there.[10]

With such a hazy state concept of the Russian homeland, the task of designating the relationship of Russia to the communities in the near abroad has been ambiguous, to say the least. Since the early 1990s, Russian authorities have experimented with various terms, each one with its own political implications. The Norwegian historian Pål Kolstø notes that words like 'diaspora' and 'minority' seem to have been rejected at an early stage, and also suggests that the word 'minority' might have signalled that the Russian authorities, for better or worse, considered these groups as being territorially based in their respective countries of residence.[11] Some other terms in circulation have been *grazhdane*, the Rus-

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6 Sakwa (2002) p. 39.

7 Laitin (1998) p. 29.

8 *SSSR v tsifrakh v 1989 godu* (Moscow, Finansy i statistika, 1990) as quoted in Sakwa (2002) pp 39-40; Eleonora Mitrofanova, quoted in RG December 23, 2004.

9 Quite contrary to a wide-spread popular belief, in Russian, the name of the former Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic, *Rossiyskaja Sotsialisticheskaya Federativnaya Sovetskaya Respublika*, referred to all citizens of the republic, being ethnic Russians or not. In addition, when all other Soviet republics had their own Communist party, state symbols and state anthem – the RSFSR had none of this. For all other groups then, nationality was completely territorialized, but the Russians enjoyed some extraterritorial status.

10 Kolstø (1999) p. 622.

11 Ibid., p. 623. However, contrary to Kolstø, this author has found proof of recent use of the term 'diaspora', for example in material from *Roszarubezhtsentr* and in different articles by the Russian political scientist Tatiana Poloskova, professor at the Diplomatic Academy at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

sian word for citizens, and *vykhodtsy*, meaning those who hail from, or have left. *Grazhdane* had to be abandoned when, after the fall of the Soviet Union, it acquired the very precise meaning of persons holding a Russian passport. Kolstø notes that it has been used later in a very loose sense, detached from the legal context of state citizenship. Another term that has reached some popularity is *russkoyazichnye*, i.e. Russian-speakers, which embraces not only ethnic Russians but also everyone else who considers Russian his or her mother tongue.

A curious hybrid still in active use is the term *etnicheskie rossiyane*, which combines ethnicity with the ethnically neutral word used to signify all citizens of Russia – indeed an oxymoron way of talking about a multinational nation of *vykhodtsy*, irrespective of their present citizenship.[12]

The term that today seems to have won general acceptance in Russian official language is the word *sootechestvenniki*. Its lexical meaning is the same as 'compatriots', viz. 'a person who was born in, or is the citizen of, the same country as another; a fellow-countryman'.[13] As it appears in actual Russian legislation, it has an even more precise, *legal* meaning, as stipulated in 'The Federal law on State Policy towards Compatriots Abroad':

> Compatriots are persons born in one state still living or have been living in it and possess the indications of common language, religion, cultural heritage, traditions and customs, as well as persons who are lineal descendants of such persons […]
>
> Under the concept of 'compatriots abroad' are implied: citizens of the Russian Federation, constantly living outside the borders of the Russian Federation […]; persons who were citizens of USSR, living in states included in the composition of USSR and have received a citizenship of these states or have become persons without a citizenship […]; *vykhodtsy* (emigrants) from [imperial] Russia, the Russian republic, RSFSR, USSR and the Russian Federation who had a corresponding civil affiliation and then became citizens of a foreign state, or possessing a residence permit or became stateless persons; descendants of persons who are members of the above-

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12 For instance, the Russian social scientist Mr Vladimir Mukomel still makes frequent use of the term *etnicheskie rossiyane*, as synonymous to *sootechestvenniki*, but as luck would have it, it has hardly been used in Russian legislation. One exception might be found in a paragraph of the detailed (no longer valid) working instructions for the Ministry of Ethnic Issues and Regional Policy, confirmed by a Government decision ('Ob utverzhdenii polozhheniya o ministerstve rossiyskoy federatsii po delam natsionalnostey i regionalnoy politike', *Postanovlenie Pravitelstva Rossiyskoy Federatsii* no 312, April 11, 1994; chap. 2, clause 9 paragraph 5). Among others, this duty is added to the competence of the Ministry: 'Co-ordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation and other ministries and departments concerned with the purpose of defending the civil rights [*grazhdanskoe pravo*] of the *etnicheskie rossiyane* living abroad; assistance with the provision of their equality in all spheres of social life'.

13 Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary of Current English, fourth ed., Oxford University Press, 1989.

> mentioned groups, with the exception of descendants to persons of titular nations of foreign states […].[14]

As an all-inclusive, non-ethnic term, 'compatriots' has its advantages, but that is also its greatest weakness: no distinction can be made between, for instance, Russian emigrants in New York, beached diasporas in the Baltic states or Ossetians with a permanent residence in Georgia. In order to find a comprehensive definition suitable for this work then, the term 'Latvia-Russians' has been chosen. The first element, 'Latvia', signals the geographical bounds of Latvian territory. As for the second element, in the Russian language there is a clear distinction between ethnicity, language and culture on one hand – '*russkiy*', and on the other hand a political concept – '*rossiyanin*', citizen of the Russian Federation. The latter term alludes to ethnic Russians as well as to other more or less autochthonous ethnic groups within the boundaries of the Russian Federation. As there is no similar distinction in English, these nuances are usually lost, if no further explications are given. In this text then, the second part of the term 'Latvia-Russians' connotes to the conception of '*rossiyane*', thus it follows the above-mentioned compatriot concept in its Russian legal understanding. In this way, the term 'Latvia-Russians' is identical to the subset of Russian compatriots abroad living in Latvia, which means that the whole 'multinational nation' in Latvia, which is the subject and main concern for Russian state policy towards compatriots, has been ringed in. Not counting nationalities from titular groups from other countries, for instance Ukrainians and Belarusians, this means that Russian compatriot policy covers about 40 different ethnic groups out of a total of 124 ethnic groups distinguished in Latvian statistics. In figures, these non-Russian Latvia-Russians nevertheless constitute an insignificant group compared to ethnic Russians. In 2000, they counted slightly more than 10 000 people, which should be compared with the 703 000 ethnic Russians who were registered as residents in Latvia at the same time.[15]

This approach is convenient for other reasons as well, as in most cases no further distinctions have to be made with regard to the present status of citizenship. It also opens up for a certain cultural awareness of the difference between being an ethnic Russian or a Russian-speaker living in Latvia, in Russia proper, or in any diaspora elsewhere.

1.3. The titular nation in Latvia

The titular nation in Latvia originates from the different Baltic tribes who settled within a territory, which is approximately the same as that of present day Latvia. In the middle ages, these tribes gradually came to form a common Lat-

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[14] 'Federalny zakon o gosudarstvennoy politike Rossiyskoy Federatsii v otnoshenii sootechestvennikov za rubezhom', no 99-FZ, May 24, 1999, article 1, paragraphs 1-2.

[15] CSB (2002), table I-16.

vian identity and consciousness. Even if it is possible to identify some subgroups – the Latgalians being the most obvious example – there are today usually no disagreements about who is a member of the ethno-cultural group of Latvians and who is not.

Some confusion may occur from one time to another about the English terminology. Together with the above-mentioned denomination '*Russian*', the term '*Latvian*', like so many other nationality words in English, has a weakness when it comes to ethno-cultural and political distinctions and nuances. On one hand, 'Latvian' refers to a specific *ethnic group*, their language, and, in its adjective form, anything that could be attributed to this group. On the other hand, anything Latvian also refers to a political context associated with a Latvian *statehood*. Therefore, outside a context, it is impossible to tell whether an expression such as 'a Latvian newspaper' refers to a newspaper *in Latvian language* or to a newspaper *in Latvia*. This kind of ambiguity becomes especially vulnerable in a work of this type, in which the different ethnic groups permanently residing in Latvia has to be considered.

One alternative had been to reserve the term 'Latvian' for a political context and to use the terms 'Letts' and 'Lettish' for an ethno-cultural frame of reference. However, as these latter words seem to be out of fashion and somewhat archaic according to modern English usage, this option seemed to be less appropriate. The solution in this work has been to stick consequently to the term 'Latvian' and then to stress the ethno-cultural signification when appropriate due to an unclear context.

1.4. Sources

This report is partly based on a number of interviews that the author made on two occasions in Riga in March and April-May 2005. The interviewees were ethnic Latvians as well as Latvia-Russians. Due to their professional background in media, public administration, NGOs or the leftwing parties with a majority of Latvia-Russian voters (for a full account see References), they were presumed to have good insight in the Latvia-Russian issue. As a group, they represented different perspectives. The twofold purpose of the interviews was first to gather accurate information relevant for this report and, secondly, to bring out the respondents' personal interpretations and assessments in order to create a deeper psychological understanding for the issue and those feelings and perceptions on which it is based. Factual information and subjective opinions extracted from the interviews have as far as possible been separated in this text. They have also been declared for what they are when an ambiguous context otherwise might have made them less distinguishable from each other.

The above-mentioned verbal information has been supplemented with extensive written material. Publications from the Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia have been an important source for the chapter on demographic parameters in Latvia. Pål Kolstø's works have been valuable references for several parts of the

study, such as the discussions on a proper definition of the group of Latvia-Russians and on Russian compatriot policy. More generally, Kolstø has also given the author a useful insight in the fascinating world of post-Soviet ethno-politics. The retrospect on the common Latvian and Russian history is also based on Kolstø together with a 'History of Latvia' (Russian version) by Bleiere *et al*, 'Latvia in transition' by Juris Dreifelds. Other valuable sources on history have been the works by Balodis, 'Latvia and the Latvian people's history' (in Swedish), Clemens, 'Baltic Independence and Russian Empire' and Thaden *et al*., 'Russification in the Baltic Provinces and Finland, 1855-1914'. The main source for the section on mass media has been 'The Baltic Media World', by Baerug *et al*. A general source of information on Russian matters has been Sakwa, 'Russian Politics and Society' (third ed.).

In addition to these sources, the report is also based on material acquired through the internet. *Chas, Telegraf* and *Vesti Segodnya* are all Russian-language dailies in Latvia, whose news material is at least partly accessible through the internet. Another very important internet-based Latvian information source has been *Policy.lv*, which is a public policy internet resource sponsored by organisations associated with the financial magnate George Soros.

The main Russian information sources used in this report are the internet-based version of *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, the news portal *lenta.ru* and the Russian federal news agency *Regnum*. Regnum obtains information from its own network of correspondents but also uses material from foreign newspapers. Besides its information on Russian news and policies with regards to Latvia, compatriot policy and so on, its compilation of news and articles from all main newspapers in Latvia (Russian- and Latvian-language) turned out to be very helpful. Spot tests in the form of comparisons with paper copies of Chas, Telegraf and Vesti Segodnya as well as searches for secondary sources on the internet also indicated that Regnum news coverage of Latvia could be accepted as a fairly neutral source of information both in its form and in the selection of content. Russian legislation used in this work has been compiled from Consultant Plus, a Russian database of legal information.

Another kind of internet-based material that turned out to be of much help consisted of the official homepages of the Council of Europe, relevant Latvian and Russian authorities, NGOs and political parties. As it might be expected that some of these sources are a mixture of factual information and the official view of the organisation or body behind it, they have been used in the report with this in mind. As with the interviews, opinions and factual information compiled from a homepage are accounted for separately.

1.5. Scope

In geographical terms, this analysis is constrained to the geographical boundaries of the present-day Latvian republic. Setting the period, the author considered that there is quite a lot of material, which covers the Latvian integration

policies during the 1990s. Therefore, this period will only be briefly referred to when necessary in order to elucidate certain contexts and historical trails that have an impact on the present-day situation.

The ambition has rather been to cover the present situation and to some extent the development during the last five years. This period does not seem to have attracted much interest from researchers and journalists alike so far. Accordingly, it seems to be mostly unknown to the public at large, and therefore needs to be followed up. There is one more reason why this time frame is motivated, and this is the accidental correlation of the presidencies in Latvia and Russia, which theoretically made possible a new start in Russian-Latvian relations. In Latvia, Vaira Vike-Freiberga was elected president on June 17, 1999, succeeding Guntis Ulmanis. She was then re-elected for another four-year term on June 20, 2003, which means that she will not resign until 2007. In Russia, Vladimir Putin was appointed acting prime minister on August 9, 1999, and swiftly rose to the rank of elected president of the Russian Federation on March 26, 2000. On March 14, 2004, he was re-elected president until 2008.

1.6. Structure and argument

The following chapters in this work deals with three different themes where each one elucidates a different angle of the ethnic discord in Latvia. In the same order as they appear, the three themes are the factors that have set the stage for the conflict, the ethnic policies in the centre of the conflict and, finally, the Russian and the Latvia-Russian actors with a stake in the conflict.

The ethnic issues in Latvia emanate from two factors that are also behind the ethnic discord in Estonia. The first is a demographic situation that is unfavourable to the titular nation, and the second is a historical coexistence with a stronger Russian neighbour that has been perceived as anything but benevolent by the Baltic peoples. Chapter 2 sets out the main characteristics of the demographic situation in Latvia. Due to an uncontrolled influx of mostly Russian and other Slavic immigrants under the Soviet period, ethnic Latvians almost lost their majority in what they considered as Latvian territory. Even when migration flows were stopped in the late Soviet period, the demographic pressure on the ethnic Latvians did not cease due to their inferior birth rates in comparison with those of non-Latvian inhabitants. In other words, if the demographic pattern had not changed, Latvian culture and language would have been threatened with a slow extinction. In the early 1990s, Latvia saw an efflux of people, mostly earlier Soviet immigrants moving to other parts of the former Soviet Union. These emigration flows eased the pressure on the titular nation, but at the same time, most ethnic groups in Latvia began to show negative population growth. Because of the population's age structure, this trend will continue for at least the next decades. With a shrinking population, the Latvian state will be put under severe pressure, as it might become difficult to uphold vital functions in society without labour immigration. Again, ethnic Latvians will be exposed to

the risk of becoming a national minority in their own country, which means that the idea of a Latvian ethno-democratic statehood might become seriously challenged.

If the demographic situation constitutes the pragmatic rationale behind Latvian national policies, then history makes up the moral foundation. Chapter 3 explores the historical coexistence between the Russian and the Baltic peoples. Since the 18th century, it has mostly been an asymmetric relationship with Russians as rulers and Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians as the ruled. From the Soviet side, and now lately even from the Russian side, systematic efforts have been made in order to play down the negative consequences that especially the Soviet period brought upon the Baltic peoples and to balance them with Soviet economic achievements in the Baltic region. Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians on their part have not forgotten their sufferings. The different interpretations of history have created two irreconcilable paradigms that function as a psychological watershed between the Baltic peoples on one side, and ethnic Russians and Russian-speakers in the Baltic region on the other side. These paradigms also matter for one's view on Baltic ethno-politics. Latvians strive for undoing a historical injustice – Russia and the Russian speakers in Latvia concentrate on the present situation and find it unfair that Latvia-Russians ought to shoulder any collective responsibility for deeds done before many of them were even born.

Latvian ethno-politics is the next theme to be examined, which is done in chapter 4. The policies which are challenged by Russia and Russian-speaking groups within Latvia concern Latvian citizenship laws, its legal definition of the concept of a national minority, its choice and use of official language and which languages of instruction it permits within the state school system. The present Latvian citizenship law was originally crafted with the occupational character of the Soviet presence in Latvia and the demographic threat against ethnic Latvian community in mind. A zero-option solution, automatically granting citizenship to all inhabitants in Latvia at the time of independence was rejected. Since the early 1990s, pressure from Russia and especially the international community has had the Latvian authorities to soften its citizenship law. Still, as late as 2004, twenty per cent of the population remained so-called Latvian non-citizens. In order to preserve their language and culture, the Latvia-Russians have tried to obtain the status of a national minority, which according to the international commitments of Latvia would make them eligible for a more favourable treatment. Again, with reference to history, Latvians claim that post-war settlers without Latvian origin are immigrants, not members of any autochthonous minority. The promotion of the use of Latvian language in all spheres of public life has therefore continued, the most controversial step taken so far being the school reform in 2004 that increased the number of subjects that has to be taught in Latvian in the higher classes. As neither side seems willing to give up its position, the only way forward is to find a completely new status for

the Latvia-Russian community, recognizing it as a unique hybrid group in between immigrants and minorities with features of both. As such, pragmatic solutions to actual problems could be searched for without either side referring to existing legal frameworks or international norms for immigrants and minorities. So far, the parties seem to be far away from that kind of a solution.

With the background and the stage set, it is time to turn to the last theme, the Russian and the Latvia-Russian actors with a stake in the conflict. Chapter 5 concentrates on Russian compatriot policy making and the patterns of interference in Latvian ethno-politics. The Russian approach to the compatriots abroad may be characterised as post-imperialist: on the one hand Russia recognizes the other post-Soviet republics as sovereign states, but on the other hand, it reserves itself the right to interfere in the interior affairs of its closest neighbours whenever it considers that the human rights of the Russian-speaking communities in these countries are violated. Under President Putin, the protection of the compatriots abroad has become one of the main themes of Russian diplomacy. The Baltic states have also been singled out as targets for several high profile freelancers in compatriot policy, such as the City of Moscow and several Duma MPs from Russian nationalist parties. As a test of the effectiveness of Russian compatriot policies in Latvia, the all-embracing objectives of its security policies, as laid down in several general doctrines and concepts, have been used as a benchmark. Special attention has been devoted to Russia's major power ambitions and its use of soft power in order to obtain this objective. According to the findings presented in this work, Russia has not reached its final objectives in Latvia. On the one hand, it is true that the Latvia-Russians have defended certain Russian positions, and that Russia has been able to postpone Baltic membership in NATO and divert some of the attention of the international community from Russia's own failures in northern Caucasus. On the other hand, all these accomplishments of Russian diplomacy seem to have been Pyrrhic victories. Russia has not been able to turn around the Latvian development. In fact, Russia's soft power in Latvia is close to naught, and Russian initiatives as regards Latvia are frequently met with scepticism not only by the ethnic Latvians but by the Latvia-Russians too, Russia's potentially closest allies in Latvia.

Finally, Chapter 6 is devoted to the Latvia-Russian community, and it concentrates on those political parties and NGOs who organise and channel the Latvia-Russian protests against Latvian national policies. In addition, the Latvia-Russian business community and Russian-language mass media in Latvia have been added as research objects in their own right in order to shed some light on their possible roles for financing the protest movement and to mobilise the Latvia-Russian masses. Parties in Latvia are more or less divided by ethnic lines, with most Latvia-Russians voting for leftist parties. The most important ones claiming to represent Latvia-Russian interests are Zapchel, People's Harmony Party and the Socialist Party of Latvia. Zapchel is considered as the most radical party of the three and the one most interested in ethnic issues. Zapchel

has also tried to organise Latvia-Russian NGOs according to its objectives, surrounding itself with a whole network of NGOs that it either controls or cooperates with. The main NGO pivot of Zapchel is the so-called Shtab, which was responsible for most protest actions against the school-reform in 2004. Another renowned NGO in the radical camp is the so-called OKROL. With allegedly close connections with Zapchel, its aim is to become a mass organisation, make the Latvia-Russian community self-sufficient and to mobilise Latvia-Russian business interests in the defence of Russian language and cultural values in Latvia. So far, OKROL has primarily attracted the interest of entrepreneurs from small- and middle-sized enterprises. It has tried to organize a Latvia-Russian infrastructure and to promote economic relations with business interests in the former Soviet republics, in the first place Russia. At the same time, it can channel support from the business community to Latvia-Russian activists. Large-scale enterprises have so far usually abstained from cooperation with OKROL, but it still seems that they take an interest in civil society, and that they also interfere when it suits their interests.

Media consumption in Latvia is also mostly divided along ethnic lines. As a parallel to Latvian political landscape, media in Russian aimed at a Latvia-Russian public tend to have a more left-wing profile than other media in Latvia. Latvia-Russian media are keener on reporting about social issues and on defending human and minority rights than Latvian media. The ethnical division of media in Latvia means that media promotes separate information spaces for ethnic Latvians and Russian-speakers. Instead of bridging the ideological differences, the logic of the market compels media to enhance the polarization of Latvian society.

The final chapter sums up the main conclusions in the previous chapters and returns to the initial question whether the radical protest movement within Latvia against Latvian ethno-politics is locally initiated or whether the ethnic discord is maintained by Russia. Given the material presented in this report, the overall conclusion is that ethnic tensions in Latvia are a local phenomenon, which is sometimes exploited by different interests in Russia. Latvia-Russian activists set their own agenda and try to mobilise support from abroad in order to improve their positions. Usually, but not only, Russia provides support for the Latvia-Russian cause. Co-operation with Russia is not organised in a systematic manner, but something that may occur when Russian and Latvia-Russian interests coincide.

2. Demographic dynamics of Latvian population

In Kolstø's words, it is not fruitful to talk about a single diaspora in the wake of the former Soviet Union. Even if the ethnic Russian communities in the fourteen non-Russian republics were singled out from all other diasporas, one would find them far too heterogeneous for being treated like one single group. The qualities of each community are influenced by many different factors, among which Kolstø mentions absolute and relative size, ethnic cohesion, social composition, cultural distinctiveness (the cultural contrast to the dominant ethnic environment), the compactness of their settlements and rootedness in the area.[16]

In this respect, even among the three Baltic countries the differences are important. This in turn has affected domestic ethno-politics, and in its extension, relations with the Russian Federation. As shown in the table below, in absolute numbers the populations of ethnic Russians in Estonia and Latvia were larger than the corresponding population in Lithuania around the time of Soviet disintegration. With fewer inhabitants the Russian share of the total population in Estonia and Latvia also became significantly larger compared to Lithuania. Ethnic Russians made up about a third in the two northern Baltic countries, compared to less than 10 per cent in Lithuania. The impact on society in the former states was also reinforced by the fact that ethnic Russians dominated the non-titular population. In Lithuania, the Russians made up 45.8 per cent of the non-titular community, in Estonia and Latvia the figures were above 70 per cent. Still, the ethnic Russians in the Baltic states made up less than 6.8 per cent of the Russian diaspora in the post-Soviet states at the time of the break-up of the Soviet Union. Against this background, the attention that the Russian Federation has paid to these particular diasporas, looks somewhat peculiar.[17]

Table 1: Russians in the Baltic states in 1989

State	Russian pop. (1 000s)	Per cent of tot. pop.	Per cent of non-tit. pop.
Estonia	475	30.3	78.8
Latvia	906	34.0	70.7
Lithuania	344	9.4	45.8

Source: *Natsionalny sostav naseleniya SSSR* (Moscow: Finansy i statistika, 1991) *as cited in Kolstø* (1999) p. 617

From a Baltic point of view, the situation looks different. The large influx of Russian-speakers to especially Latvia and Estonia is a threat to their societal security, defined as the prospects of sustainability of a society within acceptable

16 Kolstø (1999) p. 616; Kolstø (1995) p. 5.

17 Figures calculated from Sakwa (2002) p. 40, table 2.1 and Kolstø (1999) p. 617, table 1. Ethnic Russians in Latvia make up 3.6 per cent of the total diaspora of ethnic Russians in the Baltic states and CIS.

conditions for evolution of traditional patterns of language, culture and religious and national identity and custom. [18] Soviet migration policies nearly made ethnic Latvians a minority in their own traditional territory, and Estonia was not far behind the Latvian demographic patterns. Exposed to a greater societal insecurity than Lithuania, these circumstances partly explain why Estonia and Latvia, in contrast to all other former Soviet republics, did not decide on a zero-option solution, i.e. automatically granting all residents as of 1991 citizenship. Nor did they permit the possibility of double citizenship as the titular nations felt they had to come to terms with an alarming demographic situation.

If the Soviet state was the main threat to societal security in the Baltic region, today, ethno-democratic statehood are core-values embedded in the present Estonian and Latvian constitutions and other legislation acts, thus the state has turned into the most significant protector of societal security. Still there are new threats coming from outside, i.e. in Latvia, Russian pressure for concessions towards the Latvia-Russians or from inside in the form of possible different demographic patterns for ethnic Latvians and Latvia-Russians, which might change the population proportions to the ethnic Latvians' disadvantage in the long run.

2.1. Majorities and minorities in Latvia

In Latvia, the Soviet legacy left the titular nation with a feeling of a real threat of national extinction, even after the re-establishment of Latvian statehood and sovereignty. To be sure, ethnic Latvians were in majority in the countryside, but as only a third of the population was rural, this state of affairs could not alone bring any comfort.[19] In Estonia and Lithuania there were at least secondary cities, Tartu and Kaunas, that had provided alternate cultural inputs or served as a counterweight to a russified capital, but Latvia was not gifted with such a city.[20] Quite the opposite, back in 1989, ethnic Latvians were in minority in all the seven largest cities, even if they made up the largest ethnic groups in Jelgava, Jurmala and Ventspils. At the same time, ethnic Russians had an absolute majority in Daugavpils and in Rezekne, and they made up the largest ethnic groups in Riga and Liepaja.

From a Latvian point of view, the situation has since improved, as illustrated below. In 2004, ethnic Latvians were in absolute majority in Liepaja, Jelgava and Ventspils. In Jurmala, they remained the largest ethnic group, almost getting an absolute majority. In Daugavpils, the ethnic Russians kept their absolute majority, but not in Rezekne, even if they remained the largest ethnic group. In

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18 Buzan (1991) p. 19.

19 Dreifelds (1996) p. 148. In 1994, 31 per cent of the population lived in the countryside, which might not differ significantly from the situation in 1989-1991.

20 Ibid.

Riga, they remained the largest ethnic group, but they lost in relative numbers and the gap to the ethnic Latvians diminished significantly. For the whole country, Latvians now make up 58.62 per cent of the whole population, compared to 52.04 per cent back in 1989. The relative size of the group of ethnic Russians has diminished from a peak of 33.96 per cent in 1989 to 28.84 per cent in 2004.[21]

Table 2: Ethnic composition of largest cities in Latvia in 1989 and 2000

	Latv.		Russ.		Belarus.		Ukr.		Pol.		Lith.		Other	
Year	**1989**	**2004**	**1989**	**2004**	**1989**	**2004**	**1989**	**2004**	**1989**	**2004**	**1989**	**2004**	**1989**	**2004**
Riga	36.5	41.9	47.3	42.9	4.8	4.5	4.8	4.0	1.8	2.1	0.8	0.9	4.0	3.6
Daugavpils	13.0	17.0	58.3	54.5	9.1	8.4	3.1	2.3	13.1	15.0	0.9	1.0	2.5	1.9
Liepaja	38.8	50.9	43.1	33.7	4.9	3.8	7.5	5.5	1.1	1.2	2.3	3.1	2.3	1.8
Jelgava	49.7	54.2	34.7	30.4	6.0	5.8	3.9	3.0	1.7	2.0	1.2	1.5	2.8	3.1
Jurmala	44.2	49.9	42.1	36.4	4.9	4.2	3.4	2.9	1.5	1.7	0.9	1.0	3.0	4.0
Ventspils	43.0	53.3	39.4	30.7	5.8	4.9	6.4	5.1	1.0	1.2	0.7	0.8	3.7	4.1
Rezekne	37.3	43.7	55.0	49.4	2.0	1.7	1.6	1.4	2.7	2.7	0.2	0.2	1.2	0.9

Source: *Dreifelds (1996) p. 149; Demography 2004, Collection of Statistical data* (*Riga*, Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, 2004)

In any case, the relative gains of the ethnic Latvians are but a mixed blessing: according to data from the Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, the whole population is shrinking in absolute numbers.[22] In 1935, the total population amounted to 1.906 million people, of which 1.467 million were ethnic Latvians and 168 000 were ethnic Russians, the two largest groups. The population then reached its peak in 1989 with 2.667 million people, of which 1.388 million were ethnic Latvians and 906 000 ethnic Russians.[23] In 2004, the population in Latvia had shrunk to 2.319 million people, a loss of almost 350 000 people since 1989. All ethnic groups decreased, but hardest hit was the Russian group, who had dwindled to 669 000 people, thus a reduction of almost 237 000 people. At the same time, the group of ethnic Latvians shrunk with 28 000 people.[24]

2.2. Negative net migration as an explanation of population decrease

The diminishing Latvian population is a result of both a negative net migration and a negative natural population growth, illustrated in the chart below. The

21 CSB (2004), table A-17.

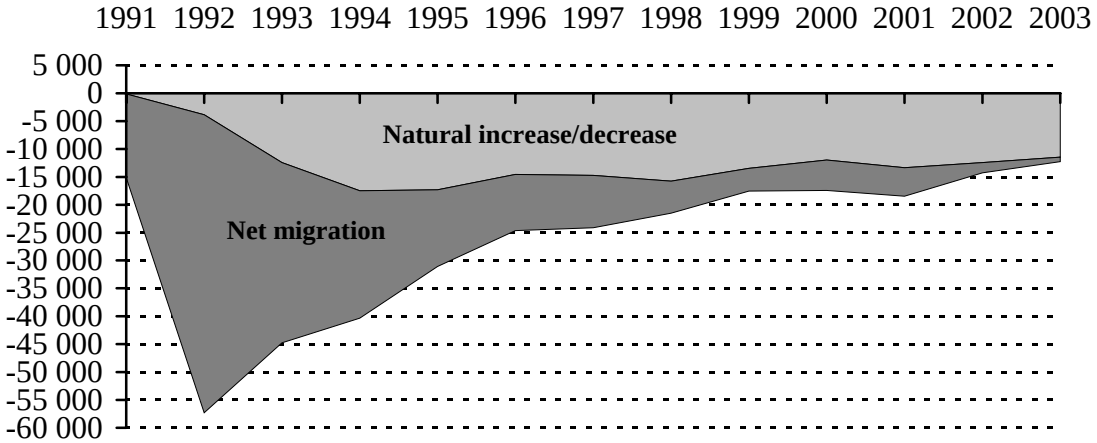
22 Op. cit. table A-16.

23 This means that the Latvian population was still 80 000 people short of the 1935 Latvian population, due to the warfare the country was exposed to during WW2 and the German and Soviet occupations and repressions.

24 Op. cit. table A-16.

culmination of mass departure came in 1992, when almost 60 000 people left Latvia for good and only slightly more than 6 000 arrived. Nonetheless, since then the negative net migration has been reduced with about 30 per cent a year until 2003, which is the last year accounted for. In this year, 2 210 people left Latvia and 1 364 arrived, creating a small deficit of only 850 net emigrants.[25]

Chart 1: Population change in Latvia by factor, 1991-2003 (persons)



Source: *Demography 2004, Collection of Statistical data* (Riga, Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, 2004), Chart 2, p. 189

It is reasonable to suppose that early emigrants were those who had most recently arrived, i.e. people without any deeper roots in Latvian soil. Most of them were ethnic Russians, but there were also other former Soviet nationalities. Early emigrants probably went back to their own or their parents' original place of living or place of birth. For instance, in 1995, no less than 84.5 per cent of all emigrants left for the CIS countries. Russia alone received 70 per cent of emigrants from Latvia that year.[26] However, the time series below shows that the share of the CIS countries has gradually been shrinking, and in 2003, it had stabilized around 56.8 per cent. The Russian share had contracted to 42 per cent.[27] The second largest share then was the category 'other countries', whose share had risen from 7.6 per cent to no less than 32 per cent.[28] That year, 984 ethnic Russians left Latvia for good, but at the same time, only 875 people left

25 Op. cit. table G-1.

26 CSB (2004), p.21 and chart 16. The other categories were Germany (4.9 percent), Ukraine (6.8 per cent), USA (4.0 per cent), Belarus (4.2 per cent) and other countries (7.6 per cent).

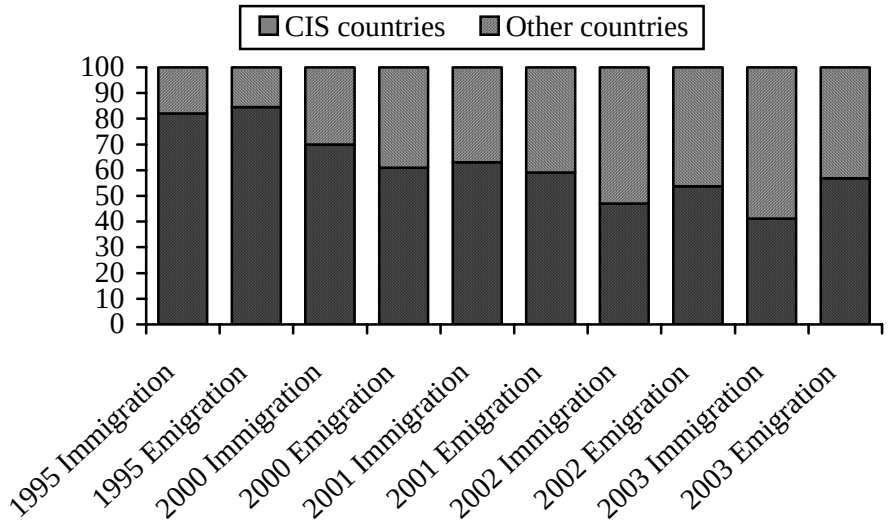
27 Op. cit. p. 21.

28 The shift in preferences should not be overdramatized, as the number of emigrants in 2003 was just a seventh of the number of 1995. Thus, small quantitative changes in 2003 compared to 1995 might give dramatic changes in the proportions of preferred countries of emigration. Still, the trend seems to be clear.

for Russia. This means that *at least* 109 ethnic Russians went for settlement in other countries.

As for immigration, the share of the CIS states has shrunk from 82.1 percent in 1995 to 41.1 per cent in 2003.[29] The largest groups of immigrants are still Russians, Lithuanians and Ukrainians, but in total, immigration from western countries is larger, even if western immigrants are nowadays also coming in modest numbers.

Chart 2: Dynamics of the long-term migratory flows, 1995-2003



Source: *Demography 2004, Collection of Statistical data* (Riga, Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, 2004), page 21

To sum up, the statistical material for the last years is small, and the time series is a bit too short for making conclusive assumptions, but put together the figures might signal no less than three new trends in migration patterns in Latvia. First, emigration as well as immigration has, for the time being, stabilized around quite low levels. Net migration was negative during the whole period studied, from 1991 to 2003.It seems probable though that in the future it might become positive or at least start oscillating between positive and negative values from one year to another.

Secondly, Russia as well as the other CIS states might gradually be losing their attractive force as a pull factor. Prospective emigrants do not any longer see Russia and CIS as a given first choice for resettlement; other countries might do as well. This in turn might suggest that emigration due to a perceived hostile Latvian ethno-politic environment has more or less ended, giving way to family reasons or career prospects as more important explaining factors of emigration patterns. For sure, this does not imply that all inhabitants in Latvia are

[29] Op. cit. p. 21.

happy with the present language and citizenship policies, but it signals that these issues are no longer worth voting for with one's feet.

Thirdly, in a similar way as immigration to CIS countries from Latvia has diminished, less people emigrate from these states to Latvia as well. Since 2002, immigration from western countries has been bigger. This might indicate that remaining ethnic Latvians in other parts of the territory of the defunct Soviet Union are not attracted by the resurrected Latvian state, or that the stock of Latvian diasporas in the successor states already has shrunk to insignificant levels, and that their migration patterns will not have any further impact on the population development in Latvia.

2.3. Negative population growth as an explanation of population decrease

As for natural population growth, the prospects look duller as illustrated in chart 1 above. During the decade preceding the dissolution of the Soviet Union, 1979-1989, the total number of ethnic Latvians who were born minus those who died was only 2 300. The natural increase of Russians in Latvia during this same period was 42 700, of Belarusians 10 300 and of Ukrainians 9 300.[30] Since then, natural increase has turned negative for all ethnic groups. Between 1995 and 2003, the number of ethnic Latvians decreased with 54 400 due to a negative difference between nativity and mortality. During the same period, ethnic Russians shrunk with 46 000, Belarusians with 9 500 and Ukrainians with 3 000. In fact, negative natural population growth was the main factor for explaining population decrease in Latvia during the years 1995-2003. On an average, Latvia lost 13 900 people a year due to the negative population growth. In 2003 the figure was 11 431.[31]

The explanation given by Dreifelds to the low nativity among ethnic Latvians during the last Soviet decade compared to other large ethnic groups in Latvia was that it was an ageing population. In fact, during that period, ethnic Latvians were in minority in the demographically very important age groups from 19 to 44 years.[32] Since then, the whole population has grown older. The age pyramid of the population of Latvia for 2004, as shown below, reveals the pattern of a shrinking population, giving birth to less and less children. In 1989, total fertility rate in Latvia shrank below the natural reproduction rate and reached its lowest point in 1998 with 1.11 children per woman. It has since risen to 1.29 in 2003, which is still below the European average.[33]

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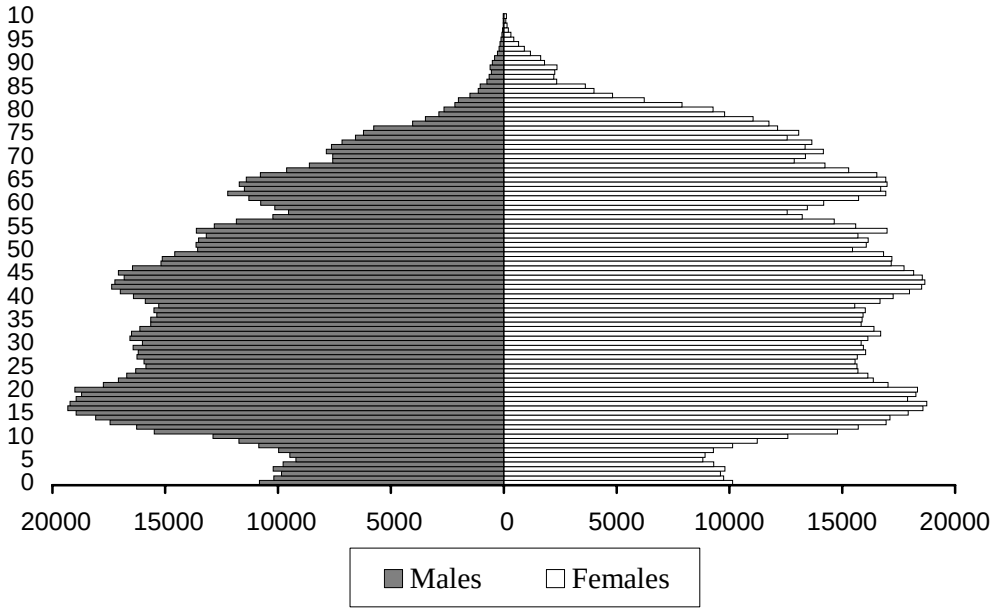
30 Dreifelds (1996) p. 152.

31 CSB (2004), table B-2.

32 Dreifelds (1996) p. 143; ibid, pp. 150-152.

33 CSB (2004) p. 15.

Chart 3: Population age pyramid of population of Latvia at beginning of 2004



Source: *Demography 2004, Collection of Statistical data* (Riga, Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, 2004), chart 3, p 190

Since there is no likelihood of a large net migration, and the negative natural population growth will probably drag on, the number of inhabitants in Latvia will continue to shrink. According to the US Census Bureau prognosis, Latvian population might amount to only 1.544 million people in 2050. That would be a loss of 1.123 million people compared to figures for 1989.[34] This will put the Latvian state under severe social and economic pressure, as fewer people in working age will have to provide for a growing number of elderly people. Former Latvian Minister of Integration, Nils Muiznieks, believes that in ten years' time, Latvia will have to open up its borders for labour migration in order to uphold vital functions in society.[35] As the prospects of more ethnic Latvian immigrants from the territory of the former Soviet Union and from the West look bleak, this means that most migrants would have to be of other nationalities. Again, ethnic Latvians would be exposed to the risk of becoming a national minority in their own country. A possible consequence of such a development is that the idea of a Latvian ethno-democratic statehood might become seriously challenged from within as well.

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[34] U.S. Bureau of the Census, International Data Base, *www.census.gov/ipc/www/idb-pyr.html*.

[35] Interview with Nils Muiznieks, March 2005.

2.4. Latvia's ethnic Russians – a short sociological portrait

Present-day Latvia has never been mono-ethnic. On the contrary, it has been home to different peoples for centuries. Like in the other Baltic states, a fraction of the present ethnic Russian community has lived in Latvia from time immemorial. Most of these early-arrived Russians, today about a quarter million, live in the south-eastern part of the country, the Latgale region, extending over the six districts of Balvi, Daugavpils, Kraslavas, Ludzas, Preili and Rezekne. A large part of these Russians was so-called Old Believers, resisters to Nikon's reforms of the Russian Orthodox Church and the orthodox rituals, which took place between 1652 and 1666. Because of their opposition to the reforms, they had been expelled from the central *gubernias* of the Russian empire. Dreifelds characterizes them as mostly rural, and in contrast to other Russophones less educated, more religious and economically less well established. They are also ethnically more mixed and many have an admixture of Latvian, Polish, Belarusian, Lithuanian and Jewish ancestry.[36]

The special character of Latgale appears for instance in different elections and referendums, as this area usually gives a high proportion of its votes to left-wing parties in general elections. High unemployment and the left-wing parties' defence of issues dear to the non-Latvians explain this voting pattern.

On September 20, 2003, Latvia held a referendum on membership of Latvia in the EU. Estimations made after the referendum revealed that about 80 per cent of all non-Latvians voted against joining the EU.[37] Therefore, when all other regions said yes to EU membership, large parts of Latgale came to say no, due to the high concentration of non-Latvians. Latvian journalist Aigars Smagars gives several explanations to Latgale's deviating voting patterns from the rest of the country. What matters here are those of his explanations that have their origins in Latgale's language divide, information divide and ethnic divide.[38]

Of these, Smagars means that the language barrier is a serious divide between a large portion of Latgale's residents and the state, which mainly addresses its citizens in the official Latvian language. As a large part of the society continues to live in a different linguistic environment, they are also exposed to a different information space, whereby they will view issues of national importance differently from the rest of society. Many people in Latgale get most of their information from Russian mass media, and Smagars claims that some people thought that it was more important what Putin said about Latvia joining the

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36 Dreifelds (1996) pp. 163-164; Alex Krasnitsky, April 2005; Mikhail Tyasin, April 2005.

37 'The Referendum and Ethnicity or Measuring Integration' *www.policy.lv*, section policy process/articles, 13.10.2003.

38 'Latgale's "No" to the European Union – The Reasons Behind the Divide' *www.policy.lv*, section policy process/articles 10.10.2003.

EU than what Latvian politicians said. No brief information campaign before the referendum could change any attitudes that had been formed during more than a decade of exposure to Russian mass media. Russian attitudes mattered in another way as well, as many of those residents living next to Latgale's border have maintained close contact on both a personal and economic level with their ethnic homelands – Russia and Belarus. Smagars asserts that it is a common opinion that Latgale could solve its economic problems if there was no border with Russia so that goods could be traded freely there. This point of view is mostly heard of in the areas bordering Russia. Here the Soviet days are remembered with nostalgia, as it was a time when they sold all the produce grown in their gardens to Russia. Some people apparently still have some small hope that the good old days might suddenly return, but the EU, with its tight borders and closely guarded economic space, dashes this hope.

The special character of Latgale has also inspired some groups to ask for an autonomous status for the region. The Russian-language newspaper Vesti Segodnya sounded the alarm in spring 2005 in an article about mighty economic and state interests threatening the Latgalian environment, possibly turning the Latgale region into a national waste dump.[39] If the State were to fulfil its development plans for Latgale, local politician Miroslav Mitrofanov meant that Latgale should try to use the EU regulations in order to obtain an autonomous status *vis-à-vis* Riga. According to Diena journalist Aleksandr Shabanov, there are two interesting moments to the context of this article. First, Mitrofanov is a party member of the pro-Russian party For Human Rights in a United Latvia, better known under its acronym in Russian, Zapchel (see section 6.3). Zapchel has won one seat in the EU Parliament, and their MP, Tatiana Zhdanok, has allied herself with the political group 'the Greens and the European Free Alliance' in the EU Parliament. Secondly, Mitrofanov had to be careful in his statement so that he would not be put on trial for anti-constitutional remarks against Article three of the Satversme, which establishes the borders and indivisibility of the Latvian State. Thus, Shabanov means that the article is the first trial balloon in print for an autonomous Latgale in the disguise of environmental demands.[40]

After Latvia had won its independence in the aftermaths of WW 1, the Russian revolution and the subsequent civil wars, Latvia's almost autochthonous Russian-speaking population was diluted with some new immigrant groups from the former Russian empire. At the beginning of last century about 150 000 ethnic Russians lived in Latvia, a number which in 1935 had risen to 168 000 people according to that year's census, as already mentioned above. Daina Bleiere *et al*. sets the 1935 figure at 206 400 ethnic Russians.[41] Besides the Old

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39 Liudmila Stoma: 'Daesh avtonomiyu Latgalii!', Vesti Segodnya, March 29, 2005.

40 Aleksandr Shabanov, personal correspondence with author, April 2005.

41 Bleiere *et al*. (2005) pp. 35, 204.

Believers, these figures also include some of those Russian refugees that had been generated by the Russian revolution in 1917.

The Russophone newcomers after 1945 settled in the larger urban areas that were to become Latvia's post-war industrial centres. Dreifelds describes these people as more imbued with Soviet culture and values and less conscious of ethnic roots and traditions as well. These Russians were set for taking an active part in the Soviet industrialization of Latvia, both as white-collar and blue-collar workers. Their weight in the Latvian economy was illustrated in the 1989 census that revealed that Latvia-Russians, on an average, were better educated than ethnic Latvians. For the latter the findings of the 1989 census came as a most unpleasant surprise, and many ethnic Latvians did not accept them. The figures were confirmed in the 2000 census, according to which 12.3 per cent of Latvians had a higher education compared to 13.6 per cent of Russians, Belarusians and Estonians, 15.9 per cent of Ukrainians and 30.4 per cent of Jews.[42]

The census in 1989 also revealed that there was an overrepresentation of non-Latvians in production management and as leaders of production units and enterprises.[43] Judging by numbers then, most people in this technical intelligentsia ought to have been ethnic Russians. According to Dreifelds, about a third of the industrial managers had been replaced by 1996. For sure, this ought to have changed the ethnic composition, but Dreifelds had no figures available that could have shown what these changes have meant for Latvia-Russian managers.

Based on findings from a study from a later date, Artis Pabriks means that there is a significant proportion of minorities in the private sector and that there are many companies with mixed staff, including ethnically mixed management in large companies. There are also many mono-ethnic companies. In any case, it is not the ethnic background *per se* that is interesting for companies when hiring staff, but actual language skills. Most companies demand fluency in Latvian, but some even demand fluency in Russian.[44]

Within present state enterprises, the picture is somewhat more mixed, many times due to the Soviet legacy. For instance, all minorities are well represented among the employees of the Latvian Railway Company. During Soviet times, the transport sector was seen as a sensitive sector for military reasons, and few ethnic Latvians were even allowed to work within this sector.[45] This imbalance prevails, and as professional training for work in the transport sector still seems to be more popular with non-Latvians, Pabriks believes that the transportation sector might remain ethnically segregated.

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42 CSB (2000), table II-5, p. 202.

43 Dreifelds (1996) p. 159. Latvians, however, were over-represented as leaders in other fields, especially agriculture and state organs.

44 Pabriks (2002) pp. 42-43.

45 Ibid., p. 31.

In other parts of the state and municipal institutions and sectors, Pabriks' findings show that there is an obvious lack of ethnic parity. Starting with the local governments, non-Latvians are proportionately less represented in district councils and administrations than their proportions in these districts, both among permanent residents and citizens. Usually though, figures are better for the administrations than for the councils.[46]

The situation within the state ministries is as gloomy as for the local administrations, since non-Latvians are employed more rarely than one would expect given their share of the citizenry. There are also significant differences between the ministries. In the Ministry of the Interior, the ratio of non-Latvian representation exceeded the share of non-Latvian citizens by 19 per cent. In the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Region Development, the underrepresentation of non-Latvian citizens amounts to 92 per cent.[47]

Three other state bodies of interest are the court system, the prison administration and the police. All these bodies have the same ethnic profile that existed during the Soviet regime. The court system is dominated by ethnic Latvian judges, and non-Latvians are employed significantly more in the prison administration and the police than in Latvia's local governments, ministries and courts.[48]

Based on his data on occupational proportionality, Pabriks concludes that there is no widespread discrimination based on ethnicity in Latvia. Nevertheless, there is a proven and obvious lack of ethnic parity in certain institutions and sectors. The main reasons for this, according to Pabriks, are 'weak involvement of ethnic minorities in the process of the state's renewal and the consequent lack of representation in newly created institutions; persistent poor knowledge of Latvian among minorities; lack of motivation to acquire citizenship; scepticism concerning the work of state institutions as a whole and low salaries of civil servants; patterns of ethnic self-segregations, especially among ethnic Latvians, but also among the minorities; a lack of open hiring procedures; a lack of education on ethnic discrimination and human rights in society, unbalanced and often incongruous information in the mass media and separate communication networks which operate in different languages'.[49]

Even if there is no evidence of structural discrimination in Latvian society based on ethnicity, those dissimilarities that do exist are exploited by different actors in the Latvia-Russian camp for strengthening their arguments on language and citizenship legislation, which today stand out as the most serious watershed between the Latvian society and the Russian-speaking groups. A propos

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46 Pabriks (2002) p. 18.

47 Ibid., pp. 25-26.

48 ibid., pp. 26-30.

49 Ibid., pp. 49-50.

the weak representation of non-Latvians within the administration, Mikhail Tyasin, co-president of the United Congress of Russian communities of Latvia (OKROL) and vice-president of Union of Russian private entrepreneurs of Latvia (SRPL), claims that Latvia-Russian taxpayers pay an unproportionally large part of the state budget. At the same time, the ethnic Latvians are allegedly those who spend the public funds and get the best use of them.[50]

Even Russia tries sometimes to exploit these differences and others in its anti-Latvian rhetoric. In a speech made by the Russian Ambassador to Latvia, Viktor Kaliuzhin, the ambassador complained about the weak representation of national minorities within the Latvian state administration. He also found it remarkable that no political party, representing the interests of the national minorities, had still participated in any Latvian government. Kaliuzhin also claimed that the Latvian Government's policies even contains some elements of genocide *vis-à-vis* the national minorities. These are harder hit by unemployment, and the mortality among the Latvia-Russians compared to ethnic Latvians is two times higher. With many low-income earners like unemployed and retired people, the national minorities have also been unproportionally struck by the price rises following Latvia's EU accession, according to the Russian ambassador.[51]

2.5. Impact of demography on Latvian politics

Latvia is a country in which demographic realities has had a direct impact on national policies. During the Soviet times, relations between the Russian-speaking and the Latvian populations were always described as harmonious. A clear evidence still put forward in the debate has been the statistically significant and persistently high level of inter-ethnic marriages. At the time of Latvia's independence though, the Russian-speaking population had come to be perceived as a threat against the survival of Latvian language and culture by the Latvian elite. From a macro-perspective, non-Latvians made up more than a third of the whole population, and among them, most were ethnic Russians. Even if the earlier large immigration flows to Latvia had diminished by then, low Latvian reproduction rates under the last decade before the Soviet collapse compared to the same figures for the Slavic populations was a source of further concern.

After independence was won, these circumstances constituted the starting-point for a new national policy towards the non-titular groups. No matter what

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50 Mikhail Tyasin, April 2005.

51 Kaliuzhin, Viktor (2005): 'Vystuplenie Posla Rossii v Latvii V. I. Kaliuzhnogo na Diplomaticheskom salone po teme: 'Rossiisko-latviiskie otnosheniya na sovremennom etape'Riga, 3 iyunya 2005 goda' Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Press department, June 7, 2005.

promises of a zero option solution that had been made earlier or the perceptions of harmonious inter-ethnic relations cultivated within the popular front, in the resurrected Latvian state, non-Latvians found themselves to be living in a more unfavourable environment than before. For example, unlike most ethnic Latvians, the bulk of non-Latvians had to earn their citizenship in the new state.

Between 1991 and 2003, more than 180 000 people left Latvia, and most of these people were non-Latvians moving to CIS-countries. The majority left Latvia in the earlier half of the 1990s, and emigration is no longer significant. This means that those people who have chosen to stay do so because they have nowhere else to go, or, alternatively, because they perceive Latvia as their home country and feel loyal to her, at least in their own ways.

It seems, though, that the acute demographic threats against the survival of the Latvian nation have subsided. The gradual softening of the citizenship law should be seen in this context, even if it has not played any significant role; international pressure probably having a greater impact on the Latvian state.

Today, there is a new demographic threat against the Latvian nation, which strikes against the long-time survival of its statehood. The population in Latvia is still diminishing, which is due to negative reproduction rates for all ethnic groups. With an ageing population, there are no prospects for any immediate changes. In order to withhold vital functions in society without putting it under unnecessary stress and strains, Latvia has to put an end to whatever rills of emigration that are left, and there might be a need in the future to open up Latvia's borders for free labour immigration. These tasks would be facilitated if Latvia could meet at least two conditions. First, before any new people could be successfully integrated into Latvian society, today's non-citizens ought to be fully integrated. Besides citizenship, this also means that they could share an idea of a Latvian state with the rest of the population that is commonly acceptable and thus functions as the lowest common denominator for all ethnic groups. Second, in future, Latvia has to be perceived as an attractive country of immigration by prospective immigrants who might be considering other options as well. Besides salaries and possible attractive work packages, one important benchmark test will then be the impression of Latvia's treatment of its earlier Soviet immigrants that have chosen to stay in the country after independence.

Both tasks boil down then to the question of integration of the non-Latvian non-citizens into the Latvian society. Its success opens up the possibility of a future much-needed immigration, and its failure would create a permanently alienated and discontented stratum of inhabitants in Latvia, a possible security threat. There is reason then to look further into the Latvian national policy issues that has raised the ethnic tensions between the different communities.

3. Common history – different roles and interpretations

The relations between Russia and each one of the Baltic states can at best be described as sensitive, even if the development has moved from mutual estrangement and hostility towards a more respectful dialogue and accommodation since the early 1990s.[52] Still, all parts involved present signs of psychological deadlocks preventing them from full co-operation. Distrust of the true intentions of the other and fear of hidden agendas often replace constructive collaboration.

To no small extent then, these deadlocks can be related to the different roles the Baltic peoples and the Russians have played in the Baltic region throughout history. Like Estonians and Lithuanians, Latvians have found a rationale for their ethnic, citizenship and language policies in their interpretations of especially late 19th century and 20th century history in the Baltic region.

Their collective memories are usually not shared by the Russians. Interpretations and evaluations of local history usually follow ethnic lines with Russians on one side and the Baltic peoples on the other side. Until this day then, Latvians as well as ethnic Russians seem to have difficulties in coming to terms with the perception of oneself in the eyes of the other. Some landings in the common history might illustrate this point.

3.1. Baltic and Latvian history before WW I

Archaeological remains prove that different Baltic and Finno-Ugric tribes inhabited the Baltic lands long before our era, but it was not until the early medieval ages that this region was dragged into European history, as it became a meeting place and battlefield between Germans, Scandinavians and Finns from the west and north, and Slavs from the south and east.

The Livonian Knights, a Germanic order founded in 1201, successively subjected Latvians and Estonians during the 13th century. These conquests paved the way for a political and economic domination of a stratum of landowners and merchants of German origin in this region for the next 600 years.[53]

The Baltic Germans could not prevent posterior invasions or military adventures of the neighbouring countries. Old Livonia was dissolved in 1561 and was divided between Sweden and Poland. Sweden took what is now the north of Estonia while the King of Poland obtained suzerainty over southern regions of Livonia including Courland (the west of modern Latvia). In the great Nordic War, Russia launched systematic pillage of Swedish Livonia from 1702 until 1710, when it was effectively incorporated into the Russian state. The Swedish loss of Livonia was then confirmed in the peace treaty of Nystad from 1721.

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52 Oldberg (2003) p. 71.

53 Balodis (1990) pp. 29-113; Clemens (1991) p. 19.

Until then, the war had killed up to three-fourths of the population of what is now Latvia and Estonia through fighting, pestilence and famine.

The Swedish period had involved reforms at the expense of the Baltic nobility, which had somewhat improved the lot of the peasants who were mostly of Latvian origin. During the war, the Baltic German nobility had traded their loyalty for Russian promises of restoring the old order. Moreover, after the war Peter the Great invited the German nobles of the former Swedish provinces to enter Russian state service. This arrangement was to become so popular among the Germans that their number and possible influence within the Russian administration were to surpass that of other non-Slavs. On its part, the Russian government allowed the Germans a wide measure of political and cultural autonomy. The Baltic model was thus left intact for the first hundred years of Russian rule due to it superiority compared to the Russian administration at that time.[54]

The loser of this arrangement was the peasantry, for which the first century under Russian rule became a period of deep degradation and outrageous exploitation.[55] Several peasant revolts led to gradual reforms, which slightly improved the peasant situation at the turn of the 19th century. Any reform proposals, though, were met with fierce resistance from the German landowners that did their best to preserve the old order. Usually, the Russians were still willing to listen to the Germans and follow their recommendations on the administration of the Baltic lands.

In 1816-1819, serfdom was somewhat unexpectedly abolished in the Baltic region, which at that time also included Courland and Lithuania, which had come under Russian rule in 1795 in the third partition of Poland. However, the German landlords had made sure that the land cultivated by the peasants should be recognized as the private property of the landlord. It is true that the reform led to formal freedom, but in the end, the landlords succeeded in limiting this freedom through different economic agreements. A new 'serfdom of the *corvée*' replaced the old one.[56] The lack of land reinforced by famines led to mass conversions to Russian orthodoxy in the 1840s based on the mistaken notion that with conversion free land would be offered in the interior of Russia.[57] Russia's response was as usual weak and slow due to the influence of the Baltic Germans on the state administration, and it did not live up to the expectations of the Baltic peasantry. Most of the converts tried then to return to their traditional faith, Lutheranism, but this movement was obstructed by the Orthodox Church and the Russian state, which forbade any apostasy from orthodoxy.

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54 Thaden (1981) p. 111.

55 Balodis (1990) p. 114.

56 Thaden (1981) p. 123.

57 Thaden (1981) pp. 218-219; Balodis (1990) p. 122.

In the last decades of the 19th century, what mattered more for Russia than the economic well-being of the Baltic peoples was the potential threat of a rising militaristic Germany under Bismarck, and its possible impact on the political orientations of the dwellers in Russian Baltic provinces. The situation was perceived as a spiritual battle for influence between the great German and Russian cultures, between the two alternatives of a further Germanised Baltic region or a Russified and loyal part to the Russian Empire. Therefore, Russian reforms in the 1880s concentrated less on further economic reforms and administrative modernization and more on school education and language as well as religion.

Whatever the Russians wanted to achieve, it was too late to implement. The 19th century had given birth to small but growing nationalist intelligentsias among the Baltic peoples. It is true that early Latvian nationalists were more suspicious of the Baltic Germans than of the Russians. Krisjanis Valdemars, for example, thought that the "Russian fist was less dangerous than the German iron claw".[58] Thus, early Latvian nationalists saw the Russian Slavophiles as allies against the Baltic Germans. However, for later generations of this intelligentsia it became clear that the Slavophile agenda departed from Latvian interests. Nevertheless, Latvian national consciousness by now had reached a critical level, and any Russian efforts to promote Russian language and Russian values in Latvia could not roll back the development. The rift between Latvian demands and Russian Baltic policies became even wider in the decades before WW I. In Latvia, the revolution in 1905 was not only a class struggle but also a nationalist manifestation. The Russian reaction became severe, but at the same time, it was only a recurrent example of Baltic Germans and Russians collaborating against the Latvians.[59] The activities of the imperial army, at the service of the Baltic German landowners, convinced many Latvians that their expectations could not be based on the presumed good will of the imperial government.

The russification policies continued until the outbreak of WW I, and besides a russified curriculum in the Baltic schools, the government also tried to dilute nationalist feelings in the Baltic provinces by a policy of cross-colonisation: Russian peasants were offered land on attractive terms in the Baltic provinces, at the same time as Estonian and Latvian emigration to Siberia was promoted.[60]

The war came to end not only all these policies, but also Russian supremacy over the Baltic region. From an Estonian and Latvian perspective, the summing up of the 150-year-long *modus vivendi* between the Russian government and the Baltic Germans was that it had indeed been built upon their backs.[61]

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58 Balodis (1990) p. 130.

59 Thaden (1981) p. 266.

60 Balodis (1990) p. 145.

61 Thaden (1981) p. 180.

3.2. WW I and the interwar period

In the Baltic region, the war came to reinforce and accelerate those centrifugal forces that brought Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians to establish their own nation states. Latvian territory became a theatre of war for years to come with grave consequences for the country and its inhabitants. Russian authorities ordered the population to evacuate areas threatened by the German kaiserist forces, which was combined with rumours of German atrocities in occupied territories. Consequently, panic grew and evacuation became chaotic. However, the authorities did not provide any refugee assistance, so this had to be organised by the refugees themselves. Even machinery from Latvian enterprises was dismantled and sent to Russia. As it was not given back to Latvia after the war, it caused a serious setback to post-war Latvian economy.[62]

In 1915, the Russian authorities permitted the formation of entirely Latvian rifle regiments of volunteers. In Latvian historiography, the efforts of the Latvian riflemen had great importance for the Russian military operations[63]. Moral was high, partly due to the widespread fear that in case of a German victory, the Baltic Germans would take revenge on the Latvians for the events during the revolution in 1905 – with a possible genocide as a result. The Latvian rifle regiments were usually engaged in order to support tottering Russian forces or to form the spearhead in Russian attacks, and they became notorious for their efforts. Bad command and sheer incompetence in the Russian military command caused many unnecessary losses, and the Russian leadership incurred the Latvian soldiers' displeasure and contempt. Therefore, the Latvian riflemen became an easy target for the Communist agitators, and during the Russian revolution, most of them sided with the Bolsheviks, for whose final victory in the civil war they came to play a crucial role.

The weakness of central power led the Baltic states to declare their independence, which brought them and the German army into the civil war that followed in the aftermaths of the Russian revolution. 'Open warfare between Soviet Russia and its western and northern neighbours ceased in 1920-21, but left traumatic memories on all sides. All parties needed cooperation with one another for trade and security. Distrust formed by past experience made such cooperation difficult. The history of 1917-1921 left both Communists and non-Communists with ample material for mutual recrimination for decades to come.'[64]

Between Latvia and the new Soviet state, a peace treaty was signed on August 11, 1920. According to this treaty, the Federative Socialist Republics of the

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62 Balodis (1990) p. 149.

63 Balodis (1990) p. 150-153; Bleiere et al. (2005) p. 77.

64 Clemens (1991) p. 44.

Russian Soviets 'voluntarily and for all eternal times renounced all sovereign rights over the Latvian people and its territory', further guaranteeing that 'the earlier belonging to [imperial] Russia did not create any obligations for the Latvian people or territory towards Russia'.[65]

After the war, it soon turned out that it was difficult to sustain any solidarity among the three Baltic states, for many reasons. Lithuania had ongoing border disputes with Poland and Germany, but was without any common border with the Soviet Union. Estonia and Latvia bordered Russia, but not Germany. Soviet power also probed for weakness in the Baltic and tried to play off the three states against each other and against their other neighbours.

An indication that the Bolsheviks were not to be trusted was the Soviet invasion and annexation of Georgia in February 1921 in spite of the earlier Soviet recognition of Georgian independence in May 1920. In addition, an armed uprising by Communists was staged in Estonia in 1924. The Soviet "International Organization for Aid to Revolutionaries", MOPR, supporting imprisoned revolutionaries around the world with legal as well as illegal means, began to infiltrate Latvia in the early 1920s.[66] Its illegal activities could continue until 1936 before it was stopped.

3.3. The impact of WW II on the Baltic region

The prelude to WW 2 obviously nullified the practical value of the peace treaty between the Soviet Union and Latvia. On August 23, 1939, the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, including the secret additional protocol, was signed in Moscow, practically giving Stalin free hands in the Baltic states. Within a year, Soviet troops had established bases in Latvia; a new Moscow-friendly government had been established and a Moscow-friendly parliament had been elected that immediately sent a delegation to Moscow, asking for Latvian incorporation into the USSR. This request was swiftly granted by the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on August 5, 1940. In Estonia and Lithuania, the development followed similar patterns.

The oppressive nature of the Soviet regime resulted in many Latvians welcoming the Germans as liberators when German troops occupied Latvia in July 1941 as part of the 'Operation Barbarossa', the German invasion of the Soviet Union. It turned out; however, that German authority was no better than the Soviet regime. Still, the Germans could find collaborators in the Latvian society among people sharing Nazi hatred for Jews and Communists, or those seeing co-operation with the Germans as a short-term strategy to regain Latvian independence after the war.

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65 Dreifelds (1996) p. 26; Bleiere et al. (2005) p. 132.

66 Balodis (1990) p. 231.

In present-day relations between Latvia and Russia, Russian authorities have found several reasons to accuse the Latvian intelligentsia for taking too soft a stand on Latvian collaboration with the Nazis during the war. Russia has especially criticized Latvia for almost giving the Latvian SS legion some kind of status as an army fighting for Latvian independence, contrary to the verdict of the Nuremberg trials, which labelled the SS as an entirely criminal organization. At the same time, Latvia has prosecuted some Soviet WW II veterans living in Latvia, accusing them of war crimes. In official Russian rhetoric, the Latvian position is frequently depicted as evidence of growing fascism in Latvia, threatening the well-being of the Latvia-Russians.

On the other hand, the Soviet Union stubbornly denied the existence of the secret additional protocol to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact until the end of the 1980s. Only in 1989, the Soviet Congress of People's Deputies passed a resolution denouncing the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, considering it legally invalid. The Soviet reluctance to reassess the first decades of its history has been inherited by the Russian Federation, which, as stated earlier, claims to be the direct heir to the Soviet Union as well as to the Russian Empire. 'Going back to the "occupation" concept as the quintessence in the interpretation of the history of relations between the Russians and Latvians,' Russia maintains that 'it is necessary to approach all the problems and events in history strictly from the scientific point of view without bringing into it politics and ideology', and it stresses that 'historical appraisal in every country should be based on criteria of international law of corresponding periods'.[67] Another argument frequently used by Russians is that the Baltic peoples were not the only one to suffer; all Soviet peoples were affected by Stalinist rule.

President Putin's position is that no further apologies besides the Soviet resolution are necessary. 'Russia has expressed its view once, and that should be enough'.[68] The present Russian president's opinion of the Baltic states during the inter-war period is far from the Baltic position:

> As I see it, in 1918, Russia and Germany concluded a deal that was sealed in the Brest-Litovsk Peace Treaty, under which Russia handed over part of its territories to German control. This marked the beginning of Estonian statehood [and the statehoods of Latvia and Lithuania]. In 1939, Russia and Germany concluded another deal and Germany handed these territories back to Russia. In 1939 [sic!], they were absorbed into the Soviet Union. Let us not talk now about whether this was good or bad. This is part of history. I think that this was a deal, and small countries and small nations were

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67 Demurin, (2001) p. 78. At the time for the article, Demurin served as Deputy Director at the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

68 Press statement and responses to questions following the Russia-European Union summit May 10th, 2005. Excerpts from the Russian president's official homepage. For comments, see RFE/RL Newsline 11 May 2005 Volume 9 Number 89; Eurasia Daily Monitor, vol.2 No. 93, May 12, 2005.

> the bargaining chips in this deal. Regrettably, such was the reality of those times, just as there was the reality of European countries' colonial past, or the use of slave labour in the United States. But today, are we, day after day, to allow the ghosts of the past to seize us by the hands and prevent us from moving forward?
>
> If the Baltic states had already been absorbed into the Soviet Union in 1939, then the Soviet Union could not occupy them in 1945 because they had already become part of its territory.[69]

That these declarations were not some accidental slips of tongue but the official Russian position is proved by the fact that similar declarations have been uttered later by other Russian officials. In a speech in Riga on June 3, 2005, the Russian Ambassador to Latvia, Viktor Kaliuzhin, asserted the voluntary nature of Latvia's incorporation in the Soviet Union, as it was based on a decision taken by the first democratically elected parliament for many years under the Ulmanis' authoritarian regime.[70] These kinds of statements are condemned in all three Baltic states, and raises, quite naturally, questions about Russian objectives and intentions in the Baltic region.

3.4. Post-war development

President Putin generally depicts Soviet history in relatively light colours. It might be connected with the fact that he has no personal memories or experiences of the Stalinist period, as he was born in 1952. As an illustration of his Soviet nostalgia, the president's yearly address to the Federal Assembly in April 2005 can be mentioned. In this address, he called the collapse of the Soviet Union 'the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century'.[71] When he explained his decision of adopting the melody of the Soviet anthem as a new anthem for the Russian Federation, Putin said that he refused to believe that all things in Soviet Union had been bad. This presidential view and other Russian apologetic approaches to Soviet atrocities in the Baltic states in connection with WW II can possibly be explained by their focus on the post-war period.

German defeat led to the restoration of Soviet supremacy in the Baltic states in 1944 and their reincorporation into the Soviet Union. In the Russian view there emerges the image of a benevolent Soviet power, which not only liberated the Baltic region from Nazi occupation, but also invested in and built up the Baltic economies, providing scarce personnel resources in the form of skilled workers and engineers, frequently of Russian or Slavic origin, to help the Baltic sister nations. For instance, after his official visit to the Occupation Museum of

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69 Ibid.

70 Kaliuzhin, Viktor (2005): 'Vystuplenie Posla Rossii v Latvii V. I. Kaliuzhnogo na Diplomaticheskom salone po teme: 'Rossiisko-latviiskie otnosheniya na sovremennom etape'Riga, 3 iyunya 2005 goda' Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Press department, June 7, 2005.

71 Poslanie prezidenta RF Federalnomu Sobraniyu ot 25.04.2005.

Latvia in January 2005, Ambassador Kaliuzhin remarked that the museum did not give much detail on the economic achievements under the Soviet period. He was also critical against the concept of a 'Soviet occupation of Latvia'.[72] Thus, Russia tries to smooth over any hints of an occupational nature of the Soviet presence in the Baltic states. It also frequently stresses Soviet contributions to the local economic development and culture. This should allegedly be more than enough to compensate the Baltic peoples from any sufferings from Stalinist and Bolshevik atrocities – if, indeed, there were any atrocities at all.

In their interpretation of history, Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians in general have always asserted the unlawful nature of this Soviet *de facto* occupation of their territory, in spite of the frame of legality that Stalin sought to uphold during the first incorporation. As it became clear that Soviet power did not intend to withdraw from the Baltics, a gradual change of attitude took place – from struggle against foreign occupation to working for one's own interest within a framework of foreign rule.[73] No further adaptation to Soviet supremacy seems to have taken place, which means that the system was never fully legitimized.

In content, the Baltic peoples also maintain that Moscow treated their countries more like colonies than quasi-independent states in spite of the powers nominally reserved to Union Republics by the 1936 Soviet Constitution. 'It killed or deported suspected oppositionists; decided how the local economy would be organized and what it would produce for the USSR; and proceeded with an intensive campaign of russification that included not only language training and indoctrination but also waves of non-Baltic immigrants who tried to make Russian not just the *lingua franca* but the dominant tongue'.[74]

Naturally, Baltic attitudes towards the Soviet system coloured their view of their Russian neighbours as well. According to Clemens, 'by some, the Russians were not considered as settlers or even as migrants seeking personal gain; rather the Russians were colonizers working for the interests of a distant metropole. Settlers develop the land for the future of their children; colonizers exploit it for the aggrandizement of the metropolitan power. Settlers build institutions to facilitate long-term development of their settlement; colonizers build institutions to facilitate exploitation'.[75] According to a summary of writings in Soviet Latvian papers by the Latvian historian Balodis, 'the typical Russian immigrant to Latvia is a self-confident person who sees himself as a culture bearer and benefactor in foreign and for himself incomprehensible country. Furthermore, his interest in culture – even Russian culture – is rather weak, his knowledge of the

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72 'Posol RF v Latvii posetil Muzey okkupatsii', *www.regnum.ru*, January 28, 2005.

73 Clemens (1991) p. 57.

74 Clemens (1991) p. 57.

75 Clemens (1991) p. 150.

humanities non-existent and he does not know any other language than Russian. He does not understand the world outside Russia and has no wish for doing so, but he is inspired by a Messianic will to hoist the Russian flag everywhere. Soviet cultural politicians have no interest in providing this self-confident person with some information about the surrounding world.'.[76]

[76] Balodis (1990) p. 360.

4. Issues about Latvian national policies

Latvian national policies concern the rules for obtaining citizenship, the choice of state language and its use in all spheres of public life and the phasing out of minority languages in the school system. The designs of these policies are due to the prevailing demographic situation in Latvia as well as Latvian common memory of history, both subjects that were discussed in the two previous chapters of this work. From a Latvian point of view, the national policies seem fair with reference to history, and they are furthermore believed to be necessary for demographic reasons if the very idea of a Latvian statehood is not to be put at risk.

Solely designed to meet the needs of ethnic Latvians, these policies have incurred fierce critique from Latvia-Russians as well as from Russia. The Russian-speaking minority issue has played a major role for the Russo-Latvian relationship since the break-up of the Soviet Union. Even if ethnic Latvians as well as Latvia-Russians and Russians from Russia proper maintain their will to cooperate and create win-win situations for all involved, the Latvia-Russian issue has many times been in the way.

The international community has from time to another found reason to intervene and to put pressure on Latvia as well. Maybe this has been especially true when it comes to Latvian aspirations to join NATO and EU as membership is dependent on respect for human rights besides other criteria. The purpose of this chapter is to go more into the details and to analyse the Latvian national policies as well as the objections raised against them.

4.1. Citizenship in Latvia

Russian unwillingness to confront its past deeds in the Baltic states means more or less that Russia automatically refuses to accept that the Baltic states should be allowed to implement their idea of statehood in the form of a national state founded on the titular nation’s interpretation of certain events that occurred under the last century. Therefore, with official Russian history writing in mind, Latvian citizenship policies become incomprehensible, almost bordering on sheer cruelty. Since Latvia voluntarily joined the USSR, post-war Soviet emigrants were in their full right to settle down in Latvia as well as anywhere else in their common homeland. Consequently, all former Soviet citizens permanently living on Latvian soil at the time of Latvian independence automatically ought to be granted Latvian citizenship. All other alternatives would be an offence against human rights.

As already mentioned, and in opposition to the official Russian view, Estonia and Latvia have consistently stressed the occupational character of their incorporation into the Soviet Union. Any zero-option solution or any juridical or moral obligations towards Soviet immigrants are therefore not acceptable. Only

the Soviet occupier is to be held responsible for any undesired immigration, which, by the way, seriously and harmfully changed the ethnic balance. Hence, citizenship in Latvia was initially only granted persons who were citizens of Latvia on June 17, 1940 and their descendants. As early-arrived Russians were automatically included in this group, it is wrong to say that post-Soviet Latvian citizenship was granted on purely ethnic principles. However, Aleksey Dimitrov, legal consultant for Zapchel (see section 6.3), holds that in practice it could be quite difficult to prove one's bonds to pre-war Latvia, as so much civil documentation was destroyed during the WW II.[77]

The first post-independence Latvian citizenship law came into force in July 1994. Due to pressure from abroad, it was changed in 1998, and in its latest version, it is considered more liberal than similar laws in many Western European countries, a fact Latvian authorities like to point out.[78] Applicants must have been living in Latvia for at least five years, they also have to pass tests in Latvian language and history and prove their knowledge of the *Satversme*, the Latvian constitution.

Critics mean that the Citizenship Law of 1998 is sound in theory, but that it has no connection to the actual situation in Latvia.[79] Still 20% of the population, in figures 452 000 people, are non-citizens, as shown in the table below. Since 1995, when citizenship through naturalization was accepted, less than 93 000 people have applied for citizenship.[80] As a child born to non-citizens is not automatically granted citizenship at birth, even people born after Latvian independence are still added to the group of non-citizens.[81]

Table 3: Composition of population of Latvia by citizenship at beginning of 2000 - 2004

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Citizens of Latvia	74,4	75,4	76,3	77,1	77,8
Latvian non-citizens	21,1	21,8	21,2	21,6	20,8
Citizens of the former USSR with no other citizenship granted	3,3	1,5	1,2	0	0
Citizens of Russian Federation	0,8	0,9	1	0,9	1
Citizens of Lithuania	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,1
Citizens of Ukraine	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,1
Citizens of other States	0,2	0,2	0,1	0,2	0,2

Source: *Demography 2004, Collection of Statistical data* (Riga, Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, 2004), chart 7, p 192

77 Aleksey Dimitrov, March 2005.

78 Kalniete, Sandra: 'Ryska diktat främjar inte grannsämjan', *DN Debatt*, March 9, 2004.

79 Ilze Brands Kehre, May 2005.

80 Naturalization Board of the Rep. of Latvia.

81 Children born to Latvian citizens are automatically registered as Latvian citizens. Parents who are non-citizens still have to apply for Latvian citizenship for their child, even if the procedure itself is said to be uncomplicated.

Certain Latvian nationalists like parliamentarian Aleksandrs Kirsteins find even the present slow pace of naturalization being of 'stakhanovite' proportions. Going even further, Kirsteins argues that the list of recently granted citizenships should be revised; citizenship should only be granted to those individuals who have convincingly integrated into society.[82] Thus, Yuri Petropavlovskiy, a radical Latvia-Russian activist, has already been denied Latvian citizenship for his alleged disloyalty to the Republic of Latvia.[83]

Clearly, Russia finds the status of non-citizenship and the slow naturalization process of Russian nationals permanently living in Latvia not acceptable, as for instance, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs pointed out on the eve of the NATO and EU enlargements in spring 2004.[84] Other actors, like EU, the OSCE and the Council of Europe have also been pressing Latvia for a more pro-active integration of the remaining non-citizens. Thus, the Council of Europe commissioner for human rights, Alvaro Gil-Robles, means that 'Latvia must avoid excluding a large proportion of the population from the common project of building a post-independence society and integrating Latvia into Europe'. He also recommends an acceleration of the naturalization of non-citizens.[85]

Some responsibility for the slow pace of naturalization stays with Latvian politicians. Latvia-Russian Member of Parliament Boris Tsilevich means that the mainstream Latvian nationalist parties have become victims of their own nationalist propaganda: they cannot give up their hard-line position now without losing too many ethnic Latvian voters. At the same time, due to their records, it is not likely that naturalized Latvia-Russians would see the nationalist Latvian parties as their first choice in any election for many years to come. For tactical reasons then, *status quo* is preferred by Latvian nationalists.[86] Nils Muiznieks makes the same analysis as Boris Tsilevich.[87] Ainars Latkovskis, Minister for Special Assignments for Society Integration Affairs, says that politicians from both sides have to soften their rhetoric to build a more harmonious society. However, according to Latkovskis, all parties and all politicians exploit nationalist ideas, as they are easier to deal with than actual and more urging social problems in society.[88]

Still, one has to remember that a large part of non-citizens takes no interest in changing their status. Gil-Robles hints that some people are deterred from go-

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82 Chas, April 25, 2005; Vesti Segodnya, April 30, 2005; The Baltic Times April 28 - May 4, 2005, vol. 10 No. 455.

83 The Baltic Times April 28 - May 4, 2005, vol. 10 No. 455.

84 Ivanov, Igor: 'Ryssar i Lettland är rättslösa', *DN Debatt*, March 1, 2004.

85 Gil-Robles (2003).

86 Boris Tsilevich, May 2005.

87 Nils Muiznieks, March 2005.

88 Chas, May 3, 2005.

ing ahead with naturalisation because, as non-naturalised persons, they come under a more advantageous set of rules for travel to CIS countries, in particular regarding visas.[89] For instance, even if the charges for multi-entry visas are the same, a Latvian citizen has to pay four times more for a single-entry visa to Russia than a Latvian non-citizen.[90] Thus, Russian solicitude for Latvian non-citizens' integration in Latvian society obviously does not comprise measures which it is free to decide upon at its own discretion, without any interference of Latvian authorities or appeals to the international community. From the Latvian point of view, the seriousness of Russian criticism of the naturalisation process is therefore an open question.

Other reasons why the non-citizens do not change their status listed by Gil-Robles are apprehension about the tests, particularly the language test, or financial obstacles. Tatiana Poloskova, professor at the Diplomatic Academy at the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, mentions obligatory military service for all male Latvian citizens under 28 years as one reason for younger men not to apply for citizenship. Aleksey Dimitrov, legal adviser to the Zapchel fraction in Latvian parliament, holds that some people do not apply for citizenship, as they are disappointed with the actual politics in Latvia or with the present development.[91] A case in point illustrating Dimitrov's assertion is, for instance, the personal position of Alex Krasnitsky, staff writer at the daily Russian-language newspaper Chas. Krasnitsky motivates his personal reluctance to apply for citizenship with the alienation and dissociation he feels about the path taken by the post-Soviet Latvian state.[92]

Dimitriy Nikolaev from the NGO *Russkaya Zapada* makes a distinction between Soviet immigrants whom he considers still to be living mentally in the Soviet Union and the early-arrived Old Believer Russians who think within the frames of the present-day Latvian state.[93] Mikhail Tyasin, co-president of United Congress of Russian Communities of Latvia (OKROL) and vice-president of Union of Russian Private Entrepreneurs of Latvia (SRPL), maintains that the treatment of the Latvia-Russians is unfair, as those people who forced Latvia to join the Soviet Union primarily were Communists, not Russians *per se*. It is therefore humiliating and insulting to have to apply for citizenship, especially if Latvia was one's country of living for most of one's life, maybe even since birth.[94]

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89 Gil-Robles (2003).

90 Homepage for Russian Embassy in Latvia: *www.latvia.mid.ru/visainfo.html*, information updated in May 2005.

91 Aleksey Dimitrov, March 2005.

92 Alex Krasnitsky, April 2005.

93 Dimitriy Nikolaev, April 2005.

94 Mikhail Tyasin, April 2005.

4.2. Latvia-Russians – a national minority?

Besides the issue of citizenship, Russia criticises Latvia for not granting Latvia-Russians any minority rights. The essence of the critique has been Latvia's ten-year-old reluctance to ratify the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities of the Council of Europe.[95] The Convention is a legally binding multilateral instrument, concerned with the protection of national minorities in general. It aims to protect the existence of national minorities within the respective territories of the signing states and to promote full and effective equality of national minorities through the creation of appropriate conditions enabling them to preserve and develop their culture and to retain their identity. The document sets out principles relating to persons belonging to national minorities in the sphere of public life, such as freedom of peaceful assembly, freedom of association, freedom of expression, freedom of thought, conscience and religion, and access to the media, as well as in the sphere of freedoms relating to language, education and transfrontier co-operation.[96] Thus, without a Latvian ratification, Russia has maintained that the development in Latvia has left the Latvia-Russians with fewer rights compared to when Latvia became a member of the Council of Europe in 1995.

In the realm of minority policy, Latvia has indeed been termed 'an issue-specific reluctant democratizer' by human rights advocates.[97] Latvia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs claims though that Latvia has worked consistently together with international organizations like the UN, OSCE and the Council of Europe and that it has taken advice from their experts concerning policies for integration and human rights. Any Russian critique of Latvian laws and their application is therefore allegedly without any justification and finds no support from the international community.[98]

Latvia's reluctance to ratify the Convention was caused by political inability to find a suitable definition of the concept of 'national minority'. In fact, as a framework document, the text of the Convention does not provide in itself a workable definition of a national minority. That task is left to the signing states so that they can find suitable definitions based on the actual situation within each signing state. Among those states who have ratified the Convention, some have added declarations with quite sweeping definitions of their national minorities in terms of 'autochthonous groups', 'common identity', 'culture', 'tradi-

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95 Igor Ivanov, op. cit.; Demurin (2001).

96 *http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/en/Summaries/Html/157.htm*.

97 Brands Kehre & Muiznieks (2003).

98 Kalniete, Sandra: 'Ryska diktat främjar inte grannsämjan', *DN Debatt*, March 9, 2004; Bertulis, Artis: 'Lettlands demokrati förtalas i svensk TV', *Västerbottenskuriren*, April 21, 2004.

tions', 'religion' or 'language'. Other states have preferred to list specific groups living on their territories and with citizenship for the actual state. Slovenia, for instance, lists its Italians and Hungarians; Germany enumerates its Danish, Sorbian, Frisian, Sinti and Roma citizens.[99]

Characteristic of all these definitions is the fact that they follow a commonly accepted European norm of limiting the use of the minority concept to ethnic groups who have resided in the actual country for many generations. Sweden, as a case in point, applies the minority concept only to groups who resided in Sweden before the year 1900 and who have preserved their distinct features: Sami, Swedish Finns, Tornedalers, Roma and Jews. For all other ethnic groups residing in a state with another ethnic majority, the term 'immigrant' is reserved.[100]

Returning to the Baltic Russians, there is a rationale for defining the post-war settlers as ordinary immigrants according to the European principles and practices outlined above. Dealt with in this way, they stand out as an exceedingly privileged group compared to other *immigrant groups* on the European continent.

However, in order to deal with the complex situation in the Baltic states and to give the OSCE an advisory and supervisory role concerning the Baltic Russians' predicament, a less stringent definition of minority had to be used, as the competence of the OSCE to deal with ethnic issues is limited to minorities, not to immigrants.[101] This solution was also accepted by the Baltic states so that the international community would be satisfied. From this perspective, compared to other *minority groups*, the Baltic Russians might be seen as somewhat unfairly treated and discriminated against.

Not surprisingly, Russia takes quite a strong position on which formula of the two the Baltic states ought to follow when ratifying the Framework Convention. Actually, the declaration added to Russia's own ratification does not address the interior situation in Russia at all, but functions more like a poorly disguised critical declamation against the Baltic states for not accepting the Baltic Russians as national minorities whole-heartedly:

> The Russian Federation considers that none is entitled to include unilaterally in reservations or declarations, made while signing or ratifying the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, a definition of the term "national minority", which is not contained in the Framework Convention. In the opinion of the Russian Federation, attempts to exclude from the scope of the Framework Convention the per-

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99 *http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/Commun/ListeDeclarations.asp?NT=157&CM=8&DF=31/05/05&CL=ENG&VL=1*.

100 Ibid. and Lundén, Thomas & Wahlbäck, Krister : 'Tala klartext med Moskva om Baltryssar', *DN Debatt*, July 25, 2004.

101 Ibid.

> sons who permanently reside in the territory of States Parties to the Framework Convention and previously had a citizenship but have been arbitrarily deprived of it, contradict the purpose of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.[102]

Lithuania came to ratify the Convention in March 2000 without adding any reservations or declarations. It seems then that it matches Russian demands.

Estonia, whose interior situation is most similar to Latvian conditions, ratified the Framework Convention already in January 1997, adding a declaration with the same wording as article 1 in its 'Law on Cultural Autonomy for National Minorities' adopted as early as in October 1993. Estonian citizenship and residence in Estonia are primary conditions for obtaining the status of member of a national minority, according to these documents. Other requisite conditions are the maintenance of longstanding firm and lasting ties with the country; distinction from Estonians based on ethnic, cultural, religious or linguistic characteristics and motivation by a concern to preserve cultural traditions, religion or language, constituting the basis of common identity.[103] The text of the law goes one step further than the declaration as it also points out that 'national minority cultural autonomy may be established by persons belonging to German, Russian, Swedish and Jewish minorities and persons belonging to national minorities with a membership of more than 3000'.

In spring 2005, Latvia finally took steps to ratify the Framework Convention. The Latvian dilemma consisted in finding a way to implement the Convention that would satisfy internal as well as external interests, without simultaneously contributing to the breaking up of the integration policy by granting the non-titular populations any rights that would overrule present-day legislation. Due to their similarity, Ainars Latkovskis thought that Latvia should not deviate too far from the Estonian example.[104] Under intense pressure from the executive branch, Latvian lawmakers were persuaded to ratify the Convention on May 27, 2005, and after the signature of the president, the instrument of ratification was deposited on June 6, 2005 with the Council of Europe.[105] Latvia chose not to completely follow the Estonian model. Like Estonia, and many other states, Latvia declared that citizenship is a necessary condition for minority status, thus, non-citizens were excluded in the Latvian definition. At the same time, it

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102 Declaration contained in the instrument of ratification deposited on 21 August 1998 by the Russian Federation.

103 Declaration contained in the instrument of ratification, deposited on 6 January 1997 by the Republic of Estonia and Law on Cultural Autonomy for National Minorities, October 26, 1993.

104 Chas, May 3, 2005.

105 *http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/Commun/ListeDeclarations.asp?NT=157&CM=8&DF=31/05/05&CL=ENG&VL=1* and The Baltic Times, June 1, 2005.

also made two reservations against implementing articles 10 and 11 of the Convention, stating that street signs will not be written in Russian, even in areas with a high concentration of ethnic Russians. Moreover, only Latvian can be used in local government meetings.[106] In the same way as Lithuania, Latvia has chosen not to point out any specific ethnic group as a national minority in its ratification, thus upholding the ambiguity of the Framework Convention in its own legislation. Right-wing Latvian politician Aleksandrs Kirsteins, former chairman of the Saeima Foreign Affairs Committee, motivated his standpoint by claiming that 'the Convention is aimed at defending a people close to extinction and to preserve the cultural traditions of small national and religious groups. The essence of the Convention is not aimed at the defence of foreign inhabitants' rights in a given country. Their rights are regulated by the UN Convention on Human Rights'.[107]

Some Latvian politicians familiar with the Convention, Ainars Latkovskis and Nils Muiznieks for instance, stressed in advance that a ratification of the Convention would not bring any substantial changes to Latvian legislation and integration policies and that non-Latvian groups should not wait for any manna from heaven. Still, Latvian reservations became a disappointment to the Latvia-Russians, and they were severely criticized.[108] Russian reactions were not slow in coming either. Commenting on the ratification already on May 26, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs meant that the Latvian parliamentarians had in view to consolidate the discriminating norms of Latvian legislation.[109] On May 27, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sergey Lavrov, regretted the exclusion of Latvian non-citizens from the Convention, as precisely the problem of non-citizens appears as the main human rights abuse in Latvia.[110] Russian Ambassador Kaliuzhin some days later stated that the Latvian declaration and reservations deprived the ratification of any practical meaning in that they were contradictory to the objective and the aim of the Convention.[111]

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106 The Baltic Times, June 1, 2005.

107 *www.gazeta.ru*, May 27, 2005.

108 Chas, May 3, 2005; The Baltic Times June 1, 2005.

109 Russian MFA Information and Press Department Commentary Regarding a Question from the Newspaper Izvestia Concerning the Planned Ratification by Latvia's Saeima of the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities No. 1202-26-05-2005 (*www.mid.ru*).

110 Transcript of Remarks and Replies to Russian Media Questions by Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation Sergey Lavrov City of Baltiysk, Kaliningrad Region, May 27, 2005 No. 1219-27-05-2005. (*www.mid.ru*).

111 Kaliuzhin (2005), op. cit.

4.3. Promotion of Latvian language in society

Latvian reluctance to implement articles 10 and 11 of the Framework Convention is an indication of the great importance that the Latvian language has been given in constructing the post-Soviet Latvian state. For instance, a person elected to the Saeima has to give a solemn promise according to which he or she promises to strengthen the Latvian language as the only official language.[112] The sensitivity of language issues in Latvia is a product of Soviet language policy, which left Latvia with a sharply reduced role for Latvian in the public domain. Another part of the Soviet legacy is an asymmetric bilingualism, 'as most ethnic Latvians by 1989 were bilingual speakers of Latvian and Russian, while most non-Latvians were monolingual speakers of Russian'.[113] In 1989, the survival of the Latvian language was crucial, and without active measures from the state, that threat is still real. Ilze Brands Kehre of the Latvian Centre for Human Rights and Ethnic Studies means, however, that the Government has to use softer methods in its defence of the Latvian language, as for the present moment there are too much force and exaggerated rhetoric.[114]

Soon after the restoration of democracy and independence, Latvia in 1992 enacted a State Language law with the aim of strengthening the Latvian language. This law allowed, even if in limited cases, the use of other historical languages of Latvia, like Russian and German. Still, the only official language was Latvian.[115] The new State Language Law of 1999 is much more demanding, as it only pays attention to the Liv, or Livonian language, as an indigenous or autochthonous language.[116] Henceforth, Latvian should be used not only in official situations and by state and municipal institutions. It also regulates the use of language in private companies and institutions, when there are legitimate public interests such as public safety, health, morals, health care, protection of consumer rights and labour rights, workplace safety and public administrative supervision.[117]

Russia seems to have been especially offended by the suppression of Russian language even in official contacts with local authorities in areas with a high

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112 Satversme (Constitution of Latvia), article 18.

113 Brands Kehre & Muiznieks (2003).

114 Ilze Brands Kehre, May 2005.

115 Poggeshi, Giovanni (2004), the text might be found at: *www6.gencat.net/llengcat/noves/-hm04tardor/poggeschi1_3.htm*.

116 State Language Law, 1999; article 4. Livonian belongs to the Fennic branch of the Fenno-Ugric languages. Today, it is spoken fluently by only a handful people.

117 Ibid., article 2.

concentration of Russian-speaking people.[118] Alvaro Gil-Robles, Commissioner for Human Rights at the Council of Europe, also believes that 'Latvian authorities should endeavour to provide more support to members of language minorities, and allow them to use their mother tongues for official business, as suggested in Article 10 of the framework convention'.[119] Ilze Brands Kehre thinks that some of the detailed regulations and obligations put on private companies are taking the legislation too far.[120] Andrey Yakovlev, consultant for the political fraction Zapchel (see section 6.3), means that it would have been more appropriate to promote the Russian language. As a scientific language, Russian is equal to English, at the same time as the volume of scientific work written in Latvian or translated into Latvian is of quite humble proportions.[121]

4.4. The school reform in 1998

Probably, one of the most effective ways to promote a certain language in a given country is to foster its use as a language of instruction in schools. In this way, a large part of the population gets into contact with the language at an age when they are most receptive for language learning. Not surprisingly then, the question of which languages should be officially used in Latvian schools has stirred up even more feelings than other questions related to language both in Latvia and Russia.

Article nine of the Law on Education that came in October 1998, stated that all teaching at state and municipal education institutions should be in the state language.[122] After widespread protests, article nine was later amended and provided with transitional provisions. Still, since September 1, 2002 pupils of basic school, grades 1 – 9, learn in two languages. After a renewed parliamentary decision on January 23, 2004, minority secondary schools had to start implementing minority education curricula with an increased Latvian-language component as of September 1, 2004. These curricula imply that in grades 10–12 of state and municipal general secondary education institutions, the number of subjects taught in Latvian increase from three to five. Up to 40% of the total number of

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118 Russian MFA Information and Press Department Commentary Regarding a Question from the Newspaper Izvestia Concerning the Planned Ratification by Latvia's Saeima of the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities No. 1202-26-05-2005; Transcript of Remarks and Replies to Russian Media Questions by Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation Sergey Lavrov City of Baltiysk, Kaliningrad Region, May 27, 2005 No. 1219-27-05-2005, *www.mid.ru*; Kaliuzhin (2005), op. cit.

119 Gil-Robles (2003).

120 Igor Ivanov, op. cit.; Ilze Brands Kehre, May 2005.

121 Andrey Yakovlev, March 2005.

122 Republic of Latvia, Education Law adopted October 29, 1998.

classes are still taught in the minority language. Schools are able to choose themselves which subjects will be taught in Latvian and in the ethnic minority language. This increase will be phased in, beginning with grade 10 in 2004, followed by grade 11 in 2005 and grade 12 in 2006. From 2007 all school exams will be in Latvian, although the students will be able to choose in which language they prefer to give their answers.[123] In Russian-language mass media in Latvia and in different protest actions carried out by Latvia-Russian radicals, these last amendments to the Law on Education are popularly referred to as *Reforma 2004*.

The rationale behind the school reform was to improve integration of the non-Latvian population into society, as an equal position on the labour market will only be possible if the non-Latvian residents have a good command of Latvian, as explained by former Latvian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sandra Kalniete.[124] The Ministry of Education and Science describes the reform as a 'well considered step to promote integration of the society of Latvia'.[125] The Government also holds that several channels exist through which the issues of dialogue between governmental institutions and NGOs and parents organizations are being addressed. Most important of these are the School Councils mechanism, through which directors communicate with teachers, pupils and their parents, and the Minority Education Consultative Council under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, in which participants from minority schools, NGOs, parents' organizations and independent experts take part.[126]

In spite of the Government's good intentions and its efforts to include civil society in the school reform, it has brought down severe criticism over itself and it has probably also contributed to an ever deeper rift in Latvia. Anna Novitskaya of the Russian-language newspaper Telegraf says that the school reform had been better without Latvian pig-headedness, and Gatis Dilans, Latvian sociolinguist, describes the decision-making process behind the school reform as a process of mono-discourse, since the Russian-speakers were not participating in reality, just being talked to.[127] As an expert, Dilans also asserts that the reform was implemented on political grounds only, and that it lacks a sound scientific base.[128] He is supported by Aleksey Dimitrov, Zapchel, who means that the reform is not professionally implemented, and that the Ministry of Education has

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123 'Development of Education', *National Report of Latvia*, Ministry of Education and Science, August 15, 2004; Gil-Robles (2003).

124 Kalniete, Sandra: 'Ryska diktat främjar inte grannsämjan', *DN Debatt*, March 9, 2004.

125 'Development of Education', *National Report of Latvia*, Ministry of Education and Science, August 15, 2004.

126 Gil-Robles (2003).

127 Anna Novitskaya, March 2005; Gatis Dilans, May 2005.

128 Gatis Dilans, May 2005.

been busier to inform than to conduct a true dialogue with the non-titular groups in the Latvian society.[129] Based on a claim of lack of democratic dialogue, the radical pro-Russian Saeima parties took the school reform to the Constitutional Court, where it was treated in April 2005.

Quite predictably, Russian reactions to the school reform were not long in presenting themselves either. With just weeks before NATO and EU enlargements, Russia launched a propaganda offensive aiming at better conditions for the Baltic Russians, and especially for the Latvia-Russians. The Russian Duma expressed its concern for the Latvian school reform in an address to the Latvian Saeima in February 2004.[130] Contrary to the Latvian political elite, the Russian Duma thought that the school reform threatened the quality of the education of the Russian-speaking population. Instead of strengthening their position, the reform would decrease the Latvia-Russians' competitiveness on the labour market, giving birth to new social and economic differences and deepen the existing rifts in an already divided society. The same view was somewhat later disseminated by the Russian Ministry for Foreign Affairs to an international audience through an article written by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, which was published in leading newspapers around the world.[131]

Already in June 2002, Russia initiated the creation of a new delegation from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, PACE, to visit Latvia in order to study the school reform and the situation of the Latvia-Russians.[132] In fact, the initiator, Russian PACE delegate and Duma deputy Dimitriy Rogozin, had demanded a reopening of the monitoring procedure in respect to Latvia, as it obviously had failed to honour its commitments to the Council of Europe. A visit of PACE co-rapporteurs to Latvia took place in March 2004. Eventually, the co-rapporteurs found no reason to reopen the monitoring procedure, even if they would like to see 'more flexibility and commitment in real terms from the Latvian authorities in dealing with issues relating to its minorities'.[133]

An interesting remark in the co-rapporteurs' report was that when they asked Latvia-Russian pupils how they would feel about being taught 60:40 in English and Russian instead of Latvian and Russian, there were no objections. The

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129 Aleksey Dimitrov, March 2005.

130 'Obrashchenie gosudarstvennoy dumy k seymu Latviyskoy Respubliki v svyazi s situatsiey vokrug zakonoproekta o vnesenii izmeneniy v zakon Latviyskoy Respubliki "Ob obrazovanii"', Russian State Duma, Feb. 4, 2004, No 42-IV GD.

131 Ivanov, Igor: 'Ryssar i Lettland är rättslösa', *DN Debatt*, March 1, 2004.

132 Dagens Nyheter, March 27, 2004.

133 Parliamentary Assembly of Europe 'Progress report of the Bureau of the Assembly and of the Standing Committee', Doc. 10212, June 21, 2004, Appendix 1: 'Draft Opinion on the Reopening of Monitoring Procedure as Regards Latvia'.

PACE visitors perceived this as ‘a small indication of to what extent perception and attitude towards a language play a role in such matters’.[134]

4.5. Transgressing the minority and immigrant concepts

To sum up the discussion about the Latvia-Russians as a national minority, the survey above points at the unclear juridical status of the Latvia-Russians as the main reason of the dispute between the Latvian community on the one side and the Latvia-Russians and Russia on the other. Both sides continue to talk at cross-purposes, as they have not settled the fundamental question: are the Latvia-Russians to be defined as a national minority or as a true immigrant group? Unfortunately, the international community, chiefly represented by EU, OSCE, and the Council of Europe, and to a lesser part, NATO and the UN, has not been of much help. The minority-light definition used in order to activate the OSCE, has, if anything, added to the confusion. Nevertheless, ‘minority-light’ simultaneously shows the Baltic Russians’ unique situation in Europe, which points at a possible road forward to solve the Latvia-Russian issue. If the unique situation of the Baltic Russians as a hybrid group in between immigrants and minorities would be accepted by both sides, then pragmatic solutions to actual problems could be searched for without either side referring to existing legal frameworks for immigrants and minorities. Actual behaviour on both sides shows, though, that the parties are far from such a solution.

134 Ibid.

5. Russian compatriot policy

In the nineteenth century, it was frequently quipped that Britain *had* an empire, but that Russia *was* an empire.[135] In comparison, the Russian empire had indeed some distinct features that put it apart from its British, French, Portuguese and Spanish equivalents.[136] The latter had a maritime character with their colonies far abroad, while the Russian empire was continental with blurred territorial and cultural distinctions between the core-land and its colonies. For the most part, the Russians lived in the midst of their subject peoples. Even if they were more inclined to assimilate elements of the conquered peoples' culture with their own, they also expected their subjects to become culturally Russian. Other empires did not have this ambition. Unlike other European empires then, the quintessence of the Russian empire prevented it from developing into a nation.

Certainly, the Communist takeover in 1917 provided Russian imperialism with some new elements that were more propitious to non-Russians, but Russian cultural hegemony and political dominance was never thoroughly challenged by these measures.[137] The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 was therefore also the final collapse of the Russian empire. Ethnic Russians were psychologically unprepared for a development that left them with a nation-state, and present-day Russia's very vivid concern for the former Soviet republics – 'the near abroad' in Russian terminology – is partly an expression of this collective Russian 'imperial phantom pain'. It is within this setting that Russian policy and patterns of behaviour on behalf of the beached diasporas in the CIS countries and the Baltic states has taken form.

5.1. The formation of a state policy

The problem of the Russian diaspora first surfaced in late Soviet politics as a means for the Communists and unionists to keep the Soviet Union from falling apart.[138] Among others, the Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev expressed his concern about the future for Russians living outside the RSFSR.[139]

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135 Beissinger, (2005). See also Hosking, Geoffrey. 'The Freudian Frontier', *Times Literary Supplement*, March 10, 1995, p. 27.

136 For the sake of clarity, the line of reasoning is somewhat simplified. As the British held a chilly disdainful distance to their subjects, they still had a civilising mission. Talking about the French, colonial Algeria resembles the Russian empire in that it was an integrated part of *la République Française* and saw a large influx of ordinary Frenchmen under the colonial years.

137 Kolstø (1995) pp. 71-104.

138 Kolstø (1995) pp. 263-265.

139 Sakwa (2002) p. 390; Kolstø (1995) p. 263.

For a number of reasons, the democrats around Yeltsin on the other hand did not put the Russian diaspora high up on their agenda at this time. The main struggle for the Yeltsin supporters was their opposition against the Communist regime, and they had neither enough time nor the energy to simultaneously deal with other matters. Another important factor explaining the lack of interest in ethnic issues in the early democratic camp is that Yeltsin used those centrifugal forces tearing the Soviet Union apart in his own struggle against Gorbachev. Therefore, he had an incentive to ally himself with those national-democratic forces in the other republics whose primary aim was full independence from Moscow.

Supporting the republican national-democratic struggle against the Soviet centre, Yeltsin consequently refused to meet with or support leaders from pro-Union organizations of Russophones in the non-Russian republics. Still, even if a Russian diaspora policy was non-existent before the break-up of the Soviet Union, Yeltsin had the RSFSR to sign agreements on matters of mutual interest with Estonia and Latvia on 12 and 13 January 1991, including guarantees forbidding discrimination against ethnic minorities.[140]

The coup in August 1991, which became the final blow to the Union, did not instantaneously change the policies of the Russian leadership. Gradually though, a more pro-active agenda took form, navigating between a rising public interest in the diaspora within Russia proper, relations with the West, post-Soviet refugee and migration patterns affecting Russia and built-in strains between the centre and the autonomous units within the Russian Federation.[141] This early policy lacked consistency and reflected the problems of developing a post-imperial foreign policy.[142]

The policy that nevertheless took form successively was chiselled out of two different perceptions of the post-Soviet diasporas and in what way they should be dealt with. The democrats and radicals around Yeltsin were situated on one side. In the post-Soviet environment, they had had a hard task to create a sustainable moral ground for Russian interference in ethnic questions in other former Soviet republics, without falling into the ethnic trap of titular nations that makes up the bulk of Russian criticism against the other republics.[143] It seems that the early Russian leadership put their hope into the newly created CIS as a means to deal with the sensitive issue. For that reason, Russian leaders tried to

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140 Kolstø (1995) p. 115 However, as these agreements were almost immediately ratified by the parliaments in Estonia and Latvia, it took the Supreme Soviet about a year to sign the agreement with Estonia. The agreement with Latvia has never been ratified by the Russian parliament. Therefore, it might now be considered as obsolete.

141 Kolstø (1995) p. 266.

142 Sakwa (2002) p. 394.

143 Kolstø (1999) p. 623.

keep a reasonably passive approach of non-interference. Foreign Minister Andrey Kozyrev epitomized this neo-liberal model of international relations, being a firm believer in negotiations and adjudging international organizations a crucial role in world politics.[144]

On the other side, those groups that did not accept the break-up of the Soviet Union soon rallied forces. The Communist position on the nationalist question was that the Soviet Union was the multinational homeland of all peoples in its territory. Russian nationalists and imperialists considered the Soviet Union as an incarnation of the Russian Empire, in which the Russians ought to be the *primi inter pares*.[145] From disparate starting points, these anti-Yeltsin groups came to similar conclusions that the Russian community was something larger than the Russian Federation *per se*. According to this view, Russia did not only have moral obligations towards the Russian diasporas in the near abroad, but these groups also ought to be full-fledged members of the Russian state like all other Russians.[146]

Due to a lack of positive results in their dealings with ethnic questions and constantly pressed by the conservative opposition, the democratic camp was forced to take a gradually tougher stand. As late as 1995, Kozyrev argued that he rejected the use of force and even economic pressure as a means to protect Russians, Russian-speakers and other minorities in the near abroad. However, referring to the Helsinki Final Act of 1975, he also emphasized that the principle of non-interference into the interior affairs of other states did not apply to the protection of the rights of minorities.[147] Applied to the successor states of the Soviet Union, Russia had thereby given itself a *carte blanche* to interfere in all successor states of the Soviet Union on behalf of Russians and Russian-speakers in the near abroad.

An important document of the early Russian compatriot policy worth mentioning is 'The Main Directions of the State Policy of the Russian Federation towards Compatriots Living Abroad', adopted in August 1994.[148] The Directions are somewhat problematic in that they give no clear definition of the conception of a compatriot; neither do they give any satisfying explanation of why Russia ought to shoulder any responsibility for compatriots living outside the Russian Federation. In any case, taking on the task, the strategic line of Russia, according to this document, is to co-operate with the post-Soviet states in order

144 Kolstø (1995) p. 269.

145 Kolstø (1999) p. 622.

146 Ibid.

147 2 May 1995 OMRI Daily Digest, No. 85, Part 1 2 May 1995.

148 'Osnovnye napravleniia gosudarstvennoi politiki Rossiiskoi Federatsii v otnoshenii sootechestvennikov prozhivaiushchikh za rubezhom', *Postanovlenie Pravitelstva Rossiiskoi Federatsii no. 1064 31 August 1994*.

to support the voluntary integration of the compatriots into these societies. Still, Russia ought to be prepared for conflicts that might threaten their well-being, or their wish to return to Russia if they cannot adapt to new circumstances in their new home countries.

The Directions also list measures to be taken by Russian authorities in order to improve the lives of the compatriots in the near abroad. These actions concern access to information in Russian language, the use of diplomatic channels, economic co-operation (and pressure), social issues as well as cultural matters. All courses of action mentioned in this document are only supposed to be submitted to bilateral negotiations with the other post-Soviet states, or if found necessary – lifted up to the levels of the UN, the OSCE or the CBSS. There are nevertheless no mechanisms stipulated for any interaction between Russia and the compatriots themselves. As legal entities in their own right with possible agendas of their own, the compatriots are more or less absent in this document. It is more or less taken for granted that a compatriot is someone to care for or to talk to, but not someone to be talked with.

In May 1999 the already mentioned 'Federal Law on State Policy towards Compatriots Abroad', or here for short, the 'Compatriot Law', was adopted. Besides finally giving a clear-cut legal definition of the Russian view of the compatriot concept as cited above, the law also undertakes the task of explaining why Russia should be entitled to interfere in ethnic issues in the other former Soviet republics. The preamble to the law explains that the Russian Federation is presumed to be the legal successor, not only to imperial Russia, the Russian republic, RSFSR *but to the USSR as well*. What is more, the institute of a Russian citizenship should be understood as being correlated to the principle of *an unbroken Russian statehood*.[149] In this manner, it seems that the gap between democrats and Yeltsin radicals on one side and Communists and Russian patriots on the other has finally been bridged. The former can avoid the ethnic trap, and the latter get credits for the Russian Federation being a superior state *vis-à-vis* the 'near abroad-states', granting Russia a historical and moral right to interfere in their internal affairs.

The Compatriot Law further stipulates that an active relationship with the compatriots living abroad should be a cornerstone in Russian domestic and foreign politics. In their new home countries, compatriots are given the right to ask for Russian support in their claims for citizens rights, political, social, economic and cultural rights as well as for preservation of their native language, customs and traditions, cultural and religious heritage.[150] Russian actions are constrained to be in accordance with universally recognized principles and norms of interna-

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149 'O gosudarstvennoy politike Rossiyskoy Federatsii v otnoshenii sootechestvennikov za rubezhom', *Federalny zakon no 99-FZ, May 24, 1999.*

150 Op. cit. preamble.

tional law and international agreements signed by the Russian Federation, also taking into consideration the legislation of the compatriots' states of residence.[151] At best, these constraints must be said to be very vague, as the international norms and principles referred to, are not specified any further, which is often the case in Russian legislation. Nor does the Compatriot Law give any references to specific international agreements. One might suggest then that the Russian Federation reserves itself the right to interpret these norms and values at its own discretion. Its interpretation of the Framework Convention discussed above is therefore an important case study in this context. For that reason, the attention paid to the legislation of the compatriots' states of residence probably turns out to be an insignificant constraint for the Russian authorities. Either the legislation of these countries is already in accordance with Russian reading of international legislation, or it should be changed to be in tune with the Russian interpretation. Otherwise, discrimination of compatriots in the near abroad and non-observance of international principles and norms constitute a sufficient cause for reassessing Russian relations with the culprit state in question, according to the Compatriot Law.[152]

Besides Russian interest in basic human rights for its compatriots abroad, the law also stipulates Russian support in other matters. Access to information through mass media in one's mother tongue remains an important issue. All compatriots should furthermore be guaranteed the possibility to study in their mother tongue on all educational levels, and to preserve their culture. In the economic sphere, the Russian Federation should stimulate co-operation between Russian companies and companies in other countries owned by compatriots or companies, where the bulk of the employees are compatriots.

To conclude, from being a marginalised occurrence in Russian interior politics, compatriot policy has thus gradually been upgraded and incorporated with official Russian foreign policy. Moreover, the wordings in the Compatriot Law show that it is a foreign policy instrument, which Russia will not hesitate to use it in its relations with the Baltic states and the CIS countries. The Russian view on compatriots as more or less helpless victims has also changed and become more instrumental over time. As much as Russia still offers its protection and support to the compatriots, the inclusion of an economic sphere in the Compatriot Law shows that Russia hopes for some profitable economic co-operation in return.

5.2. The role of the president

The presidency of Putin has been characterized not only by a restoration of presidential power into what it was like during earlier periods, but also by a

151 Ibid.

152 Op. cit. paragraph 14, clauses 4 and 5.

stringent centralization. Putin has systematically dismantled the system of checks and balances that was established during Yeltsin's rule, basing his power on bureaucratic as well as charismatic elements.[153] In his own way then, Putin seems to have confirmed the main points of a more general critique against any presidential system in that Russian politics has become over-dependent on the president's personality, the party system has been undermined and the present system places limits on the formulation of clear policy choices and alternative governments.[154]

Like so many other questions in Russian politics, the compatriot policy has also been subordinated to the presidential office. In the ninth convention of the State Council in January 2003, Foreign Minister Ivanov asked for the creation of a unified all-state system capable of taking on all aspects of the defence of the compatriots' rights, support of the Russian language, culture and education.[155] In the first version of the Compatriot law, the federal subjects were given much more room to manoeuvre, creating their own policies and programmes aimed at compatriots abroad. The law has since been revised twice, and in the last version of December 2004, the regions were deprived of these privileges. These changes might probably be interpreted as a part of the bigger struggle for power over the regions between the president and the federal subjects; nevertheless, the result has been a federalisation of the compatriot policy.

Since coming to power, Putin has repeatedly stated that the protection of compatriots abroad is an important and integrated part of Russian foreign policy. In his yearly address to the Federal Assembly in 2001, Putin reminded the senators in the Federation Council and the deputies of the State Duma about the issue of protecting 'the rights and interests of Russian citizens, our compatriots abroad'.[156] In the same speech, he also stressed the duty of all state organs to realize the importance and sensitivity of the international stage, calling for a high degree of professionalism. In his address to the Federal Assembly in 2004, Putin said that Russian society expects Russian foreign policy to produce more results with a substance with regard to personal safety, better business opportunities for Russian firms and protection of rights for compatriots abroad.[157]

Putin's personal actions as president have mostly been limited to the top-level, like meetings and discussions with other heads of state and official delegations. Still, he has not refrained from symbolic actions adapted to mass media

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153 Sakwa (2002) p. 460.

154 Juan Linz, 'The Perils of Presidentialism', *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (winter 1990), pp. 72–84, as referred to in Sakwa (2002) p. 99.

155 Ninth Convention of the State Council (Gossovet), January 22, 2003, *www.kremlin.ru-/text/appears2/2003/01/22/42020.shtml*.

156 Poslanie prezidenta RF Federalnomu Sobraniyu ot 04.04.2001.

157 Poslanie prezidenta RF Federalnomu Sobraniyu ot 26.05.2004.

and directed towards a home public as well as to different diaspora groups abroad. With respect to Latvia, Putin has in different ways given his personal moral support to WW II veteran Vasiliy Kononov, prosecuted for war crimes allegedly committed under his command, when Soviet troops returned to Latvia at the end of the war. A letter from Latvia-Russian schoolboy Yaroslav Karpelyak asking for help to get his education in Russian led to a personal answer from the president as well as an invitation to Karpelyak's whole class to visit the president in Kremlin.[158]

5.3. The role of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Most of the practical work with the compatriots abroad has been entrusted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Still, it seems not to have been without difficulties to win the Ministry's support for a Russian compatriot policy. In a meeting with senior officials within the ministry in 2001, Putin criticized the staff at Russian embassies and consulates for not showing the issue enough interest: 'If the work with compatriots abroad was seen as burdensome, it would be better to leave one's place to somebody else.'[159] In a speech to all Russian ambassadors abroad in July 2002, Putin still found reason to complain about the bureaucratic indifference of many embassies and consulates towards the problems of the compatriots. He also stressed that it was a 'big mistake' to see this matter as a peripheral problem, when it is in fact a central part of Russian foreign policy.[160] Obviously, the situation has changed since then. In his annual meeting with the ambassadors in July 2004, Putin again emphasized the importance of the compatriot policy, but the critique against the ambassadors was gone.[161] Somewhat later in that year though, other sources pointed out that the Ministry's officials still had not reached a higher standard in their dealings with compatriot issues.[162]

In February 2002, the Ministry's work with international scientific and cultural contacts was reorganized and the Centre for Scientific and Cultural Cooperation, *Roszarubezhtsentr*, was established.[163] It seems that Roszarubezhtsentr has some operative responsibility for compatriot issues.

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158 Homepage of the Presidential Administration, *www.kremlin.ru/text/news/2003/07/491-25.shtml.*

159 RG, December 23, 2004.

160 Homepage of the Presidential Administration of the Russian Federation *www.president.kremlin.ru/appears/2002/07/12/1720_type63378_29145.shtml.*

161 Homepage of the Presidential Administration, *www.president.kremlin.ru/appears/2004/07/12/0000_type63374type63377type63378_74399.shtml.*

162 RG, December 23, 2004.

163 Ukaz Prezidenta, No 146, February 5, 2002.

In a *ukaz* from April 2002, the Ministry was given new functions concerning the compatriots abroad.[164] It now participates in the development of new guidelines for Russian compatriot policy and takes measures for their realisation. It has also been given some right to initiate new legislation in order to improve Russian legislation concerning compatriots abroad. The Ministry should also co-ordinate the work with compatriots abroad for all federal organs as well as the organs of the federal subjects. This work is to a greater part carried out through the Governmental Commission on Compatriots Abroad. The commission is subjected to the Government, and according to its modified tasks, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs should also provide for its activities. The commission consists of about 25 members, and it is led by the minister of foreign affairs. The minister is seconded by two vice chairmen, senior officials from the ministry, of which one is Eleonora Mitrofanova, the present director of Roszarubezhtsentr. Other members represent, for instance, the Presidential Administration, other ministries, the Customs, the FSB, the Presidential Administration of Tatarstan, relevant committees of the Federal Assembly, the City of Moscow and the City of St. Petersburg.

In November 2002, the Government of the Russian Federation adopted the 'Principal Directives for Russian Support towards Compatriots Living Abroad for the period 2002-2005' with the Governmental Commission on Compatriots abroad as implementing organ.[165] For the actual period, the main task was to set up effective mechanisms for co-operation with the diaspora abroad. The main purpose was to defend the compatriots' rights and freedoms, to provide for their legal rights and to help them preserve their ethno-cultural origin, as well as to activate their role in Russia's co-operation with foreign states. In contrast to earlier legislative acts, it seems, then, that the compatriots finally have been accepted as legal entities in their own right instead of just being talked to and exposed to Russian compatriot legislation.

The work with the Principal Directives should be based on scientific recommendations and allowed for the full use of diplomatic, economic, cultural, and humanitarian and information tools available to the Russian state in order to provide for Russian national interests. The fulfilment of these goals would, according to the document, improve the international stability and allow Russia to surround its border with a trustworthy belt of friendly states as well. In a way, this formulation curiously reminds of earlier epochs in Russian history, when national security was supposedly improved by constantly putting more land between a potential dangerous abroad and a Russian core-land.

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164 Ukaz Prezidenta, No 417, April 27, 2002. It was later replaced by Ukaz Prezidenta, No 865 from July 11, 2004. In one form or another, the functions mentioned in ukaz no 417 were basically transferred to ukaz no. 865.

165 Rasporyazhenie Pravitelstva RF ot 28.11.2002 No 1663-p.

The compatriot policy as stated in the Directives is financed through the federal budget, even if the Commission is encouraged to find external financing as well. According to official figures from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 252 million roubles were spent on work with compatriots in 2004.[166] For 2005, the appropriation has been augmented to 302.4 million roubles.

5.4. The role of the Russian Duma

The presidential office, as well as the harsh realities of international politics, has constrained the Russian Duma from any bolder policy initiatives or activities, but it is not as if it had not tried. In spring 1998, the strained relations between Russia and Latvia deteriorated into a serious crisis, which in short had strategic, political and ideological reasons.[167] The igniting spark was an unsanctioned demonstration by mostly Russian-speaking pensioners against high heating tariffs in front of the Riga City Council building on 3 March that was forcibly broken up by the police. In Russian media, the whole event was presented as evidence of a discriminatory attitude on behalf of the Latvian government towards ethnic Russians. Eight days later, two bills were presented to the Duma by five Duma deputies.[168] The first one called for a ban on all economic transactions with Latvian state organs, private firms, organizations and citizens. Moreover, all agreements between Russian and Latvian actors were to be deemed as expired and Latvian suits in Russian courts to be left without hearing.[169] The second one was to provide for a legal ground for humanitarian aid to compatriots living in Latvia.[170]

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166 www.mid.ru *'O zasedanii Pravitelstvennoy komissii po delam sootechestvennikov za rubezhom'* Soobschenie dlya pechati 311-15-02-2005, February 15, 2005.

167 See, for instance, Bleiere & Stranga (2000) pp. 216–259 for a Latvian account of the crisis.

168 The five Duma deputies were all members of the 'State Duma Committee on issues concerning CIS and relations with compatriots' and represented as many factions and parties in the Duma: Yu. P Kuznetsov (LDPR), V. N. Skvortsov (Nash Dom Rossiya), G. I. Tikhonov (Narodovlastie), A. G. Chekhoiev (Kommunisticheskaya Partia RF) and G. I. Churkin (Agrarnaya Partia) Pasport Proiekta Federalnogo Zakona N 98810745-2.

169 'O merakh Rossiyskoy Federatsii po predotvrashcheniyu narusheniya osnovnykh prav i svobod grazhdan Rossiyskoy Federatsii i rossiyskikh sootechestvennikov v Latviyskoy Respublike' *Federalny zakon, proekt N 98810745-2 ko ftoromu chteniyu.*

170 'O merakh po okazaniyu gumanitarnoy pomoshchi grazhdanam Rossiyskoy Federatsii i rossiyskim sootechestvennikam, postoyanno prozhivayushchim v Latvii, v svyazi s massovym narusheniem prav cheloveka i prav russkogo naroda v Latviyskoy Respublike' *Federalny zakon, proekt N 98800745-2 ko ftoromu chteniyu.*

The law on sanctions against Latvia was adopted by the Duma in its first reading in May 1999.[171] Before the first reading, it had gotten only marginal and technical remarks from the State Duma Committee on Industry, Construction, Transport and Energetic and the Legal Department of the Duma Apparatus.[172] The State Duma Committee on Foreign Relations welcomed the idea of diplomatic, politic and economic sanctions against Latvia in principle, but found it premature to legislate upon the issue, as it would circumscribe Russia's freedom of action *vis-à-vis* Latvia.[173]

Between the first and second readings of the law, the Legal Department of the Duma Apparatus presented more serious remarks, as it stated that the bill contradicted Russian obligations to international law.[174] Critique that was even weightier was delivered by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs after the second adoption.[175] The Ministry observed that earlier remarks from itself as well as the Presidential Administration had not been observed by the Duma. The bill aimed at a total severance of Russian relations with Latvia, and therefore it would have a negative impact on the Russian-speaking population in Latvia as well. For instance, 47 per cent of the employees at the Latvian railways consisted of compatriots according to the Ministry, and if railway transports between Russia and Latvia would cease, the following cut-downs would probably strike the Latvia-Russian community hard. In the same way, Russian citizens' human rights to conclude economic agreements and transactions freely would be violated, which is against the Russian Constitution and Civil Code. Furthermore, the bill contradicts Russian obligations against Latvia in already concluded bilateral agreements and international law. The Russian economy would suffer too, as Russian

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171 The way of the bill can be followed in 'Pasport Proiekta Federalnogo Zakona N 98810745-2'. In Russia, a bill is adopted in three readings. *In the first reading* the concept of the law as well as its topicality and practical significance are considered. *In the second reading*, amendments and proposals made by the parliamentarians after the first reading are considered. *In the third reading*, the bill is scrutinized in its entirety. A federal law is deemed to have passed if it is approved by more than half of the deputies (226 deputies). For adopting a so-called constitutional law or any amendment to the constitution, a majority of two thirds of the Duma (300 deputies) is needed. After passing, the bill is sent to the Federation Council for approval. If accepted by the Federation Council, the bill becomes law when signed by the president (who also has the power to veto the bill).

172 Pismo Komiteta po promyshlennosti, stroitelstvu, transportu i energetike, N3.11 – 15/474; Zaklyuchenie Pravovogo upravleniya Apparata GD FS RF *N* 2.2 – 15/2957; 16.03.1999.

173 Pismo Komiteta po mezhdunarodnym delam, N 3.16 – 284.

174 Zaklyuchenie Pravovogo upravleniya Apparata GD FS RF N 2.2 – 15/2957; 04.10.1999. The bill was adopted in its second reading November 16, 1999.

175 Pismo Ministerstva inostrannykh del Rossiiskoi Federatsii, N 7032/GS.

ports would not be able to compensate in full for the transport capacity lost if Latvian ports were to be boycotted. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs also noted Russia's dependency on Latvian pharmaceutical products and the negative impact that possible Latvian retaliations might have on Russian firms.

Unlike its predecessor, the committee for CIS and compatriots' issues of the third Duma (2000 – 2003) began to realize the complexity of the situation.[176] If the suggested law on sanctions against Latvia ever was to be implemented, the actual chairman of the committee at that time, Boris Pastukhov, held it as probable that Russia might expect not only Latvian retaliations, but also retributions from certain Western states. Moreover, the committee feared that 'the answers to Russia's activities would be mixed up with the strengthening of the thesis whipped up by Russia's adversaries about "violations of human rights" in the Chechen Republic'. Nevertheless, the members of the committee were united in their view on the necessity of taking measures against Latvia and other states, where human rights of Russian compatriots were threatened[177].

In April 2000, the Duma declined to adopt the bill in its third reading and sent it back for a new second reading where it is still pending; a fate it shares with the other bill on humanitarian aid to compatriots living in Latvia. Both bills were actualized again in spring 2004, as the actual amendments to the Latvian education law described above caused a new fall-out between Russia and Latvia. Questioned in the Duma on the status of the two bills, the present chairman, Mr Andrey Kokoshin, said that both bills needed redrafting. He claimed that his committee was working on this together with Latvian colleagues, i.e. compatriots in Latvia. The difficulties according to Kokoshin lay in creating a strong law with real penalizations against the Latvian leadership and parliament without bringing any harm upon the Russian-speaking population.[178]

The Russian Duma has also tried other ways to support the compatriots in Latvia. One way has been to issue official declarations and appeals about Latvian discrimination of Russians and Russian-speakers, the Latvian citizenship law, constraints in rights to exercise certain professions and, recently, the amended Latvian education law gaining legal force on February 27, 2004. According to one deputy, Konstantin Zatulin, more than 30 declarations had been issued during the existence of the Duma until spring 2004. [179] In addition, the Duma has invited delegations of Latvia-Russians to Russia as a gesture of moral support. For instance, in November 2003 a delegation from the Headquarters for the Defence of Russian Schools in Latvia, in Russian popularly referred to as

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176 Pismo Komiteta po delam SNG I svyazam s sootechestvennikami, N 3.17-195.

177 Ibid.

178 Parlamentskaya gazeta No 23(1395) 07.02.2004.

179 Moskovskaya sreda No 8(66), 3-9 March 2004, p. 3.

the *Shtab*, was invited in order to give its view of the actual situation in Latvia.[180]

The examples mentioned above indicate the importance that the Duma accords to the Latvia-Russian issue. At the same time, there is probably a growing frustration, since all its efforts to influence Latvian policies affecting the Latvia-Russians so far seem to have been of no avail, as it has just produced a lot of paperwork without any practical results. For instance, as the Latvian Education Law obviously could not be put off the track by Russian efforts, and as military actions or economic sanctions were out of question, Duma Deputy Mr Aleksey Mitrofanov, LDPR, suggested in August 2004 that Russia at least should begin a boycott against Latvia concerning cultural contacts and tourism.[181]

5.5. The role of Russian free-lancers

In a Latvian political context, the term 'the hand of Moscow' has become synonymous with any possible Russian interference in Latvian interior affairs. The term is therefore frequently used in an ill-defined manner, which gives rise to unnecessary confusion in the debate. For that reason, it is essential to look into the meaning of 'the hand of Moscow', according to Andrejs Pantelejevs, national security adviser to Prime Minister Indulis Emsis (March 9, 2004 – December 2, 2004).[182] Certainly, not all Russian activities in Latvia emanate from Kremlin or the federal structures mentioned above. As regards the compatriot issue, it is supported, or contested, by other political structures too. These 'free-lancers in Russian compatriot and ethnic policy making' are often more confrontational and undiplomatic in their dealings with compatriot issues than Russian state representatives are. On many occasions, their aims and objectives are also more unpredictable.

The most notable and powerful actor within this group is the City of Moscow and its mayor, Yuri Luzhkov. The city has a systematic approach to the compatriot issue, manifested through its own written policies and programmes, leaving little ground for any *ad hoc* solutions.

In spring 2005, the Government of Moscow adopted a new programme for its work with the compatriots for the period 2006–2008. Like previous documents, prioritized aims and objectives in the new programme consisted of legal support and protection to the compatriots, support to diaspora NGOs, Russian language, education and culture, medical help, and economic cooperation.[183]

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180 Parlamentskaya gazeta No 48(1420), 17.03.2004.

181 Parlamentskaya gazeta No 142(1514) 03.08.2004.

182 'Panteleyev: "OKROL – eto novy Interfront"' *Vesti Segodnya*, September 14, 2004. Pantelejevs is also a former leader for the power-party of the 1990s, *Latvijas Cels*.

183 'Pravitelstvo Moskvy prodolzhit podderzhivat sootechestvennikov za rubezhom', *www.regnum.ru*, February 24, 2005.

Yet some critics maintain that the Moscow city compatriot programme is one of the most corrupted compatriot programmes in Moscow.[184]

In Latvia, the city of Moscow seems to have made some inroads into the Russian schools. The programme 'Moscow Certificate' offers students who want a complete or parts of a Russian school education, distance-learning courses at a secondary school in Moscow. The city also offers scholarships to talented students. In 2004, there were 179 holders of the 'Scholarship of the Mayor of Moscow' in Latvia alone. The coordinating organization in Latvia is the NGO 'Nelliya', led by Vladimir Rybakov.[185] Nelliya mostly deals with Russian culture and education, but it is also associated with ROL, another NGO that is given a more thorough presentation in the chapter of Latvia-Russian actors.

In May 2004, a large delegation from Moscow headed by Luzhkov was invited to Latvia by Riga mayor Gundars Bojars in order to participate in the 'Moscow Days' festivities. Meetings were also held with Vice Prime Minister Ainars Slesers. The main event during the visit was the inauguration of 'the Moscow House' in Riga, a combined representation office for the city of Moscow and a Russian cultural centre. As it was aimed to facilitate the consolidation of the Latvia-Russian community, it was in Luzhkov's words 'a gift to the residents of Riga and a problem for the authorities'.[186] During his visit to Latvia, the Moscow mayor also made further critical remarks to the Latvian government concerning Latvian citizenship laws and the school language reform. He also promised the Latvian authorities that he would express his criticism at the European Union and the European Parliament as well.[187] The Saeima found reason to react disapprovingly to these remarks.[188]

During this visit, Luzhkov was seconded by Duma deputies Vladimir Vasiliev and Konstantin Zatulin, members of the pro-Putin political party 'Yedinaya Rossiya', of which Luzhkov himself is a member. Their main interest dur-

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184 'Aleksandr Lebedev: "Programmy poderzhki sootechestvennikov – odin iz samykh korruptsionnykh v Moskve"', *www.regnum.ru*, July 14, 2005.

185 'Stipendiatov stanovitsya bolshe', *www.moskvaimir.mos.ru*, International department of the Government of Moscow, October 7, 2004.

186 'Latvia dolzhna druzhit s Rossiey, esli khochet stat "transportnym uzlom" Evropy', International department of the Government of Moscow, June 1, 2004, *www.moskvaimir.mos.ru*.

187 'Luzhkov nazval netsivilizovannym Zakon ob obrazovanii Latvii, a situatsiyu s negrazhdanami respubliki – pozorom Evrosoyuza', *www.regnum.ru*, May 29, 2004.

188 'Seim Latvii: Luzhkov v Latvii sebya vel nedopustimo dlya inostrannogo gostya', *www.regnum.ru*, June 1, 2004.

ing the visit seems to have been dedicated to Latvian non-citizens and poverty-stricken compatriots.[189]

Besides the City of Moscow, there is a heterogeneous group of Russian politicians and possibly some technocrats of national significance who take an active interest in Latvian integration politics. In their capacity as elected representatives of the Russian people or as appointed officials for the Russian state, they often have a legitimate mandate for getting involved in Russian foreign policy. In some cases, however, certain individuals seem to be transgressing the instructions or duties that reasonably could be associated with such an authorization. One plausible reason for this kind of behaviour could be their personal convictions or beliefs. Another reason, which might be intertwined with the first as well, is the incentive to boost one's personal career within Russia proper by playing the nationalist card in the near abroad. Credibility among the growing scores of Russian patriots and nationalists at home might be strengthened when dealing with interstate and international issues and relations, if one could stand out as a stouter defender of Russian core values and Russianness than any other Russian politician does.

Latvia seems to be an especially targeted country for these free-lancers, even if far worse ethnic problems exist elsewhere in the post-Soviet space. Geopolitical assumptions and considerations may have played a certain role, but some credible alternative or complementary explanations do exist. Former integration minister Nils Muiznieks holds that in their time, 'the Baltic states were very important symbolically for the [Soviet] intelligentsia of Moscow and St. Petersburg, which often vacationed in Jurmala'. The post-Soviet development has caused a mutual alienation that the Russian intelligentsia cannot forgive the Baltic peoples, as it has led to the effect that it 'no longer feels quite so European'.[190] Another explanation is given by Tatiana Poloskova, professor at the Diplomatic Academy at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and director of the think-tank *Rossiyane*. She maintains that the Baltic states are popular among Russian researchers and defenders of compatriots, as they are more accessible and offer a higher degree of personal security for travellers compared to visits to the Central Asian republics.[191] Concisely, the Baltic states have been targeted out in some kind of natural selection process.

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189 'Teper u nas est dom', International department at the Government of Moscow, May 31, 2004, *www.moskvaimir.mos.ru* The Moscow House replaced the Railworkers' Cultural Palace in Riga.

190 'Integration: Not a disaster, but the beginning of the road', *www.policy.lv*, October 14, 2003. Nils Muiznieks in an interview with Girts Samgriezis from Radio Free Europe.

191 'Tatiana Poloskova: "Ne my 'bankuiem', 'bankuiut' nas!"', *www.russkie.lv*, March 1, 2005.

Some figures concerning the popularity of Russian politicians among the compatriots abroad might illustrate what impact this selection process has had on Russian-speakers in Latvia. According to a Russian multidisciplinary study about the compatriots carried out in spring 2004 by a group of leading Russian experts under the direction of Professor Poloskova on the demand of the Government Commission on Compatriots Abroad and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, certain Russian politicians were remarkably more popular in Latvia than in the other post-Soviet states. On an average, Putin's rating was 44 per cent among the compatriots, compared to 34.3 per cent in Latvia. Luzhkov scored an average 3.2 per cent, but in Latvia, he got 18.2 per cent. Dimitriy Rogozin, Duma deputy for the social-patriotic political party *Rodina*, did not reach 1 per cent among the respondents in any single state, with Latvia as an important exception.[192] Here his approval rating was 12.5 per cent.[193]

Rogozin is also well-known by the Latvian elite, as he is probably the best example of a Russian politician, mixing official commissions with private incentives and convictions. According to his official biography, Rogozin's political career began in the early 1990s, when he founded and managed the national-patriotic movement 'Congress of Russian Communities (KRO), a block claiming to represent the interests of ethnic Russians in former Soviet republics.[194] In March 1997, he won a by-election for a single-mandate Duma seat in Voronezh Oblast, a seat that he has kept in subsequent elections. Using the Duma as a new platform, he has continued to speak out and write articles about the plight of ethnic Russians in Chechnya and in various former Soviet republics.[195] Within the Duma, Rogozin has been a vice-chairman of the Committee for minority issues and he still holds a seat on the Foreign Affairs Committee, where he served as chairman during the third term of the Duma (2000 – 2003). As a Duma deputy, he has also served as a chairman of the Russian delegation to the Assembly of the Council of Europe, PACE.[196] In this last-mentioned role, he has produced a motion calling for a reopening of monitoring procedures in respect to Latvia

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192 The epithet 'social-patriotic' is borrowed from the homepage of Rodina, *www.rodina.ru*.

193 'Tatiana Poloskova: "Latviyskie eksperty perevrali rezultaty monitoringa i moi slova"', *www.regnum.ru*, August 31, 2004. See also the study: Rossiyskaya diaspora v stranakh SNG i Baltii: sostoyanie i perspektivy, Moscow, 2004; RG December 23, 2004; *Roszarubezhtsentr*.

194 Official biography at Rodina homepage, *www.rodina.ru*, section leaders, Dimitriy Olegovich Rogozin; homepage visited October 31, 2005.

195 Belin, Laura: 'Dimitriy Rogozin: Playing the Single-Mandate Card', *www.rferl.org/-specials/russianelection*, homepage visited October 31, 2005.

196 Official biography, op. cit.

in June 2002, and a written declaration condemning the Latvian school reform in February 2004.[197]

Besides these official engagements, Rogozin has attracted the attention of Latvian authorities and security organs for his close co-operation with Latvia-Russian radical forces. Commenting on causes behind the protests against the Latvian school reform in 2004, Andrejs Pantelejevs said that he thought that Rogozin's party Rodina 'was interested in a course of events in accordance with the radical scenario'.[198] Many ethnic Latvians found it especially obnoxious that one of the local organizers behind the protests in 2004, Aleksandr Kazakov, was elevated to a status as personal adviser to Rogozin on Latvian affairs, as this created an impression of Kazakov being remote-controlled from Moscow. Kazakov was later expelled to Russia, where he as late as autumn 2005 was working for Rodina on youth questions. Based on his experiences from Latvia, Kazakov also co-operates with Rogozin in order to unite the protest movement in Latvia with a similar protest movement in the Crimea, which has expressed a wish for such collaboration. Kazakov's visions are even bolder, as he anticipates co-operation with other Russian-speaking diasporas as well.[199] However, Kazakov's allies in Latvia have given voice to some hesitation over an internationalization of their movement.[200]

In 2004, Rogozin was denied entry visa to Latvia twice, barring him from participating in a congress held by the school reform protesters and from visiting the constitutional assembly of a new Latvia-Russian NGO, OKROL, whose main architect was Kazakov. According to unofficial information cited by the Russian news agency RIA Novosti, Rogozin's name has since then been transferred to Latvia's black list over unwanted persons on its territory.[201]

A different kind of freelancer is the Russian former business oligarch Boris Berezovsky, currently living in exile in Great Britain. Berezovsky also takes a critical stand to Latvian integration policies. Still, Berezovsky says that the problem of Russian-speakers in the post-Soviet space is primarily a problem of

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197 PACE homepage, *assembly.coe.int/default.asp*, section Documents, Working Documents Quick Search; homepage visited October 31, 2005. Since Latvia joined the Council of Europe on February 10, 1995, at least 12 working documents in the form of written questions and declarations and motions for a resolution, recommendation or order have been issued with a critical address to Latvian authorities within the PACE structure. Of these, 10 have been initiated by Russian delegates.

198 Panteleyev: "OKROL – eto novy Interfront"', *Vesti Segodnya*, September 15, 2004.

199 'Pod egidoy partii "Rodina" sozdaetsya struktura, koordiniruyushchaya bortsov za russkie shkoly za predelami Rossii', *www.regnum.ru*, August 29, 2005.

200 Gnedovskaya, Siuzanna: 'Rogozin obedinyayet shtaby, Buzayev ne toropitsya soglashatsya', *Telegraf*, September 5, 2005.

201 'Latvia vnesla Berezovskogo v "cherny spisok"', *RIA Novosti*, October 26, 2005.

Russia having the wrong attitude to the issue. What Russia has to do, and probably Latvia too, is to disconnect the concept of a political nation from the concept of a blood nation, i.e. a nation formed out of common ethnic origin. On the contrary, though, Russian policies in Latvia at present aim at separating the Russian-speaking population, presenting it as a fifth column, when the question of nationality should be a process of self-identification. According to Berezovsky, in contrast to Russian policies, the aim of his social activities in Latvia is to help creating a political nation, understood as a nation made up of the citizens of the country. Russian-speakers should become Latvian citizens and be able to speak in Latvian.[202]

In 2001, a local branch of the Berezovsky-controlled International Foundation for Civil Liberties was opened in Latvia. The General Director of the foundation, Aleksandr Goldfarb, claims that the activities of the foundation in Latvia are concentrated on language and educational issues.[203] The branch manager Natalia Troitskaya states that from 2001 until June 2005, the foundation had spent 250 000 US dollars, or about 50 000 dollars a year, with an exception for 2003, when no money at all were spent in Latvia. For the year 2005, the foundation planned to increase its spending to 100 000 US dollars. According to investigations carried out in 2005 by the Latvian language newspaper Neatkariga, two large beneficiaries to the Civil Liberties Foundation in Latvia has been the 'Latvian Society for Russian Culture', LORK, and the 'Civil Initiative XXI'.[204] Russian-language newspaper Vesti Segodnya mentioned a third organisation in an article from 2002 as beneficiary, namely the 'Russo-Latvian association for cooperation', and an additional organisation as a potential future beneficiary, Western Russian or *Russkaya Zapada*.[205]

In 2005, Boris Berezovsky visited Latvia twice, in February and in September. The second time he travelled together with Neil Bush, brother of the American president. As these were his first visits to Latvia in twelve years, they attracted much attention, not least due to the international warrant against him issued by Russia. Latvian authorities nevertheless refused to extradite him to Russia on both occasions. Berezovsky's second visit was less well received by the Latvian authorities. Within days, Prime Minister Kalvitis suggested that it was time to ban Berezovsky from future travel to Latvia, and he was supported

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202 Elksne, Polina: 'Zachem Berezovsky priezzhal v Latviyu?', *Telegraf*, February 28, 2005.

203 Ibid.

204 Ibid. In Russian: Latviyskoe obshchestvo russkoy kultury, and Grazhdanskaya Initsiativa XXI.

205 Nikolay Kabanov: 'Berezovsky zakopaet v LR $100 000', *Vesti Segodnya*, June 4, 2002. In Russian: Rossiysko-latviyskaya assotsiatsiya sotrudnichestva and Russkikh Zapada.

by President Vike-Freiberga.[206] On the recommendations of the National Security Council, Berezovsky's name was thus introduced in the black list in October 2005.[207] The move has caused much speculation in Latvia about the true reasons behind the blacklisting, and Berezovsky himself has publicly protested the move.[208]

As the examples of Rogozin and Berezovsky show, the barring of visas and blacklisting of unwanted freelancers is a method used by the Latvian security establishment in order to neutralize any potential threat that certain individuals might constitute against Latvian national security. As long as these freelancers do not enjoy official backing by the Russian state for their activities in Latvia, this strategy is probably quite effective, and without too much political risk for the Latvian state. Thus, as offending as their activities and positions might be to Latvia, the freelancers probably represent a minor problem for Latvian security organs, their true capacity in any real showdown with Latvian authorities being quite limited. Deprived of the possibility to visit Latvia on legal grounds, their influence on Latvia-Russian radical and extremist groups will simply fade away.

The disparity between Russian official policies and statements and those of the freelancers is also recognized as a problem among certain Russian authorities. Eleonora Mitrofanova, director of Roszarubezhtsentr, claims that the anti-Latvian rhetoric emanating from Russian radicals, which is for everyone to see in Russian media, does not help the Russian-speakers in Latvia. 'Most probably it even makes their situation worse.'[209]

Even if this insight is disregarded, it is possible that the free-lancers' relations with Russian authorities have grown more precarious lately also for other reasons. Nowadays there are signs that Russia has softened its confrontational style in its relations with Latvia. Instead of confrontation, it looks like that Russia now tries to buy Latvia over to its side by emphasising the economic relationship between the two states, partly at the expense of the compatriot policy. The surest indication for this new turn of Russian politics would be the new Russian ambassador to Latvia, Viktor Kaliuzhin, who, unlike his predecessors, is no career diplomat. On the contrary, he has his origin from within Russian oil industry.[210] Since taking up his duties, Kaliuzhin has very actively promoted

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206 Eglitis, Aron: 'Kalvitis to Berezovsky: don't bother coming back', *The Baltic Times*, October 5, 2005.

207 'Latvia vnesla Berezovskogo v "cherny spisok"', *RIA Novosti*, October 26, 2005.

208 Boris Berezovsky: 'Otkrytyy sudebny protsess posluzhit ukrepleniyu demokratii v Latvii', *The Telegraf*, October 26, 2005.

209 Abik Elkin: 'Eleonora Mitrofanova:"Nenavist k sosedu – eto ochen opasno"', *Vesti Segodnya*, August 22, 2005.

210 'Panteleyev: "OKROL – eto novy Interfront"', *Vesti Segodnya*, September 15, 2004.

economic co-operation between Russian and Latvian firms, even if the criticism against Latvian integration policies to some extent remains (see section 2.4).[211] If this interpretation of the actual events is correct, the Russian Federation could certainly do without any remaining free-lancers trying to promote their own position and status within Russia proper at the expense of official politics *vis-à-vis* Latvia.

5.6. Russian objectives in Latvia as benchmark for its compatriot policy

Beyond the conjunctures of daily politics and reactions on actual events, Russian relations with Latvia are subordinated to the all-embracing objectives of its security policies, which have been laid down in several general doctrines and concepts. In this section, the level of fulfilment of these objectives has been used as a benchmark in the evaluation of the effectiveness of Russian compatriot policy in Latvia. The components deemed relevant for this benchmark evaluation concerns above all Russia's major power ambitions and its drafted needs for military, economic and domestic security.

The ambition to appear as a major power is shown, for instance, in the National Security Concept, the Foreign Policy Concept and the Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation.[212] The National Security Concept states among other things that it is a national interest of Russia 'to strengthen its role as a major power – as one of the most influentional points of a multipolar world'. An important part of this concept is a further significant influence on the former Soviet republic, chiefly on the CIS states. It is nevertheless likely that Russia's ambitions in the Baltic region at least amount to not losing any further influence. The still valid State Nationality Policy Concept from 1996 states that one of the paramount objectives of Russian nationality policy in foreign policy is 'to contribute to a reintegration of all former Soviet republics on a new basis in the political, economic and spiritual spheres'.[213] The Foreign Policy Concept brings up the ambition to create a belt of friendly states around Russia's borders, and the Military Doctrine speaks about the need to keep any foreign military blocs away from this area.

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211 Kaliuzhin, Viktor (2005): 'Vystuplenie Posla Rossii v Latvii V. I. Kaliuzhnogo na Diplomaticheskom salone po teme: 'Rossiisko-latviiskie otnosheniya na sovremennom etape'Riga, 3 iyunya 2005 goda' Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Press department, June 7, 2005.

212 'Kontseptsiya natsionalnoy bezopasnosti Rossiyskoy Federatsii', Jan. 10, 2000; 'Kontseptsiya vneshney politiki Rossiyskoy Federatsii', June 28, 2000; 'Voennaya doktrina Rossiyskoy Federatsii', April 21, 2000.

213 'Kontseptsiya gosudarstvennoy natsionalnoy politiki Rossiyskoy Federatsii, June 15, 1996.

Russia's most important instrument in order to maintain its hegemony over the CIS states and to obtain recognition as a major power is to use soft power, i.e. seeking influence chiefly through cultural and ideological means. A crucial part of what might be defined as a soft power strategy for Russia is also, according to the current Foreign Policy Concept, to promote the Russian language and culture abroad.

As Russia both sees itself and generally is conceived as the direct heir to the Soviet empire, probably one of the most important parts of Russia's endeavour to soft power has been to close the historical chapter about the Soviet Union on terms that are favourable from a Russian perspective. 'There can be no full reconciliation between Russia and the rest of Europe before history is put to rest between Moscow, on the one hand, and the Baltic states and Poland, on the other'.[214] The most conspicuous example of this is the pompous celebration in Moscow marking the 60th anniversary of the end of WW II in Europe, May 9 2005, whose main purpose seems to have been to emphasize the importance of the Soviet war efforts for the final victory. As for the rest, Russia has shown zero tolerance against any efforts to analyze critically the role of the Soviet Union in the war. Efforts of the Baltic states and Poland to deepen the discussion about Soviet war efforts by including the negative impact that Soviet WW II policies has had on their peoples has been countered with fierce Russian resistance and accusations of rising neo-fascism.

Russia's defence of the history of the Soviet Union is not limited to its involvement in any events before and under WW II. It also seems that the general debate over the earlier Soviet totalitarian system is met with an apologetic approach. The present Russian line of argument is to stress that also Russians suffered and that they too have been victims to the totalitarian system. Besides, not only endurances were equally distributed during the Soviet period but everyone had also an equal share in Soviet achievements. In other words, Soviet crimes are deliberately diluted giving them a less serious character, as their underlying cause ought to have been benevolent. The State Nationality Policy Concept is an example of an official document that describes the Soviet period in these terms.

Russian soft power also makes a strong point of the Russian language. One of the principles of Russia's nationality policy is to preserve and develop the minority languages and to use the Russian language as the common language for all peoples. At the same time, according to the National Security Concept, it is as obvious that Russian should continue to be the interstate language between the CIS states lest a spiritual renewal of the cultural community that the former Soviet republics make up is rendered impossible.

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214 Trenin (2005): 'Russia, the EU and the common neighbourhood', *Policy Brief*, October 2005, Carnegie Edowment for International Peace, *www.CarnegieEndowment.org*.

A further aspect of Russian soft power is to facilitate for Russian citizens and compatriots living abroad to maintain their contacts with the historical fatherland and its language, culture and traditions. Judging from the State Nationality Policy Concept, the main target group consists of Russian citizens and compatriots living in any CIS state or in Estonia, Latvia or Lithuania. According to several of the doctrines mentioned before in this section, Russia pledges itself to give material and cultural support to compatriots in the former Soviet republics and to defend their human rights in accordance with international norms.

Overall, respect for human rights and their defence are key concepts that are mentioned frequently in several of the above-mentioned doctrines. This emphasis serves two purposes. For external use, it ought to strengthen Russia's commitment to soft power politics, thus improving its reputation abroad. Within Russia and applied in a consistent manner, the references to human rights should also strengthen Russia's commitments to rule by law and make a return to totalitarianism impossible.

Applied on Latvian conditions then, it turns out that the Latvia-Russians are an important instrument and the main target group for Russian soft power politics simultaneously. As an instrument, the Latvia-Russians usually defend the Russian interpretation of history. Latvian dailies in Russian language quite frequently find reasons to give space in their pages for discussions on Latvian history, both in the form of editorials and letters-to-the-editor. This kind of material becomes quite voluminous especially in connection with Latvian remembrance days. At these days, activists of especially Latvia-Russian origin also frequently organise some kind of counter-demonstrations or actions against any official ceremonies. The fiercest actions in later years have nevertheless been carried out on March 16, the unofficial remembrance day of the Latvian SS legion, when veterans organise marches in remembrance of their fallen comrades. Counter-demonstrants have organised their own marches dressed up in prison uniforms similar to those worn by prisoners in Nazi concentration camps. To conclude, Latvia-Russian activists have thus offered the official Latvian view on history some resistance, but they have not been able to win the debate. On the contrary, it seems likely that they have gotten a few more adversaries among ethnic Latvians, as they, in fact, challenge some of the *raison d'être* of a Latvian statehood.

In a similar way, as was shown in section 4.2 and onwards in this work, the Latvia-Russians have not been able to strengthen or at least successfully defend the present positions of the Russian language, but they, as well as Russia, have experienced how it has gradually been forced out from the public sphere. Promotion of Russian soft power politics through the Latvia-Russians has thus been less successful.

Considering the Latvia-Russians as targets for Russian soft power politics, it appears that Russian policies have not succeeded in creating an entirely positive view of Russia within this group either. Starting out from a more general level

considering all compatriots in the Baltic states and in the CIS states, one of the conclusions made in the multidisciplinary study on compatriots mentioned in section 5.5, was that the compatriots had little information about existing Russian programmes and that Russian activities usually were not effective.[215] Also stated above in the same section, among Russian politicians, only Putin enjoyed some general confidence in the post-Soviet space, as he was trusted by 44 per cent of those who had answered the questions of the research group. Other politicians did not even reach six per cent on an average in this rating.

Another conclusion made by the research group was that Russian financing of different diaspora organizations had not been optimal. Different organizations competed for financing among themselves, which, in fact resulted in internal splits in the diaspora groups, making them weaker instead of empowering them.[216] Squabbles between leaders, inability to carry on constructive dialogues with the authorities in one's home country had become the norm in many Russian organizations abroad. The researchers therefore recommended that Russia's interests would be better served, if it started to finance tangible projects like schools, theatres, newspapers, libraries and so on. Real projects ought to compete about Russian financing, not different organizations.

This general picture of Russian compatriot policy is also reflected in Latvia. Russian support has caused more of competition, splits and fraction formation among the Latvia-Russians than unity. At the bilateral level, Russia is mostly considered as too clumsy a player in the Baltic states by many Latvia-Russians as well. Krasnitsky, journalist at the Russian-language newspaper Chas, means that Russia only devotes itself to 'stupid rhetoric' that is not based on a real assessment of the situation. Even if ethnic tensions in Latvia have been created locally, Russian 'collateral damage' has only worsened the situation and brought no good to the Latvia-Russians.[217] Among the Latvia-Russians, there is also an understanding that Russian and Latvia-Russian objectives not necessarily coincide every time. When Latvia-Russian MP Boris Tsilevich, also a delegate for Latvia to PACE, commented on his Russian PACE colleagues, he said that 'apart from undoubted common humanitarian interests, there is still certain specifics within the interests for defending human rights that depends on which state a person represents'.[218]

With reference to the Baltic states, it seems that, at first sight, Russian soft power politics has been quite successful at the international level. Using its voice and influence in different international forums, Russia has succeeded in

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215 RG, December 23, 2004.

216 Ibid.

217 Krasnitsky, April 2005.

218 Shary, Andrey: 'Teper Rossiya pytaetsya vliyat na Evropu', April 13, 2006, *www.svobodanews.ru* (Russian version of RFE/RL).

keeping the issues of language policies, citizenship and minority status in the Baltic states from being removed from the international agenda. Certainly, the Latvia-Russians have benefited from this part of Russian diplomacy, as it has given them an access to the international community that might have been difficult to achieve through official Latvian channels, given the low democratic representation of the group and their minor impact on Latvian politics.

On the other hand, both inside Latvia and at the international level, Russian advocacy of the compatriot's human rights in Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania has not been perceived solely as a question of care for the compatriots or a genuine Russian interest in human rights issues. Two critical opinions frequently met say that either Russia exaggerates the ethnic issues in the Baltic region in order to divert attention from its own failures in the Caucasus and Chechnya or it systematically exploits the issue of the Baltic Russians as a pawn in the international diplomatic game. Until 2004, Russia capitalized on the ethnic issue in Estonia and Latvia using it as one argument together with several others against any NATO enlargement including the Baltic states.[219] At most, Russia succeeded in postponing an invitation to the three states to begin accession talks in connection with the Madrid Summit in 1997 when the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland got such invitations. In the end, Russia was not able to stop the development. At the Prague Summit in 2002, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania were invited to begin accession talks together with Bulgaria, Rumania, Slovakia and Slovenia, and in 2004, they all joined NATO.

Thus, based on the material used for this work, the Latvia-Russian's significance for the fulfilment of the objectives of Russian soft power politics in Latvia shows a mixed but mostly meagre result. Russian involvement has been met with some scepticism by the Latvia-Russians themselves, and they hold an independent view on Russian actions. Nor have the Latvia-Russians been instrumental for the achievements of Russian goals in Latvia. Russian ambitions to include Latvia in its belt of friendly states around its outer borders and to keep Latvia outside NATO have not been fulfilled. In its relations with Russia Latvia might certainly be characterized as a peaceful, but hardly as an entirely friendly state. Culturally and ideologically, Latvia has since independence gravitated westwards away from Russian influence; today it is a member of both EU and NATO. It is true that the Latvian point of view as regards Russia has fluctuated since independence, but in spite of normal formal relations and active bilateral trade, Latvian distrust in Russia's true objectives in the Baltic region has not diminished. Usually, occurring Latvia-Russian moves have not neutralized but strengthened this fundamental Latvian distrust in Russia.

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[219] See for instance Oldberg, Jarlsvik, Norberg & Vendil (1999); Leijonhielm et al (2000); Oldberg (2003) for a full account of the Baltic states and NATO enlargement.

It is more difficult to say, though, whether any correlation between Latvia-Russian domestic activities and Russian anti-Latvian international campaigns also means that they have been consciously synchronized, thereby indicating a close co-operation between official Russia and Latvia-Russian activists. It could not be ruled out, but with reference to the feeble results of Russian diplomacy in Latvia, it seems unlikely. An alternative explanation therefore is that Russia plays its own game and catches on the development in Latvia, when it finds it suitable to do so, i.e. when it fits Russian interests. Several incentives exist for such an opportunistic behaviour. Without any higher economic and political costs, the policy might earn some goodwill among the Russian-speakers, thus preserving some of Russia's influence over the whole group. If Latvia would turn into a weaker state in the future due to interior protests and international questioning of its integration policies, Russia might also regain some of its control over the Baltic region that was lost with the disappearance of the Soviet Union. Finally, by keeping the international community busy with Latvian and Baltic issues, Russia turns the world's attention away from more questionable Russian policies and activities in Russia proper as in Chechnya, or in the surrounding near abroad as in Georgia and Moldova.

6. Latvia-Russian actors in Latvia

The prevalent picture of Russian society is one of a collectivist society, *i.e.* a society in which the individual is subordinated to the higher interests of the group or, on an aggregated level, the state. In this system, the individual remains passive under most circumstances and takes no actions, even if his or her way of living is threatened by fundamental changes that have been initiated from above. Support for this view is found in Russian history, which is without any serious experiences of popular government and democracy. Among many Russians, the ideal of statesmanship still seems to be that of a strong leader, who can maintain law and order and make everyone fall into step and march in the same direction. After the radical changes that occurred under Gorbachev and Yeltsin, when large crowds of people were actually out in the streets defending their rights and interests, Putin's policies have not encouraged any civil participation in the governing process. On the contrary, Putin's reforms have at most been aimed at 'strengthening the vertical of power' or to 'exercise the dictatorship of the law'. 'Although the framework and institutions of a democratic society have been established, political practices of leaders at all levels often undermine the spirit of democracy, according to Richard Sakwa, Professor of Russian and European politics.[220] Thus, old patterns of development in Russia still prevail.

Often, it is taken for granted that Russian societies in the near abroad function in the same way as in Russia. Furthermore, Russians in the near abroad are often supposed to be more loyal to the aims and objectives of Russia than to their proper state of residence. In addition, at least theoretically, individuals trained in the Soviet military or the Soviet secret organs might still be in active service in their new homelands, secretly working for Russian interests, even if this prospect grows weaker as the actual persons grow older and the memory of Soviet Union fades away.

It seems, though, that the perception of the Russian diaspora as societies without any power of initiative or will of their own is applied too schematically. As time passes by, any hopes of an emergence of a new state with the old boundaries of the Soviet Union grow weaker as well as personal, emotional and cultural bonds to Russia do. When analysing different events in the post-Soviet countries, it therefore becomes more and more relevant to devote more attention to the new political environment and what new constraints and opportunities it offers, than to actual political conjunctures in Russia.

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220 Sakwa (2002), Preface to third edition.

Concerning all three Baltic countries, one first has to consider the complex attitudes toward the Baltic peoples that characterises Baltic Russians as well as Russians in Russia proper. As stated by Clemens,

> [most] Russians in Soviet times regarded the Baltic peoples as more Western and more materially advanced than Russians. This recognition evoked mixed emotions. Some Russians thought that they should learn from and emulate the hardworking Balts. Others nursed a kind of inferiority complex toward Balts that contained both envy and respect. Some Communist or chauvinist Russians regarded themselves as ideologically and perhaps morally superior to Balts: Uzbeks and Azeris might need Russian technology; the Balts needed Russian defence capabilities, raw materials, and manpower. Above all, however, the Balts needed Soviet ideology so that they did not succumb to bourgeois, Fascist or anti-Communist tendencies. In short, many Russians thought that they were doing the Balts a favour by cohabiting with them.[221]

Concerning more specifically the situation in Latvia, whose conditions have more resemblance with the situation in Estonia than in Lithuania, one has to consider that the Latvia-Russian group makes up about one third of the entire population and that many of its members are well educated. In their self-apprehension, many Latvia-Russians take their right to belong to the country and to keep their lifestyle intact as given, and under the cosmopolitan Soviet system, they were favoured group. This applies to the last arrivers as well, i.e. post-war immigrants and their descendants. In most cases, they did not understand that they moved into an occupied territory. According to available information provided to them by the Soviet authorities, they sincerely believed that they were just moving inside the same country, namely the Soviet Union. It is also important to remember that under Soviet rule, large groups of people could not freely choose their place of living, as it was a matter of administrative decisions carried out by the authorities.

For these reasons, most Latvia-Russians take an unsympathetic attitude towards the thought that they are accessories to an illegal occupation of a sovereign state, that they through their settlement in Latvia might have prolonged this occupation, and through their sheer number threatened the Latvian culture and language with near extinction. On the contrary, many Latvia-Russians with great pride point at their contributions to the Latvian society that they have given through their work. Why the Latvians want to punish them for accomplishments that have furthered the economic development in Latvia is not only incomprehensible, but it is a great insult as well, that gives rise to feelings of alienation towards the present Latvian state and its objectives.

Furthermore, if ethnic Latvians feel that their societal security is strengthened by the present statehood (see the opening of chapter 2), Latvia-Russians consider, on the contrary, that their traditional patterns of language, culture and

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221 Clemens (1991) p. 150.

religious and national identity and custom are being threatened, and that the main threats come from the ethno-defined policies of the state.

The feeling of being insulted and the perceived threat against one's lifestyle and culture has made possible a mobilisation of the Latvia-Russian community mainly according to ethnic and cultural affinities ever since independence. The details of this mobilisation are the main theme of this chapter. A natural starting-point has been the political sphere and those political parties that pursue Latvia-Russian interests. Another group to look further into consists of Latvia-Russian NGOs who are free to use more far-reaching means in an effort to force through their opinions. Parties and NGOs alike need economic resources to function and carry out their missions, *i.e.* they need sponsors. The most likely domestic group of sponsors would be the Latvia-Russian business community. Therefore, this has been added as a third group to be analysed. Besides economic mobilization, political parties and NGOs also need to reach other people than the already convinced. Ordinary mass media here play a crucial role. Thus, Russian-language mass media make up a fourth group of actors to be examined.

6.1. Background to the Latvian political landscape

When Latvia was resurrected as an independent state in 1991, the Latvians chose to build their statehood on the earlier state that had existed during the short interwar period. This also involved a reintroduction in 1992 of the Latvian constitution, the *Satversme*, adopted in 1922. The Satversme was originally modelled on the German Weimar Constitution, and as its prototype, it contains the same flaws. The Weimar republic was notorious for its weak governments and political instability, and in the same way, the acceptance of proportional rather than majority elections in Latvia led to a political system splintered into uncountable parties and fractions during the interwar period. Before the coup d'état by Prime Minister Karlis Ulmanis, in May 1934 that effectively set aside the constitution, Latvia had had no less than eighteen governments.[222]

The inter-war patterns have been repeated as the post-Soviet Latvian state has experienced the same split in its interior politics as its predecessor. Parties in Latvia are usually built up around political personalities rather than being based on ideology. Besides, the voters' preferences have changed fast from one party to another, and the winner of one election might be the main loser of the subsequent one. Since May 1990 until spring 2005, Latvia has had no less than twelve different prime ministers.[223] All governments, though, have had a cen-

222 Dreifelds (1996) pp. 29-31.

223 Homepage for the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia, *www.mk.gov.lv*.

trist-rightist character, even if the parties have changed over time. In addition, since 1993, no less than 72 political entities have been registered in Latvia.[224]

The fifth Saeima, or parliament, since the adoption of the Saeima election law in 1922, was elected in 1993, and it was thus the first Saeima to be elected since its predecessor was dissolved in the coup of May 1934. Twenty-three candidate lists were submitted for the judgement of the electorate, and of these, eight passed the vote threshold and were given seats in the Saeima. This pattern has been repeated with minor alterations in the subsequent Saeima elections. The last Saeima election in 2002 – the eighth since 1922 – attracted twenty different candidate lists of which six parties and associations of parties gained seats.[225]

Table 4: Overview of the political parties in the eighth Saeima after election

Party	Ideol.	Leaders, prominent members	Seats	Gov
Apvienība Tēvzemei un Brivibai/LNNK For Fatherland and Freedom/LNNK	Nat.	Guntars Krasts, Maris Grinblats	7	
Tautas partija People's party	Con.	Andris Skele, Aigars Kalvitis, Atis Slakteris, Aleksandrs Kirsteins**	20	5
Latvijas Pirma Partija First party of Latvia	Chr.	Eriks Jekabsons, Ainars Slesers, Niels Muiznieks	10	3
Jaunais laiks New era party	Con.	Uldis Grava, Einars Repshe	26	6
Zalo un Zemnieku Savienība Union of Greens and Farmers			12	4
Latvijas Zemnieku Savienība Farmers Union of Latvia	Agr.	Vilis Kristopans		
Latvijas Zala Partija Green Party of Latvia	Env.	Ingrida Udre		
Par cilvēka tiesibam vienota Latvija, PCTVL For Human Rights in a United Latvia, Zapchel				
Tautas Saskanas Partija, TSP* People's Harmony Party		Janis Jurkans***, Boris Tsilevich	17	
Lidztiesiba Equal Rights		Tatiana Zhdanok	3	
Latvijas Sociālistiska partija* Socialist Party of Latvia	Soc.	Alfreds Rubiks	5	

* Has left coalition after election. ** Ousted from the party. *** Has left the party. Source: www.saeima.lv

The instability of the Latvian political system with rapid changes in voter preferences, politicians' party affiliations and co-operation patterns between the

[224] Homepage of Latvia State Registration Chamber, *www.ur.gov.lv* visited on June 27, 2005.

[225] Homepage of the Latvian parliament, *www.saeima.lv*.

parties do not invite any deeper study of Latvian interior political system, and it is in any case beyond the scope of this study. In spite of the high probability of an early last day of consumption of the information, here follows a brief picture of the eighth Saeima, frozen in time and valid for spring 2005 in order to get an overview of the political environment in which the pro-Russian parties are acting.

6.2. Latvian voters' preferences: nationalists, right wing parties and centrists

For Fatherland and Freedom/LNNK is a nationalist conservative Latvian political party with seven seats out of 100 in the Saeima. It has participated in the Government, but is at present in opposition. Its roots can be traced back to the more radical part of the Latvian independence movement of the late 1980s. The party has always been for strict language and citizenship laws, but it has recently moved more and more into economic questions.

The People's Party was founded by the businessman and former Prime Minister Andris Skele. It describes itself as a conservative party, but under Skele's leadership, many people came to associate the party with his person. In the last Saeima elections, the party got 20 seats. Since December 2004, the People's Party leads the government under Prime Minister Aigars Kalvitis. In June 2005, the party was struck by a political scandal as the controversial nationalist Aleksandrs Kirsteins was expelled from the party because of anti-Semitic remarks.[226] Kirsteins was chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee before he was banished, but built his reputation especially on his irreconcilable attitude towards anything that could be interpreted as concessions towards the Latvia-Russian population or the Russian Federation. As Kirsteins has been a thorn in the side to Latvia-Russians and Russia alike, his ousting might open up for a more conciliatory tone in Latvian politics.

The First Party of Latvia is a Christian democratic party, chaired and founded in spring 2002 by the priest Eriks Jekabsons, who returned from the USA to Latvia in 2001. In spite of the short time of planning the election campaign, the eighth Saeima elections gave the party 10 seats in the parliament and representation in the government in the form of three ministry posts. Among the conservative parties, the First Party of Latvia stands out for its relatively moderate positions on ethnic issues. The party is prepared to discuss the proportion of instruction in Latvian in minority schools, and non-Latvians are represented in the party. For the time being, the party has no less than 14 seats in the Saeima, as one deputy has left the party for the New Era Party and five deputies from the old pro-Russian coalition Zapchel presented below chose to change their party

226 'MP Kirsteins booted from People's Party' *The Baltic Times*, No 459, May 25, 2005.

affiliation to the First Party of Latvia.[227] Presumably, it seems then that First Party of Latvia's positions on ethnic issues cannot be too far away from the pro-Russian activists' opinions. This addition of Saeima seats has become a political embarrassment for the party, as it has not been well received by the Latvian society. In fact, the party has been accused of running Moscow's errands.[228] In the municipal elections on March 12, 2005, the party was punished by the electorate as it scored a worse result than expected. In the city council of Riga, the First Party of Latvia secured only four seats out of 60.[229] At present, it appears that the party has lost its support from ethnic Latvians.[230]

The New Era Party is a new anti-corruption conservative party founded in 2001 by the former governor of the Bank of Latvia, Einars Repse. It has focused on economic questions such as to combat corruption and tax evasion. It has also suggested right-wing social reforms in health care and education. In the election to the eighth Saeima, the New Era Party became the largest party as it won 26 out of 100 seats. Einars Repse was prime minister between November 2002 and March 2004, when he had to step down. The New Era Party is still in the government, though, and Repse is minister of defence.

The Union of Greens and Farmers is a political alliance that at present consists of two parties, the *Farmers' Union of Latvia* and the *Green Party of Latvia*. The alliance is based on similar sentimental feelings shared by the voters of the two parties. Latvians are supportive of the traditional small farms and perceive them as more environmentally friendly then large-scale farming. Nature is threatened by the development, while small farms are threatened by large industrial-scale farming. The alliance ran on an ideologically amorphous agenda and won 12 seats in the Saeima. The Union is represented in the government as well.

6.3. Left-wing parties with Latvia-Russian support

None of the parties mentioned above – with a possible exception of the First Party of Latvia – has any party programme that appeals to Latvia-Russians at large. This fact is part of the background to why an electoral pact was set up by three left-wing parties half a year before the elections to the seventh Saeima in 1998 in order to strengthen the Russian-speakers' position in parliament. The common name chosen for this coalition was set to 'For Human Rights in a United Latvia', but it has become more known under its Latvian and Russian

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227 Homepage of the Latvian Parliament, *www.saeima.lv*, section Saeima members. All five new members came from People's Harmony Party. Four of these were of Slavic origin.

228 Russian homepage of Latvijas Pirma Partija, *http://rus.lpp.lv/index.php*, section Publikatsii/Stati intervyu, vystupleniya, interview with Erik Jekabsons from 18.03.2005.

229 Homepage for Central Election Commission of Latvia, *www.cvk.lv*.

230 Boris Tsilevich, May 2005.

acronyms, *PCTVL* and *Zapchel*. In this text, the acronym Zapchel is used. The founding parties behind Zapchel were the People's Harmony Party, the Equal Rights and Socialist Party of Latvia, and some words have to be said about them before Zapchel can be presented any further.

The roots of *the People's Harmony Party*, *Tautas Saskanas Partija*, can be traced back to the moderate wing of the Popular Front, *i.e.* the Latvian independence movement of the late 1980s and early 1990s (see section 6.4). Its earlier leader and founder Janis Jurkans was the first minister of foreign affairs in independent Latvia from 1990 to 1992, but was then ousted for his allegedly too moderate positions in Latvian relations with Russia.[231] The party has very moderate positions on citizenship and language issues compared to the Latvian nationalist parties, and it has therefore been quite popular within the Russian-speaking electorate. It has tried to keep a considerably mixed leadership of ethnic Latvians and Russian-speakers as one way to bridge the gap between the two communities. Its co-operation with the Socialist Party and Equal Rights alienated the party from liberals and Latvian voters, and today most ethnic Latvians probably define it as a left-wing Russian party.

The Socialist Party of Latvia and Equal Rights (or *Lidztiesiba* in Latvian,) trace their roots back to the parliamentary fraction Equal Rights that appeared in the popularly elected Supreme Council of the Republic of Latvia in March 1990. In 1993, Equal Rights was registered as an NGO, as most of its leaders at that time were non-citizens and only citizens were allowed to register a political party. Nevertheless, Equal Rights won representation in the fifth Saeima elected in 1993. As the Election Law was soon amended, making only political parties eligible, the Socialist Party of Latvia was organized in 1994 in an attempt to keep the movement's issues alive in any future Saeima.

The Socialist Party of Latvia describes itself as a socialist party with a Marxist basic outlook, and it is about as leftist as Latvian laws allow, following the banning of the Communist party in 1991. As such, it works for the creation of a society built on welfare and equal rights based on Marxist theory.[232] Already from the beginning, its focus has been on social and economic issues, but to some extent, it has also made itself a name as a defender of Latvia-Russian civil rights.

Back in 1994, different priorities and ideological disagreements between the Socialist Party and the NGO Equal Rights came to render further co-operation difficult. Therefore, *Equal Rights* was reorganized as a political party in 1996, and the seats of the Socialist Party were divided between the two parties. Prominent leader of the party Equal Rights has since the beginning been Tatiana

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231 Janis Jurkans himself is an ethnic Pole with Latvian as mother tongue (Smith Sivertsen in Bakke (ed.), 2004, p. 64.).

232 From the party's homepage: *www.latsocpartija.lv*.

Zhdanok, who is still very unpopular with ethnic Latvians, being a former active member of the now forbidden Communist Party and together with Alfreds Rubiks being actively opposed to Latvian independence in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In contrast to the Socialist Party, Equal Rights has stressed Latvia-Russian issues above anything else, and its view on economics has been described as ambiguous: mostly leftist but also flirting with liberal ideas in order to broaden the potential electorate.

Ahead of the seventh Saeima elections in 1998, the three above-mentioned parties thus decided to put an end to their mutual cannibalization and started to cooperate in order to get a noticeable representation in the Saeima. From the outside, the Zapchel coalition looked successful, as it won 16 seats in the elections to the seventh Saeima. In the municipal elections in 2001, Zapchel also won 13 out of 60 seats in the Riga City Council. In the elections to the eighth Saeima in 2002, Zapchel's share of the seats in parliament increased to 25 seats, making it the second largest block. Of these, People's Harmony Party got the greater share with 17 seats, as the Socialist Party and Equal Rights won four seats each.[233]

In the end, though, differences in leadership style and ideological aims and objectives overwhelmed the three parties' will to co-operate. The People's Harmony Party left the coalition in early 2003, followed by the Socialist Party half a year later. The People's Harmony Party was badly hurt by the collaboration with the Socialist Party and Equal Rights. Allying itself with the more radical pro-Russian and leftist parties with leaders like Tatiana Zhdanok and Alfreds Rubiks, it lost its support among ethnic Latvians. In the municipal elections in 2005, the party was left without any seats at all in the Riga City Council.[234] It also lost eight seats in the Saeima, as five of its parliamentarians left for the First Party of Latvia; one joined the Socialist Party and two became members of the reconstructed Zapchel.[235] With an extra seat in the Saeima after the split, the Socialist party profited moderately from the co-operation and its break-up. In the municipal elections in 2005, it got the surprising result of eight seats in the Riga City Council together with its new coalition partner *Dzimtene*, Fatherland, which was a formation of political unknowns with a spectrum of po-

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233 Homepage for the Latvian Parliament, *www.saeima.lv*, section Saeima members.

234 Central Election Commission of Latvia, *www.cvk.lv*, section for local elections in 2005.

235 Homepage of the Latvian Parliament, *www.saeima.lv*, section Saeima members. One of the two new Zapchel members, Jakovs Pliners, also became co-chairman of Zapchel together with Tatiana Zhdanok. The defection to the Socialist Party by Igor Soloviev might have been sanctioned by the People's Harmony Party, as the socialists needed one more MP to form a fraction of their own in the Saeima according to Latvian legislation.

litical views embracing everything from socialist ideas to Euro-scepticism. One of its leaders was Arturs Rubiks, a son to Alfreds Rubiks.[236]

Zhdanok's party Equal Rights came to stand out as the real winner when Zapchel collapsed. According to the coalition's own assessment of the events in 2003, Jurkans' and Rubiks' departure together with their sympathizers, made possible a transformation of Zapchel into a real party for ethnic Russians in Latvia.[237] Members from People's Harmony Party and the Socialist Party who had been against their parties leaving the coalition formed a new party, '*Free Choice in Peoples' Europe*'.[238] This party was solely created in order to become a new ally of Equal Rights, hence saving the Zapchel coalition from liquidation. The Zapchel fraction in the Saeima could thus resurface with a necessary minimum of six seats already in August 2003.[239] In November 2003 the coordination between the two new coalition parties grew even firmer, as they agreed upon a moratorium on any further party work in Equal Rights and Free Choice in People's Europe. Even if it formally has remained a party coalition, Zapchel has ever since acted as a unitary party, and it is perceived as such by the general public. Thus, Equal Rights has kept control over the popular brand name of Zapchel, and through its new coalition partner, it has also gained two more seats in the Saeima. These moves have also been awarded by the electorate. Zapchel won one of the nine Latvian seats in the election to the European parliament in June 2004, and in the municipal elections in spring 2005, it was rewarded with nine seats in the Riga City Council.[240]

The Socialist Party programme states that Latvia should be a unitary multiethnic state, and concerning citizenship, it argues for a zero-option solution. Even if its leader, Alfreds Rubiks, former leader of the Latvian Communist Party and member of the Politburo of the Soviet Communist party, stresses that all residents in Latvia should know Latvian, the party is against the school-reform in its present form. The Socialist Party thus has a clear view on these

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236 Central Election Commission of Latvia, *www.cvk.lv*, section for local elections in 2005.

237 Homepage of Zapchel, *www.pctvl.lv*, Russian version, section party history. Document about the founding of BITE and the rebirth of Zapchel.

238 Free Choice in Peoples' Europe' is the author's unofficial translation for the official party name *Brīva Izvēle Tautu Eiropā* in Latvian or *Svobodny vybor v Yevrope narodov* in Russian. The Latvian abbreviation, BITE, means bee in Latvian, which alludes to the Russian abbreviation Zapchel, meaning the same thing but in Russian, thus emphasising the close kinship with the coalition. An interesting circumstance is that the present leader of the National Bolsheviks in Latvia, Latvia-Ugandan Aijo Beness, is a member and co-founder of BITE, which in fact, improves the political platform for the National Bolsheviks and brings them closer to Latvian mainstream politics.

239 Ibid.

240 Central Election Commission of Latvia, *www.cvk.lv*, sections for local elections in 2005 and European Parliament election in 2004.

questions that many Latvia-Russians might sympathize with, but its main message to the electorate still is that of socialist solutions to economic issues in society.[241] The party's position on ethnic issues seems then to be not much more than a side-effect of the internationalist claims of its Marxist view on society.

The People's Harmony Party has presented itself as a social democratic party based on social justice and solidarity. In contrast to the Socialist Party, it is not committed to any rigid ideology but strives for pragmatic solutions on all issues. It has therefore succeeded better than the Socialist Party in concatenating its integration recommendations and ethno politics with the rest of its party programme. The People's Harmony Party wants to preserve the multiethnic character of Latvia, and it is against any integration policy aiming at a mono-ethnic society. The teaching of Latvian in minority schools has to be improved, but at the same time, the choice of language of instruction in minority schools should not be allowed to have a negative influence on the quality of the education. It should be easier for elderly people to obtain Latvian citizenship, and non-citizens should be allowed to participate in local elections. The party also opens up for automatic citizenship for children born after Latvian independence by non-citizen parents.[242]

Compared to the Socialist Party and the People's Harmony Party, the new Zapchel takes a more radical and militant position on questions with reference to the Latvia-Russians. Its uncompromising style and its image of a party that takes no prisoners among political adversaries have rendered it few friends among the right-wing parties in Latvian politics. However, Zapchel does not strive for any co-operation with these parties, as it is solely dedicated to the Russian-speaking population. The party programme from 2003 identifies the Russian-speaking community as a natural base for any struggle against discrimination. The capability of the Latvian population to settle any human rights abuse issues is seen as significantly impaired.[243] The transformation of Zapchel into a party for Russian-speakers on the national arena is therefore seen as a positive development.[244] Put together with the roots of Equal Rights in the human rights movement it follows that the Latvia-Russian issues is the main *rai-*

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241 Alfreds Rubiks, April 2005, homepage of Latvian Socialist Party, *www.latsocpartija.lv*, different section.

242 Party programme of People's Harmony Party, as presented on the party's homepage, *www.tsp.lv*.

243 Homepage of Zapchel, *www.pctvl.lv*, Russian version section, section party programmes, party programme for Equal Rights.

244 Homepage of Zapchel, *www.pctvl.lv*, Russian version, section party history, loc. cit.

son d'être of Zapchel, and this also motivates the central position of these issues in the actual party programmes.[245]

According to Zapchel, the governing right-wing parties' mismanagement of the ethnic issues is at the core of Latvia's social and economic problems since independence. In its suggestions to solutions, Zapchel clearly manifests that it is on a collision course with the official Latvian interpretation and evaluation of Latvia's history during the last century. In fact, the party programme of Equal Rights calls official Latvian history writing about the 20th century a falsification. It has been vehemently opposed to the trials against former Soviet soldiers for allegedly committed war crimes at the time of the liberation of Latvia from the Nazi occupation. At the same time, it does not perceive any nuances between different Latvian groups that took up arms against the Soviet army, dismissing all as Nazi collaborators and fascists. The Soviet period was in fact not an occupation at all, and as stated above, leaders like Tatiana Zhdanok were at the time opposed to and worked actively against Latvian independence.

Thus, all issues important to Zapchel have been lifted out from the historical context normally given to them by the ethnic Latvian majority. Latvian society is instead seen as divided into two distinct communities – almost comparable in size – based on the Latvian and Russian languages and culture. As such, both communities should be treated equally, and given equal status. The role of the state then should be to continue offering the minorities education in their own languages even in the final classes in school.[246] Even if Russian-speakers should be stimulated to obtain proficiency in the Latvian language, people with a Latvian mother tongue should have to continue learning Russian as well. In regions where Russian-speakers reach at least 20 per cent of the total population, it should be possible to use Russian as an official language.

The above-mentioned political coalition partner of Zapchel, Free Choice in Peoples' Europe, bases its critique of the citizenship law on the fact that taxes are paid by citizens and non-citizens alike, but only citizens have a say on tax levels and spending of public funds, as non-citizens are non-eligible, nor do

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245 For this text has been used Equal Rights' Party Programme adopted at the seventh party congress in April 12, 2003; Party Programme for Free Choice in Peoples' Europe, adopted at the founding meeting September 28, 2003; and Zapchel's election programmes for the elections to the 8th Saeima in 2002 and to the EU parliament election in 2004. All documents from *www.pctvl.lv*, Russian version section programmes.

246 Still, in the author's interviews with Aleksey Dimitrov and Andrey Yakovlev in March 2005, they claimed that Zapchel in principle could accept the school reform, provided it was postponed until those generations who have had a bilingual education since kindergarten reached the higher classes. Still, their opinion was that Russian would be better as a language of instruction for all, as there already is a rich scientific literature written and published in Russian, and as Russian in the same way as English functions as a *lingua franca* for people with different mother tongues.

they have any voting rights. Equal Rights is more pungent with an analysis verging on conspiracy theory asserting that the non-citizen institute, an allegedly unique construction for modern Europe, came into existence with an aim to monopolize political power, hence dismissing the Russian-speaking population from politics and economic life in Latvia.

In their own somewhat different ways, all the above-mentioned left-wing parties thus provide a challenge to the *Satversme*, the Latvian constitution. As neither of them has been banned and is allowed to participate in all elections, this challenge still seems to be within boundaries that the Latvian society and its judicial system at least find tolerable.

The remaining question then is the left-wing parties' contacts with Russia, and if they are subversive against Latvian statehood. It is no secret in Latvia that the Socialist Party, Zapchel and the People's Harmony Party have connections in Russia that are over and above those that any other party has been able to establish. Their political adversaries have expressed suspicions about the aim of these contacts. Janis Jurkans nevertheless brushes aside these reactions as a manifestation of political envy.[247]

The Socialist Party claims to have good connections with all political parties in Moscow, not just Ziuganov's Communist Party, and these contacts are directly motivated by the party's internationalist principles.[248] Probably, they are also based on a high dose of nostalgia for times irrevocably gone by. The Socialist Party is, after all, the direct heir to the now banned Latvian Communist Party, and Alfreds Rubiks was its last leader and Latvian representative in the Politburo in Moscow. Rubiks denies, though, that his party receives any financing from any source in Moscow, and maintains that it is almost solely financed by its members.[249] Overall, Rubiks sees the Russian compatriot policy in Latvia as a failure. Maybe someone gets Russian financing, but it has had no impact on Latvian language and citizenship policies so far. Rubiks also points out that Russia has neglected to take measures supporting integration in Latvia which it is free to decide upon, the most striking example being the already mentioned visa regime. According to actual regulations, non-citizens in Latvia are charged less for a Russian visa than Latvian citizens are, thus rewarding the former for their stateless position (see section 3.4).

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247 Interview with Janis Jurkans in Echo Moskvy, February 16, 2001. *http://echo.msk.ru/-guests/2512*.

248 Alfreds Rubiks, April 2005.

249 Ibid. The party has 1 500 members who give up one per cent of their income to the party, except for its Saeima deputies who are asked to contribute no less than 10 per cent of their income, due to their high salaries. Rubiks also asserts that the budget for the party is no bigger than 10 000 to 12 000 lats per annum.

The People's Harmony Party has tried to give its Russian connections an aura of good statesmanship. Three reasons might be given for this behaviour. First, its leaders belonged to the moderate wing of the independence movement who strove for good relations with the post-Soviet Russian state under Boris Yeltsin. Second, as a former minister of foreign affairs, the party's founder Janis Jurkans has had less problems with opening doors in Moscow than any less known non-Russian politician from Latvia would have had. Third, the party believes that the days when Latvia was seen as just another sanitary cordon or buffer zone between different European great powers belong to the past. Therefore, Latvia should use its geography, recent experiences from the past, the presence of a large group of Russian native speakers and its good connections with western democracies to become a real bridge between Russia and the European Union in economic as well as political matters.

Sometimes it seems that the People's Harmony Party has been more successful in presenting itself as a moderate force in Latvian politics in Russia than in Latvia. In February 2001 for instance, Janis Jurkans headed a parliamentary delegation invited to Moscow by Duma vice-speaker Vladimir Lukin. During this visit he also participated in a live broadcast at the radio station Echo Moskvy, in which he was given time to explain the situation in Latvia to Russian listeners.[250] In September 2002, Jurkans met with President Putin in Moscow. On this occasion, he was presented by his hosts as 'an active supporter of integration of the Russian-speaking population into Latvian society on the basis of providing equal political and socio-economic rights'.[251] At the meeting, the chairman of the Duma committee for international affairs, Dimitriy Rogozin, also participated. It is important to remember though that during this period, Jurkans still represented the Zapchel fraction, not his own party. Another prominent member of the party, Janis Urbanovics, visited Moscow as a representative for Zapchel in the year 2000 and in November 2002, invited by the Duma committee for CIS and compatriots' issues.[252]

Compared to the People's Harmony Party, it has been difficult to find any evidence of official meetings between Russian authorities and representatives of Equal Rights and the new Zapchel fraction. The Russian Ministry for Foreign Affairs has a record, though, of a meeting between the two chairpersons from Zapchel, Jakovs Pliners and Tatiana Zhdanok, and Russian Vice Minister for

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250 Interview with Janis Jurkans in Echo Moskvy, February 16, 2001. *http://echo.msk.ru/-guests/2512*.

251 *www.kremlin.ru/eng/priorities/specevents21892/2002.shtml*.

252 'Itogovaya informatsiya o rabote Komiteta po delam SNG i svyazyam s sootechestvennikami za 2000 god' and 'Informatsiya o rabote Komiteta po delam SNG I svyazyam s sootechestvennikami v period vesenney sessii 2002 goda'. From *www.duma.gov.ru*, section for committee work.

Foreign Affairs Vladimir Chizhov in October 2003. According to the report from the meeting, the Zapchel representatives informed Chizhov about the Latvian non-citizen institute and the linguistic situation. Chizhov confirmed Russian preparedness to continue to defend the Russian-speakers rights in Latvia at the bilateral and international levels.[253]

Anyhow, Tatiana Zhdanok contributes relatively often to Russian newspapers and radio talk shows. Her recent popularity seems to be founded on the fact that she is the first – and so far only – ethnic Russian who has a seat in the EU Parliament. As she is considered in Russia as '*nash chelovek*' – 'one of our own' in English – Russian media provides her with free scope to convey her viewpoint on the situation in Latvia. This is problematic from a Latvian point of view, as Zhdanok's opinion as an expert commentator is usually left unchallenged. Ignoring the rule of also hearing the other party, *audiatur et altera pars*, Russian media passes on an unbalanced view of the situation in Latvia to their readers and listeners, partly with the help of Zapchel. According to ex-Prime Minister Ivars Godmanis, Zhdanok and other politicians associated with her try to worsen relations between Russia and Latvia as they profit from it.[254] This is also in line with Zhdanok's belief that Russia should take a much tougher stand against the Baltic states and stop making concessions. If not, the Baltic states will use their influence within the EU structures to press Russia to continue its policy of appeasement. 'Concessions, especially from such a major power as the Russian Federation shows the weakness of the state, and in international politics the weak are always beaten'.[255]

A question at least as controversial in Latvia is whether Tatiana Zhdanok or the movement she represents are financed by Moscow or not. One aggravating circumstance makes many in Latvia believe that Zhdanok has too good relations in Moscow. After finishing her post-graduate studies in mathematics at the Latvian State University, she was allowed to travel abroad and to work at the University of Montpellier as early as in 1982 – 1983, i.e. during a period when it was still difficult for ordinary Soviet citizens to get permission to travel abroad.

According to Ilze Brands Kehre at the Latvian Centre for Human Rights and Ethnic Studies, Tatiana Zhdanok is also one of five or six persons who have

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253 Soobshchenie dlya pechati: 'O vstreche zamestitelya Ministra inostrannykh del Rossii V.A.Chizhova s predsedatelem fraktsii politicheskogo obedineniya "Za prava Cheloveka v edinoy Latvii" v Seyme Latvii Ya. Plinerom I sopresedatelem T.Zhdanok' Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Press department, October 14, 2003 No 2294-14-10-2003.

254 From Regnum, weekly news summary from Latvia from June 11 to June 16, 2005; document *www.regnum.ru/news/485270.html*. Cited from Latvijas Avize and Neatkariga. Ivars Godmanis was prime minister between May 7, 1990 and August 3, 1993.

255 Ibid., cited from interview with Tatiana Zhdanok in Latvian newspaper Vesti Segodnya.

openly reported that she has received certain project financing from Moscow.[256] Andrey Yakovlev, consultant for Zapchel, says, though, that *the fraction* relies exclusively on domestic resources for its financing. In fact, according to Yakovlev, taken together, Russian compatriot policy and financial support to Latvia-Russians has been proved ineffective. In many cases, it has degenerated into a system of *otkat*, i.e. a system where Russian officials are paid a percentage of the means they have approved by the project owner.[257] Zapchel's treasurer, Ilga Ozish, confirms that Zapchel is dependent only on domestic financing. According to her, Zapchel is financed only by its membership fees and donations from physical persons – mostly from party members and Zapchel deputies. Due to the actual anti-corruption legislation in place, it would not be possible to accept donations from other sources.[258] According to the same source, the Zapchel election campaign for the elections to the European Parliament in 2004 was financed by bank loans taken by the two first candidates on the Zapchel list, Tatiana Zhdanok and Miroslav Mitrofanov, using their own apartments as securities.

Latvian Minister for Special Assignments for Society Integration Affairs, Ainars Latkovskis, asserted in autumn 2005 that Tatiana Zhdanok recently had fallen into disgrace with official Moscow. The underlying causes, according to the minister, were her ambitions to become a leader for all European Russians outside Russia, and her alleged cooperation with Boris Berezovsky. Zapchel representative Yuri Petropavlovskiy later denied that Zapchel or Tatiana Zhdanok had launched any cooperation with Berezovsky.[259]

6.4. NGOs

Lobbyist NGOs in the so-called third sector, i.e. non-government organizations active in the non-governmental and non-economic field and whose primary purpose is to defend or promote a specific cause or to influence certain policies and practices, have come to play an increasing part in Latvian public life. Organized from a bottom-up perspective, they have nothing in common with earlier Soviet creations whose purpose was to work as 'transmission belts', according to Stalin, in order to convey the Communist Party's policies to the masses in a more effective manner.

The first successful attempt to establish a lobbying NGO in Latvia was the organization of a so-called Popular Front in autumn 1988, ostensibly to support

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256 Ilze Brands Kehre, May 2005.

257 Andrey Yakovlev, March 2005.

258 'Kaznachey "pchel", kotoryy rabotaet mnogo, tikho i polezno', *Rakurs*, April 26, 2004. Rakurs is the net-based party paper for Zapchel which can be found at *www.rakurs.lv*.

259 'Skandal vokrug "finansirovaniya" Shtaba zashchity russkikh shkol Latvii', *www.regnum.ru*, September 7, 2005.

Gorbachev's Perestroika policy. Soon it became clear that it had an agenda of its own, aiming at full independence from the Soviet Union.[260] The Popular Front was to become 'the main moving force of Latvian political development, attracting to its ranks many of the best thinkers, organizers, planners and tacticians from the Communist establishment as well as from the "informals" who had not been co-opted into the Party ranks' in Latvia's struggle for independence.[261] The opponents against independence gathered in the International Workers' Front, 'Interfront', calling for 'the retention of the Soviet Communist system and for the territorial integrity of the Soviet state'.[262] As it was struggling for *status quo* and was initiated from above, the Interfront movement was clearly on the defensive already from the beginning. With nothing to offer the titular nation, it was mostly ignored or frowned at by ethnic Latvians. Ethnic Russians and other Slavs living in Latvia usually found the Interfront more attractive, as it defended their rights and their position in Latvian society. Still, it is not correct to characterize the Interfront movement as a purely Slavic or Latvia-Russian movement, as it was, basically, more like a Communist creation. Furthermore, quite large groups of Latvia-Russians found good reasons to support Latvian independence and involved themselves in the Popular Front movement.

Although there was a sharp drop in political activism after the aims and objectives of the Popular Front had been achieved, i.e. an independent Latvian state, the experiences made between 1987 and 1990 have without any doubt been germinal to the formation of subsequent NGOs in Latvia, no matter what are their aims and objectives. Confidence in work through NGOs as a tool for changing society is widespread. However, as the communist system had left the civil society underdeveloped, NGOs and political parties in all of Eastern Europe have had difficulties to create a functioning and democratic civil society. Usually, potential activists have put too much emphasis on the significance of leadership – and conceivably as well on the prospects of personal power and benefits that come with leadership. According to an interview with Viacheslav Altukhov, president of the Russian Community of Latvia, ROL, in 2002 only four per cent of all NGOs registered in Latvia had more than 500 members.[263] In another interview in the same year, Altukhov asserted that one reason behind this situation was the low threshold for setting up an NGO. It only took a minimum of ten members and a state registration fee of 20 lats to register.[264]

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260 Kolstø (1995) p. 112.

261 Dreifelds (1996) p. 52.

262 Kolstø (1995) p. 113.

263 Panorama Latvii, October 21, 2002, No 246 (3015), interview with Viacheslav Altukhov, leader for ROL.

264 Chas, March 12, 2002, interview with Viacheslav Altukhov, leader for ROL.

The Latvia-Russian community has not been an exception to this pattern of a multitude of small NGOs with overlapping activities due to an excessive interest in leadership and power issues.[265] It seems that out of 8 000 registered NGOs in Latvia today, about one hundred are associated with Latvia-Russian issues, according to Tatiana Favorskaya from the Russian Society of Latvia, ROvL.[266] Mikhail Tyasin co-chairman of United Congress of Russian Communities of Latvia, OKROL, maintains that there are about 80 NGOs connected with Latvia-Russian issues, but that probably only half of them are active.[267] In addition, the Latvia-Russian group had some specific problems to conquer when creating an effective civil society. Latvian post-independence development might have discouraged some Latvia-Russians from further engaging in any political or social movement. The Interfront movement had failed to preserve *status quo*, and the Popular Front deserted its early promises of equal rights for all inhabitants in Latvia at the time for independence, as Latvian nationalist forces came to dominate the political landscape in Latvia.

A certain 'brain-drain' occurred with the post-independence emigration to other parts of the former Soviet Union. Those who chose to stay might have withdrawn from political actions, as they believed that the situation should improve by itself when the Latvian nationalists had had their day and everyone's economy had improved. Anyhow, these expectations have not come true.

Another important obstacle that has restrained organization is the large contingent of non-citizens or 'aliens' among the Latvia-Russians. Non-citizens are only permitted to register social organizations, not political ones. In this way, they have no legal right to express their view neither on citizenship policies nor on other issues that influence their daily lives. In addition, the distinction between social and political NGOs gives the authorities full discretion to determine the purpose of an organization. This might open up for unnecessary registration difficulties for certain social organizations that might otherwise have enriched the landscape of the Latvian society. Finally, an obstacle already mentioned has been Russian financing of different NGOs that in many cases has come to promote the atomisation of the Latvia-Russian civil society instead of strengthening it. Besides, this observation is valid for the whole Russian 'near abroad', as Russian financing sometimes has become some sort of business opportunity for a lot of compatriot NGOs. Fierce competition for Russian money has led to splits between actors that otherwise might have profited on cooperation. Also, according to some observers, more efforts have sometimes been put into obtaining financial means from Russia – maybe with the help of

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265 Chas, March 12, 2002, op. cit.

266 'Konsolidatsii russkikh Latvii meshaet otsutstvie ledera', *www.regnum.ru* June 20, 2005.

267 Ibid.

otkat – than to promote specific issues in the local community or to establish good working contacts with local authorities.[268]

In spite of these hindrances, there exists in Latvia today some sort of civil society even among the Latvia-Russians. On its homepage, the Russian Ministry for Foreign Affairs lists at least 35 different compatriot NGOs in Latvia. The number becomes even larger, if one also includes the ten local offices of national organizations and those 14 other sub-organizations that are members in one of the NGOs already included in the first figure.[269] Judging by their names, most of these NGOs seem to be working within the cultural sphere. Others are different types of veteran organizations, especially for participants in the WW II, but also for participants in later conflicts like the Afghanistan war. A third group of NGOs defends and promotes the status and use of the Russian language. A fourth group consists of umbrella organizations that supposedly are more interested in building systems and structures than in carrying out work in any specific field of interest. Even if this list probably is far from being comprehensive, it probably gives a good overview of the different types of Russian and Latvia-Russian NGOs that exist in Latvia.

The sheer quantity, frequently overlapping activities and the lack of an uncontested uniting national organ for *all* Latvia-Russian NGOs, have made it more difficult for Russian financing sources (and anyone else, for that matter) to find their targets.[270] Observers from different camps generally agree that for some organizations it is not the fight for a certain cause but access to different financing sources that is their main *raison d'être*. For instance, Mikhail Tyasin says that in some cases, small, almost fictive NGOs have been set up whose only aim has been to get access to financing. After they have received their grants, these means have then been shared with the official who made the decision.[271]

Tatiana Favorskaya at the Russian Society of Latvia holds that work in the third sector, financed by different European Union funds, could serve as a substitute for all governmental work places that statistically seem to be reserved for ethnic Latvians.[272]

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268 Poloskova, *RG* December 23, 2004, Ivars Indans, February 2005, Andrey Yakovlev, March 2005.

269 Homepage of the Russian Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Russian version section Sootechestvenniki za rubezhom/Organizatsii sootechestvennikov za rubezhom.

270 See, for instance, interview with Vitaliy Skrinnik of the Moscow branch of the state-public fond for support to compatriots abroad in Panorama Latvii, November 12, 2002 No 265 (3034).

271 Mikhail Tyasin, April 2005.

272 'Integratsiya – eto rabochie mesta', *Vesti Segodnya*, November 22, 2001, No 275 (713).

A small group of NGOs have distinguished themselves as the most important ones for Latvia-Russian issues. They can all be considered as mainstream, even if a more fine-tuned classification would define some of them as moderates and others as radicals.[273] Their power is based on their weight in membership numbers or on their work as lobbyists and informants in Latvia and in international forums, or on spectacular manifestations. As they seem to be well and healthy and take up a large part of media's interest, they are given a short presentation below.

According to the Latvian Institute, immediately after the recognition of Latvia's independence a first social organization for Russian speakers was organised in 1991 under the name of *Russian Community of Latvia*, ROL.[274] From the very beginning, ROL has been a defender of Russian cultural and social values, aiming at strengthening the Latvia-Russian community both spiritually, morally and materially.[275] Initially ROL managed to live up to its ambitions of becoming an umbrella for all NGOs based on the Russian-speaking community. It brought together all leaders from different Russian organizations, but soon internal quarrels tore the organization apart and local branches declared their independence.[276] All members of ROL are now collectively affiliated to Zapchel, and its chairman Viacheslav Altukhov was a Zapchel candidate for the Riga City Council in the municipal elections in spring 2005.[277]

A contender to ROL for the title as 'most influential NGO' is the *Russian Society of Latvia*, abbreviated as ROvL[278] According to its homepage, it was founded already in 1920 and its spheres of interest cover the development of Russian culture and education in Latvia. Among other things, it also offers courses in Latvian in order to promote the integration of Latvia-Russians into Latvian society. Its mission is to be an enlightening organization.[279]

The main differences between ROL and ROvL are that ROL has a better regional organization, while ROvL has a strong position in Riga; ROvL has spe-

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273 Like any other country, Latvia harbours extremist groups as well that do not hesitate to use violence. However, due to their marginality and insignificance for the Latvian political development, they will not be dealt with further in this text.

274 The Russian name is Russkaya Obshchina Latvii. Source homepage of Latvian Institute; section Society/National Minorities/Russians in Latvia, *http://www.li.lv/en/?id=23*.

275 Kolstø (1995) p.131.

276 European Commission, section for education and training/policy areas/languages/languages of Europe/regional and minority languages/Euro mosaic/Latvia *http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/index_en.html* , August 2005 See also Kolstø (1995) p. 131.

277 Zapchel homepage.

278 Russkoe obshchestvo v Latvii.

279 'Konsolidatsii russkikh Latvii meshaet otsutstvie ledera', *www.regnum.ru* June 20, 2005.

cialized in different kind of projects, whereas ROL has gathered experience from mass actions in the streets;[280] ROvL wants to become an organization of experts and trained functionaries while ROL has tried to mobilize the masses.[281]

The closeness in convictions and ideology has encouraged the two organizations to gravitate towards each other in recent years. One important step was taken in 2000, when the leader for ROvL, Tatiana Favorskaya, was first elected to the board of ROL. A second step followed in 2002 when she was elected vice-president of ROL with a special responsibility for humanitarian questions.[282] At present, ROvL constitutes an integrated part of ROL, but as it is an independent juridical person, it still carries out its own activities.[283]

A moderate defender of the Russian language in Latvia is the *Latvian Association of Russian Language and Literature Teachers*, usually referred to under its Russian acronym LAPRYaL.[284] It was created in 1996, and as its name implies, LAPRYaL is a professional association, striving 'to promote settlement of issues related to learning and teaching of the Russian language and literature'.[285] LAPRYaL is a member of the Latvian Association of Language Teachers (LVASA), and it gives consultations to the Latvian Ministry of Education in matters concerning Russian language use in the school system. Although it has declared itself against the school language reform, LAPRYaL seems to have accepted Latvian as the single state language.

The *Latvian Association for Support of Schools with Russian Language of Instruction*, Russian acronym LAShOR, is an NGO for support to schools with a curriculum in Russian language, founded in 1996. Its aim is to contribute to the maintenance and development of education in Russian in Latvia. LAShOR states that good command of Latvian is a 'moral norm' for non-Latvians living in Latvia. Therefore, the state must ensure such teaching of Latvian in schools that graduates have a free command of the Latvian language. However, schools and parents should be free to choose the language of instruction on all levels in municipal schools, in particular the Russian language. It supports integration in Latvian society, but a transfer of state schools into the Latvian language would

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280 'Ne dolgo bylo razluka', *Vesti Segodnya*, June 12, 2002.

281 'Integratsiya – eto rabochie mesta', *Vesti Segodnya*, November 22, 2001; 'Puti, katorye my vybiraem' *Panorama Latvii*, October 21, 2002, No 246 (3015).

282 *Vesti Segodnya*, June 12, 2002, op. cit.

283 *www.regnum.ru* June 20, 2005, op. cit.

284 Russian name: Latviyskaya assotsiatsiya prepodavateley russkogo yazyka i literatury. Information from LAPRYaL homepage. *www.laprjal.com*.

285 LAPRYaL homepage.

rather lead to assimilation instead of integration. LAShOR is also a consultative body for the Ministry of Education on language issues.[286]

Another early NGO worth mentioning is the *Latvian Human Rights Committee*, Russian abbreviation LKPCh.[287] It was founded in 1990, but it was only in May 1995 that it became registered as an NGO. The same year LKPCh joined one of the biggest associations of human rights defence in the world, the somewhat leftist International Federation of Human Rights – F.I.D.H. The Latvian Human Rights Committee, however, is a small NGO with a few dozen members. The main activities of the committee are to render legal counselling to the public and to monitor the human rights situation in Latvia and prepare and distribute materials on human rights in Latvia. Since a long time ago, LKPCh receives EU grants for project funding.[288] Simultaneously, LKPCh is a highly politicised organization due to its connections to the political party Equal Rights and the new Zapchel. Among the people behind LKPCh are, among others, Tatiana Zhdanok, leader of Zapchel and EU parliamentarian, Vladimir Buzayev, Saeima MP for Zapchel and Gennady Kotov, Zapchel deputy in the Riga City Council.

The organizations listed above are examples of a first generation of Latvia-Russian NGOs in post-independent Latvia. Starting in 2003, a second generation, which is usually more radical and implacable, has developed as a reaction to the school reform of 1998. The mobilising factor has been the sinister date of September 1, 2004, the first day of implementation of the latest amendments to the school reform, i.e. the already mentioned Reforma 2004, according to which 60 per cent of teaching in the higher school classes should be in Latvian language (see section 4.4).

A first attempt to put some weight behind the Latvia-Russian demands to overturn Reforma 2004 was the organization of the *Headquarters for the Defence of Russian Schools in Latvia*, usually referred to by its Russian short name *The Shtab*, in April 2003.[289] Strictly speaking, The Shtab is not an NGO, as it has remained unregistered with Latvian authorities. However, to be registered officially is not one of its ambitions as 'The Shtab is not an organization but an

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286 From LAShOR homepage, *www.lashor.lv*, memorandum of LAShOR principles and position.

287 Latviyskiy komitet po pravam cheloveka.

288 'Kto zakazal shtab?', *Vesti Segodnya*, April 22, 2004.

289 No official name in English seems to exist. Some other translations used are 'Committee to the protection of Russian Schools in Latvia', 'Russian Schools Defence Staff', and 'Shtab to Protect Schools with Russian as the Language of Instruction'. Full name in Russian: 'Shtab zashity russkikh shkol'.

event' and The Shtab is 'a net structure into which everyone enters with his or her own resources'.[290] Zapchel describes The Shtab in following words:

> From the beginning, The Shtab has acquired the form of a perpetually active social 'forum'. There is no leader, no statutes and no formal status as a social organization. In addition, there are no particular secrets – anyone can come to the Shtab meetings and participate in the discussion. During the discussion, suggestions about protest actions take form. Those participants of the discussion who agree with the suggestion, participates in its implementation. Those who can help materially donate money for information material.[291]

According to its homepage, eleven different organizations stand behind The Shtab: Zapchel, LKPCh, LAShOR, ROvL, ROL, Latvian Association of Russian Youth - LARM, Belarusian Society 'Pramen', Union of the Ukrainians of Latvia, Youth Club of Latvia (MKL), Youth Movement 'Solidarnost' and Latvian Academy for Thai Kick-Boxing (LAT).[292] Moreover, The Shtab also claims that it is supported by different school committees for parents and teachers.[293] Judging by the information provided on the homepage of The Shtab, it seems that Zapchel and LKPCh are the most important.

Initially The Shtab had the support of LAPRYaL as well. However, in later documents found on the homepage of The Shtab, it has disappeared. It seems then that LAPRYaL – being a professional organization for Russian language teachers – has found itself compelled to withdraw from The Shtab, as the protest actions and the uncompromising attitude of the latter are hardly compatible with its mission.

Some kind of rift has also developed between LAShOR and The Shtab. LAShOR does not agree with The Shtab that a new education policy could only by obtained by using means of force. True, LAShOR itself has organised street manifestations since 1996, but it has also valued to keep a channel open for discussions and negotiations with the government. According to Igor Pimenov, chairman for LAShOR, 'The Shtab came to existence in 2003 on the initiative of Equal Rights, the core of Zapchel, only because the protest mode of the

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290 Citation from Shtab's homepage, *www.shtab.lv*, section 'O Shtabe'. First citation from Yuri Petropavlovskiy, the second from Aleksandr Kazakov.

291 Zapchel homepage, *www.zapchel.lv*, section Partii/Istoriya.

292 LAT might look rather odd among the other founding organisations, and when speculating about its function, the Latvian language press accused it of being some kind of a street-fighting unit for Shtab. An allegedly aggravating circumstance is the close contacts between LAT and the inner circles of Latvia-Russian radical activism, as its president, Yuri Petropavlovskiy, is also known for being a chief ideologue and political strategist for Zapchel. However, Shtab maintains that the role of LAT is just to act as a stabilizing factor at its public meetings and outdoor protest manifestations and that its members are instructed to use only peaceful means for solving conflicts.

293 Shtab homepage.

population had reached such a level that it became interesting for the politicians to exploit'.[294] Pimenov also maintains that in July 2004, LAShOR was exposed to a hostile take-over attempt by The Shtab activists, which almost killed off the organization.[295]

What has been significant for The Shtab is that it has brought out the Latvia-Russian opposition against Reforma 2004 from parliament and the editorial columns into the streets on a scale hardly seen since the protests leading to Latvian independence. As the school reform could not be overturned in the Saeima, the organizers behind The Shtab have concluded that Latvian authorities will only listen to them, if they start speaking from a position of strength. Since it was created, The Shtab has used several ways in order to obtain such a position.

The most obvious method used has been to call for mass mobilization within the Latvia-Russian group and to organize street manifestations and school strikes. After the large protest actions in spring and autumn 2004, The Shtab has been less successful though to mobilize any large-scale support for its cause.

The Shtab has also frequently appealed to the international community to intervene in Latvian politics, for instance in order to stop the allegedly growing tendencies of fascism in Latvia and to put an end to the state-supported discrimination against the Latvia-Russians and serious violations of basic human rights. Since Tatiana Zhdanok was elected to the European Parliament, she has assisted the Shtab in organising meetings in Strasbourg with EU parliamentarians, where the Shtab representatives have been able to submit their view of the situation in Latvia.[296] The Shtab activists have also visited Moscow.[297]

Thus, one interpretation of the strategy of the Shtab is that it aims at instigating objectively observed high levels of civil disorder in Latvia, and then to forward its subjective interpretations of the situation to the international community. A situation of strength will then have been achieved, when the Latvian government finds it less painful to negotiate with the opponents of Reforma 2004 than to face the embarrassment of open critique, and possible sanctions or measures, from the international community.[298]

The methods used by the Shtab have been vehemently condemned within the Latvian society, especially the participation of children in street manifestations

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294 'Konsolidatsii russkikh Latvii meshaet otsutstvie ledera', *www.regnum.ru* June 20, 2005.

295 Ibid.; 'Raskol v Latviyskoy assotsiatsii v podderzhku shkol s russkim yazykom obuchenia', *www.regnum.ru*, August 2, 2004. At this time, LAShOR had 36 members when eleven Shtab activists applied for membership. When it was denied, 10 of the members decided to leave LAShOR.

296 According to Shtab homepage, one journey to Strasbourg was carried out in July 2004 and another in February 2005.

297 'Situation around Russian schools in Latvia', Echo Moskvy, March 4, 2004.

298 Ibid.

and repeated calls for school strikes. Among Latvian nationalists, the impression of Latvia-Russians as an unreliable group has rather been strengthened by the Shtab activities. From the sideline, Ilze Brands Kehre of the Latvian Centre for Human Rights and Ethnic Studies maintains that rather than the militaristic and categorical rhetoric of the Shtab, it would have been better to continue the political dialogue and to find compromises.[299] Critique against The Shtab also exists within the Latvia-Russian community. Dimitriy Nikolaev of the NGO Russkaya Zapada considers it as wrong to drag children into the political game.[300] The Socialist Party, which usually sides with the Latvia-Russians, has also expressed itself as being strongly against the methods used by the Shtab.[301]

As September 2004 approached, the Shtab did succeed in drawing attention to its cause that went far beyond the Latvian borders. However, it was probably partly helped by a temporarily higher international interest in Latvia, being one of the candidate countries that were to be admitted as new members to NATO and the EU in spring 2004. It was a serious setback, though, that only five per cent of the students responded to the call of the Shtab to stay absent from school on September 1, 2004. According to Pantelejevs, national security adviser to Prime Minister Emsis, 'the Shtab activists had not understood that there was no support within the community for such a radical and senseless action.'[302]

Being just a loose network kept together by enthusiasm and voluntary work usually carried out by very young people, it became evident that the Shtab lacked the necessary financial strength and patience to fight any prolonged struggle on its own. The solution that the architects behind the Shtab came up with was to set up a new umbrella construction purporting to embrace all parts of the Latvia-Russian community defined as 'everyone considering Russian language and culture as their homeland'.[303]

The constituent assembly of the resultant *United Congress of Russian Communities of Latvia* – OKROL in its Russian acronym – took place in the Moscow House in Riga at September 12, 2004 after several months of preparations.[304] The preamble to the programme manifesto, adopted by the assembly, states that all official politics in Latvia, either openly or in a disguised manner, is aimed at ruining the Russian cultural and language community. In this context, Reforma 2004 is just another part of a chauvinist policy striving for a complete deconstruction of the Russian community in Latvia. The perceived en-

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299 Ilze Brands Kehre, May 2005.

300 Dimitriy Nikolaev, April 2005.

301 Alfreds Rubiks, April 2005.

302 'Panteleyev: "OKROL – eto novy Interfront"', *Vesti Segodnya*, September 15, 2004.

303 *Programma OKROL (Manifest)*. The Manifesto can be found at the homepage of OKROL, *www.ruslv.org*.

304 In Russian: *Obedinennogo Kongressa Russkoy Obshchiny Latvii.*

croachment on the children is seen as the last drop. The way forward to protect the Russian community and to guarantee it a worthy existence in future goes through unification and formulation of explicit national and cultural, social and political and economic goals and tasks. According to the founders, the purpose of OKROL is to fulfil this mission.[305]

Further, the manifesto reveals that OKROL has no confidence in the Latvian state. It wants to settle all outstanding issues in a direct dialogue with the Latvian community, bypassing the state. The programme manifesto includes an ambitious wish list including a modernised education system in the Russian language and it embodies a Russian elite institute, introduction of traditional Russian holidays, consulting centres for Latvia-Russian companies, jobcentres for Russian speakers, a union for Russian entrepreneurs, a network of business angels, a social fund and a pension fund, *et cetera*.[306] Thus, the manifesto aims at special solutions for the Russian community, which chiefly lead one's thoughts to a new state within the state.

An important issue at the constituent assembly was how the ambitious programme of OKROL could be financed. One idea put forward was that OKROL should ask for a proportional share of the state budget with regard to taxes paid by the Latvia-Russians. Financial means could also be obtained from Latvia-Russian small and middle-sized enterprises in a longer perspective, provided that an enhanced business infrastructure could be put in place from which the Latvia-Russian companies would prosper. [307] Other sources of financing outlined in the manifesto could be generated from Russian state and business structures, as well as different EU funds and better integration of Latvia-Russian business with the EU economy. For these reasons, OKROL intended to open representative offices in Moscow as well as in Strasbourg or Brussels.[308]

Another interpretation of the detailed manifesto is that OKROL, in a future not too far away, eventually will turn itself into a new political party. The manifesto itself denies such a scenario. Nevertheless, OKROL will exercise its influence on Latvian politics through specific politicians whom it has chosen to support in municipal and national elections.[309] At least theoretically, party affiliation is said to be less important for picking the right candidates worthy of sup-

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305 *Programma OKROL*, op. cit.

306 An angel investor (business angel in Europe) is an affluent individual who provides capital for a business start up, usually in exchange for ownership equity. Unlike venture capitalists, angels typically do not manage the pooled money of others in a professionally-managed fund.

307 'V Latvii uchrezhden Obedinenny Kongress Russkoy obshchiny Latvii', *www.regnum.ru* September 13, 2004.

308 *Programma OKROL*, op. cit.

309 Ibid.

port from OKROL than their record of accomplishment as stout defenders of the Latvia-Russian community. Even so, reality might reveal itself to be more complicated, as the architects behind OKROL usually are perceived as being closely associated with Zapchel and the Shtab, who in turn, are considered being hard-lined radicals. The harm seems to have been done already, even if Zapchel after the constituent assembly of OKROL decided that its leaders should withdraw from the work in the OKROL representative assembly and recommended its two ordinary members elected as co-chairmen for OKROL, Mikhail Tyasin and Eduard Goncharov, to suspend their party membership.[310] From the beginning, OKROL joined the Shtab as well, but then chose to withdraw. The connection is still there, as many members of OKROL are also Shtab activists.[311] According to its annual report of 2004, OKROL worked together with the Shtab and Zapchel in order to unmask the school reform, and it invited the Duma deputy Natalia Narochnitskaya from Rogozin's Rodina party together with Zapchel.[312]

Today OKROL lays claim to be the largest Latvia-Russian NGO; some months after its creation membership figures above 50,000 members circulated in Latvian mass media.[313] Not all other Latvia-Russian NGOs are impressed or welcome this development. Neither ROL, nor LAShOR nor ROvL have chosen to join the new organization. Viacheslav Altukhov means that his organization already has a history of 15 years, and that he does not find any reason why ROL should join a new organization that has yet to find its forms.[314] Igor Pimenov states that 'even if Tyasin declares that he unites all, it does not mean that all want to be united by him. The desire to obtain massiveness at any price is a bad sign.'[315] ROvL is open for co-operation with OKROL and participates in all meetings, according to Tatiana Favorskaya. It has chosen, though, not to join the organization: 'Tyasin recently joined public life, and to him it seems that in this field the horse did not loll in the grass before him.'[316]

Quite predictably, OKROL was not well received by ethnic Latvians. Andreys Panteleyevs claimed that the OKROL manifesto reminded of the termi-

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310 'OKROL prirastaet predprinimatelyami', *Chas* September 27, 2004; *www.regnum.ru*, September 13, 2004, op. cit. Besides being members in Zapchel, Mikhail Tyasin has worked actively within the Shtab and Eduard Goncharov is a well-known ROvL activist too.

311 'Konsolidatsii russkikh Latvii meshaet otsutstvie ledera', *www.regnum.ru* June 20, 2005.

312 *Itogi raboty Pravleniya OKROL za istekshiy god.* The Itogi can be found at the homepage of OKROL, *www.ruslv.org.*

313 'Human Rights in Latvia in 2004', p. 31, Latvian Centre for Human Rights and ethnic studies, *www.humanrights.org.lv/html/*.

314 Ibid.

315 Ibid.

316 'Konsolidatsii russkikh Latvii meshaet otsutstvie ledera', *www.regnum.ru* June 20, 2005.

nology and idea of the Interfront movement, which he found most disturbing.[317] An aggravating circumstance from the Latvian point of view has also been the connection between OKROL and Aleksandr Kazakov. Kazakov designed OKROL, and besides Yuri Petropavlovskiy, he is considered as the main architect behind the Shtab as well. In spring 2004, he had attracted the authorities' attention for stirring ethnic hatred between ethnic Latvians and Russian-speakers. Minister for the Interior, Eriks Jekabsons, stated in June 2004 that 'Kazakov and Petropavlovskiy are on a very dangerous path of confrontation and instigation, inveigling children in mass actions. Kazakov is no ascetic unselfish righteous man but an ordinary demagogue, and his demagogy has already reached dangerous levels.'[318] Kazakov was also accused of collaboration with Duma deputy Dimitriy Rogozin, whose connections and interest in Latvia have already been presented (see section 5.5). In April 2004, Prime Minister Emsis openly accused Kazakov of being specially sent by Moscow to Latvia in order to organize the protests against Reforma 2004.[319] Kazakov for his part claimed that he became an assistant to Rogozin only after the Shtab had already been created and that he had never been paid by Rogozin, nor did he occupy any position in connection with the Russian State Duma. In addition, he could not have been sent to Latvia as he has lived most of his life in Riga, a city in which he was actually born.[320] Nevertheless, as Kazakov was a Latvian non-citizen with Russian citizenship, Latvian authorities finally saw fit to ostracize him to Russia on September 3, 2004.[321] As Kazakov was deported from the country, he could not participate in the constituent assembly of OKROL, where he was elected co-president of the new organisation. Neither could Rogozin participate, as he had been denied a visa to enter Latvia for the event. Yuri Petropavlovskiy is still in Latvia, but being perceived as disloyal to the Latvian state, he is so far denied Latvian citizenship, even if he has passed all obligatory tests for naturalisation.[322]

Thus, fourteen years after Latvian independence, it seems that a well-developed Latvia-Russian civil society has come to existence. However, in most cases, connections to the Latvian civil society seem to be relatively weak. Latvia-Russian NGOs have been created in order to pursue issues that do not affect ethnic Latvians in the same way; therefore, they do not catch the attention of ordinary Latvians.

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317 'Panteleyev: "OKROL – eto novy Interfront"', *Vesti Segodnya*, September 15, 2004.

318 'Yekabsons: "Narod pytayutsya zombirovat!"', *Vesti Segodnya*, July 8, 2004.

319 'Kto zakazal shtab? *Vesti Segodnya*, April 22, 2004.

320 Ibid; Shtab homepage: 'Otkrytoe pismo A. Kazakova premier-ministry LR I. Emsisu'.

321 'Iz Latvii vydvorili Zashchitnika shkol Aleksandra Kazakova', *Chas*, September 4, 2004.

322 Ivars Indans, February 2005, Andrey Yakovlev, March 2005.

The recent school reform seems to have triggered a political awakening among the Russian speakers. At least in a shorter perspective more people have gotten themselves involved in societal matters. Simultaneously, there has been a political radicalisation with a second generation of NGOs springing to life. It also appears that some of the more radical NGOs are no more than 'transmission belts' for Latvia-Russian political parties, at first hand for the new Zapchel coalition.

Obviously, there are objectively verifiable connections between Latvia-Russian NGOs and different interests in Russia. Usually Latvian authorities do not meddle as these relations are either considered quite weak or of a harmless character. In some cases though, Kazakov and Petropavlovskiy being the most evident examples, the government has found reason to interfere, at least as a lesson and warning to others. Russia is not the only source of support considered by Latvia-Russian NGOs, though. Some organizations work with the government, and others have turned to the international community. European structures, especially the European Union holds a special position in this matter. Within the Zapchel sphere, it is the Latvian Human Rights Committee, LKPCh, which is the biggest grant-seeker.[323]

6.5. The Latvia-Russian business community

Besides possible Russian capital and support from international funds and structures, Latvia-Russian political parties and NGOs certainly have a choice of mobilising resources from within Latvia. The main sources of this support, apart from possible state funds, are theoretically made up of contributions from private citizens and business structures, sacrificing whatever means they are prepared to dispense with. In this context, the business structures are of special interest. Private business is usually more able to generate material support than private persons are. In comparison with the state, it is less bureaucratic as it answers to no one except itself, provided that its acts and deeds are kept within the boundaries of the law.

In Latvia, the conditions for getting support from the business sector are potentially better than in Estonia and Lithuania. Compared to these countries, a proportionally larger part of the Russian-speaking population is engaged in private business. In a study from 1993, Anatol Lieven claimed that in contrast to the other two Baltic republics Latvia has attracted a higher proportion of educated Russians who have become the driving force in the private business sector and areas of technological development.[324] Some people like Mikhail Tyasin, OKROL, even think that the private sector has been the sole chance for Rus-

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323 'Skandal vokrug "finansirovaniya" Shtaba zashchity russkikh shkol Latvii', *www.regnum.ru*, September 7, 2005.

324 Lieven (1993) p. 188 as cited in Dreifelds (1996) p. 168.

sian-speakers to survive in Latvia, as they have been almost completely excluded from the state sector.[325]

Which role, then, has Latvia-Russian businessmen so far actually played in the establishment of a Russian-speaking civil society? A fierce critic of the Latvia-Russian business community in Russia, the Duma deputy Konstantin Zatulin, claims that Latvia-Russian businessmen are more interested in their own business than in the well-being of the local society. Therefore, when in Russia, they have come to appear more as effective lobbyists for nationalistic Latvian interests than as stout defenders of Latvia-Russian civil rights.[326] It should not be forgotten, though, that as a Russian nationalist boosting his own popularity by playing the Latvian card for domestic purposes, Zatulin probably finds it profitable to show his supporters that Latvia-Russians are still in need of Russian help and protection in order to defend their civil rights.

In Latvia, in an article in *Panorama Latvii* from 2002, Viacheslav Altukhov, ROL, nevertheless followed the same line, complaining over the Latvia-Russian business structures' lack of interest in civil society, 'effectively putting the burden of struggle for Russian equal rights on the shoulders of the poor'. In the same article, Altukhov maintained that he had asked twice for material help from two of the largest Latvian banks – Rietumu Bank and Parex Bank – but that he had been turned down both times. Still, 'as the gentlemen in Brussels are far away, think too long and make decisions slowly and as Russia is drowning in its own troubles', Altukhov's conclusion was that the Latvia-Russian community had to begin to help itself.[327]

However, other sources maintain that the Latvia-Russian business community is more involved in civil society matters. According to Anna Novitskaya at the daily Russian-language newspaper Telegraf, Zapchel is financed by Russian-speaking businessmen in Latvia.[328] Another Russian-language daily newspaper, Chas, mentions that money for project realisation usually comes from the Soros Foundation, the Berezovsky fund, the Latvian Integration Fund, the Ministry of Culture, 'but that bankers and entrepreneurs do not always say no'.[329] Alex Krasnitsky, journalist at Chas, means that help from the business community does not always need to be financial either. For instance, a bus company might help in organising transports for activists, or a café or small restaurant might offer them food and drink in connection with protest activities. Observations at street demonstrations have also shown that activists' T-shirts have been

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325 Mikhail Tyasin, April 2005.

326 Moskovskaya sreda, No 8(66), 3-9 March 2004, p. 3.

327 Viacheslav Altukhov: 'Puti kotorye my vybiraem' *Panorama Latvii*, October 21, 2002, No. 246 (3015).

328 Anna Novitskaya, March 2005.

329 'Pochemu v Latvii net russkogo dvizhenia', *Chas*, March 12, 2002.

prepared by different firms as the prints and marks of the T-shirts have differed, according to Krasnitsky. This could indicate that the T-shirts have been prepared free of charge and that the cost therefore has been split between various sympathising printing firms.[330]

In any case, Alex Krasnitsky considers that there is a much greater interest in social issues today among Latvia-Russian businessmen than before. This interest coincides with the above-mentioned birth of the second generation of Latvia-Russian NGOs. Before Reforma 2004, the stratum of Russian-speaking entrepreneurs and businessmen usually abstained from politics and concentrated on their business. The school reform, according to Krasnitsky, left them with an apprehension of being vulnerable and being pressured from two different directions by the state: From one side the school reform was perceived as an assault on their children and all kinds of family values related to Russian language and culture. From the other side their business ventures were pressured by high taxes for the benefit of a mostly ethnic Latvian state administration, depriving them of the means necessary for solving the school issue outside the ordinary school system by organising private education institutions.[331]

Besides the natural weakness of the Shtab discussed above, it is within this context that the birth of OKROL must be considered. As discussed before, the programme of OKROL is very ambitious, and even if it aspires to obtain a certain degree of volume, due to the aims and objectives of its programme, OKROL has quite consciously targeted Russian-speaking business people, trying to recruit them into its active core. In the OKROL vision for the future, this stratum constitutes the embryo of a new Latvian political and economic elite that could replace the present ethnocrats and the puppet state they have created (sic).[332] This new elite would also defend the titular nation and the Latgalian nation, as these groups obviously do not understand their true interests and therefore are unable to defend them.[333]

So far, after one year of existence, the OKROL recruiting strategy seems to be working. Independent local branches have so far been set up in Liepaja, Jelgava, Rezekne and Riga.[334] All local branches are led by Russian-speaking entrepreneurs, who seem to be more enthusiastic about an NGO abstaining from party politics than the local intellectual elite is.[335]

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330 Alex Krasnitsky, April 2005.

331 Alex Krasnitsky, April 2005.

332 *Itogi raboty Pravleniya OKROL za istekshiy god*, op. cit.

333 Ibid. It is unknown to the author if the resemblance with Leninist theory and rhetoric about the Communist party as an avant-garde of the revolution and defender of the objective interests of the worker class is just coincidental or not.

334 According to OKROL homepage, *www.ruslv.org*.

335 'OKROL prirastaet predprinimatelyami', *Chas*, September 27, 2004.

One instrument used by OKROL for uniting the Russian-speaking businessmen of Latvia has been the *Union of Russian entrepreneurs*, SRPL, which has been formed under the aegis of OKROL.[336] SRPL seems to have its main interests in the economic sphere, complementing or replacing the existing state infrastructure for business support. Projects in preparation include, among others, an employment office, a network of business angels, an arbitration court and an advice bureau. Contacts have also been made, or are in progress, with business structures or local authorities in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Estonia, Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine and Kazakhstan.[337] Still, SRPL also wants to foster a spirit of social responsibility for the Russian-speaking community among its members, and anticipates a close co-operation with OKROL in this field.[338]

According to the first annual report of OKROL, SRPL has primarily attracted entrepreneurs from small and middle-sized enterprises. Rather than joining SRPL, large-scale enterprises in Riga have chosen to create a union of their own, with which OKROL claims to have established normal working contacts, considering it another part of the Latvia-Russian economic infrastructure.[339]

OKROL holds that its failure to organize the large-scale enterprises proves that these are under severe pressure from the state, and that they therefore shun the radical character of OKROL and SRPL.[340] Whatever the substance of this explanation, large-scale enterprises still have taken an interest in the development of the civil society that is far beyond their sphere of primary economic interests. A possible example dates from summer 2005. On July 2005, a long-awaited event took place in form of the unification of the People's Harmony Party and the New Centre Party, led by Sergey Dolgopolov.[341] Similar party programmes and small chances to clear the 5-percent hurdle to the Saeima – should each party choose to continue acting on their own – made this fusion a logical step. A serious obstacle on the road to unification was the People's Harmony Party leader Janis Jurkans' non-acceptance of Dolgopolov as leader for the new Centre of Harmony Coalition. In protest, he came to leave the People's Harmony party and all his party posts at the constitutional meeting of the Centre of Harmony Coalition.[342]

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336 In Russian: Soyuz russkikh predprinimateley Latvii. No official translation into English seems to exist.

337 *Itogi,* op. cit.; 'Rukovodstvo SRPL nakhoditsya na peregovorakh v Moskve na vyshem urovne'. Found at homepage of SRPL, *www.srpl.info*; date of publishing unknown.

338 Aleksandr Gaponenko: *Manifest Soyuza Russkikh Predprinimateley Latvii*, November 11, 2004; homepage of SRPL, *www.srpl.info*.

339 *Itogi*, op. cit.

340 *Itogi*, op. cit.

341 'Russia and Latvia – try to move on' *Moscow News*, July 20-26, 2005.

342 Ibid.

Jurkans' antipathy for Dolgopolov is based on the fact that the latter had been expelled from the People's Harmony Party for breach of party discipline. Immediately after his expulsion, Dolgopolov founded the New Centre Party, and tried to win over the voters of the People Harmony Party.

Jurkans found it even more serious, though, that it was not the constitutional assembly of the new party coalition that had put forward Dolgopolov as coalition leader. According to Jurkans, the Centre of Harmony Coalition was nothing else than a business project designed in the cabinets of the Parex bank and launched by the oligarchs behind it; i.e. Valeriy Kargyniy and Viktor Krasovitskiy, generally considered as Latvia's richest persons. However, this claim was rejected by Dolgopolov.[343] It seems that Latvian mass media gave larger credit to Jurkans' version than to Dolgopolov's disclaimer. One circumstance strengthening Jurkans' claims put forward in the Latvian evening paper Vakara Zinas was that Dolgopolov is financially dependent on the Parex bank. Diena looked in another direction and ran an article that implicitly involved Jurkans in the efforts of the First Party of Latvia to clean up the economic mess around the Riga Passenger Port – an initiative that would be a direct challenge to the economic interests of the Parex Bank – if realized.[344]

In any case, the new Centre of Harmony Coalition seems to have a predominance of ethnic Russians compared to People's Harmony Party. According to the reporting from the constituent assembly and the following development, Janis Jurkans was not the only prominent non-Russian who either refused any posts in the coalition or left the coalition altogether. The new coalition is thus gravitating into a pure Russian-speaking party operating on the centre-left part of the Latvian political scale. According to Jurkans' opinion, the Centre of Harmony Coalition was nothing less than a new Zapchel.[345]

6.6. Mass media

Baltic media are usually considered as being the most independent in comparison with media in all other successor states to the Soviet Union. Still, the Baltic media development has not been without challenges. According to Harro-Loit, one of the authors behind a study about the Baltic media world, the media economy in the Baltic area has undergone a change of consecutive economic paradigms since the end of the 1980s.[346] As claimed by the same source, in Latvia the development of printed media might be schematically divided into four different periods. Taken together, they stretch from the first signs of democratisa-

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343 'Novoe "soglasie" bez Yanisa Yurkansa, ili zolotoy pesok s ulitsy Smilshu', *www.regnum.ru/news/485270.html*, July 18, 2005.

344 'Bitva za Rizhskiy svobodny port', *www.regnum.ru/news/485270.html*, July 18, 2005.

345 'Novoe "soglasie" bez Yanisa Yurkansa, ili zolotoy pesok s ulitsy Smilshu', op. cit.

346 Halliki Harro-Loit in Baerug (2005), p. 92.

tion and the weakening of the media censorship system; the successful rise of an independent press on the crumbles of the Communist news media; a subsequent economic crisis characterised by rising costs and falling circulation; towards a period of 'concentration of ownership, surreptitious advertising and the development of online media'.[347] Thus, a strong competition between media players is taking place, and accordingly, media have changed their focus from a political to a market-oriented approach in terms of news production. Furthermore, 'a new audience has been born, which, for example, is less concerned about using the media for political socialisation, and has a pragmatic approach to information consumption.'[348]

Some foreign investment, particularly Scandinavian, entered the Latvian and Baltic press market already in the beginning of the 1990s, and its presence is still very significant in all three states. Three media firms, Schibsted and Orkla Media AS from Norway and Bonnier from Sweden, are notably strong in the Baltic media markets. In Latvia, Bonnier is considered as the most dominant Scandinavian media firm.[349]

On a transnational level, the whole region is covered by the news agency Baltic News Service and the online-only news portal Delfi, with sister portals in Russian in Estonia and Latvia, as well as the commercial TV3 television network and three business newspapers in the local state language owned by Bonnier in each of the Baltic states.[350]

Focusing on Latvia, ether media are dominated by the public *Latvijas Radio* and *Latvijas Televizija*, which mainly broadcast in Latvian. Still, one of the four stations belonging to Latvijas Radio – '*Dome Square'* – broadcasts in minority languages, mainly Russian, and 20 percent of transmission time on the second channel of Latvijas Televizija is devoted to programmes in other languages. Besides these giants there are 30 commercial radio broadcasters and 26 private TV broadcasters and 37 cable TV and cable radio stations operating in Latvia as well.[351]

The national dailies in Latvia can be grouped by language and profile. The largest Latvian-language dailies are *Diena* and *Latvijas Avize* with *Neatkariga Rita Avize* as a good number three. The two largest national Russian-language dailies are *Vesti Segodnya* and *Chas*.[352] 'Unlike the third national Russian-language daily, *Telegraf,* Vesti Segodnya and Chas do not resemble standard

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347 Ibid., p. 93.

348 Balcytiene, Aukse in Baerug (2005), p. 40.

349 Balcytiene, Aukse in Baerug (2005), p. 11.

350 Harro-Loit, op. cit. p. 91. The three business newspapers are: *Äripäev* in Estonia, *Dienas Bizness* in Latvia and *Verslo zinios* in Lithuania.

351 National Broadcasting Council of Latvia, *www.nrtp.lv*, visited October 4, 2005.

352 Harro-Loit, op. cit. p. 99.

national quality papers neither in form or content. They are rather more like the yellow scandal tabloid papers with little or no separation in either form or content.'[353] The Russian-language dailies also have to compete with newspapers from Russia that have developed partly Latvian and Baltic editions like *Komsomolskaya Pravda* (*Komsomolskaya Pravda Baltik*) and *Moskovskiy Komsomolets* (*MK Latviya*).

Besides the dailies mentioned above, there are also three major business newspapers in Latvia, *Dienas Bizness* in Latvian and *Biznes & Baltiya* and *Kommersant Baltik* in Russian.

Media in Latvia are primarily regulated by the Law on the Press and Other Means of Mass Communication and the Radio and Television Law. Other applicable laws deal with, for instance, regulation of commercial speech, protection of individual rights, distribution of and access to information and legal regulations applying to elections.[354] There also exists a self-regulating system, which consists of a national ethics code and a national broadcasting council with members elected by the Saeima. There is no similar council for the press, even if some dailies have introduced their own ethics code that is more far-reaching than the national code.[355]

Like in Estonia and Lithuania, the Latvian media system is characterized by 'liberal corporatism', more of market-oriented thinking as there is a strong protection of press freedom besides a liberal regulation of the media.[356] None of the Baltic states has imposed press ownership regulation and subsidies are paid only for a few cultural publications and public service broadcasting, i.e. in those sectors where there is no true market.[357] Harro-Loit suggests that one reason for this ultra-liberal media policy might be the long tradition of political censorship: the state and politicians are treated as the main threat to freedom of speech.[358]

Still, media in Latvia maintain that they are subjected to pressure from the state. One hotly debated issue has been the infamous paragraph 5 of Article 19 of the Law on Radio and Television restricting the amount of broadcasting in foreign languages to no more than 25 per cent of the total broadcast in 24 hours. For instance, in March 2002, the radio station *Biznes & Baltiya* was told that it could face permanent shutdown. One reason cited by the National Radio and Television Council was that the station had allegedly infringed on the language requirements, but the station's programme director believed that the real reason

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353 Ibid.

354 Balcytiene, Aukse and Harro-Loit, Halliki in Baerug (2005), pp. 28-29.

355 Ibid. p. 31.

356 Balcytiene, op. cit. p. 56.

357 Harro-Loit, op. cit. p. 90.

358 Ibid.

was that Bizness & Baltiya had broadcast Russian material.[359] In June 2003, the Latvian Constitutional Court reacted to an application from Zapchel, ruling that paragraph 5 of Article 19 was unconstitutional and therefore had to be abolished. Other reasons given in the ruling were that these restrictions did not comply with the Satversme, the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and, finally, that it did not promote social integration.[360]

In March 2005, the commercial Riga-based radio station *PIK 100FM* faced a temporary shut-down, as the National Radio and Television Council established that it had violated Latvian election laws by broadcasting hidden political advertisements for the Socialist Party and its coalition partner Dzimtene in connection with the election campaign to local councils in spring 2005. The owner of the station, Yuri Zhuravlyev, who was also a member of Dzimtene, accused the National Radio and Television Council for political repression, claiming that its board was dominated by people with close connections to the Latvian rightist parties. The punishment imposed on the radio station was therefore nothing but a simple revenge for the unexpected positive election results of the Socialist Party and Dzimtene in the elections to the Riga City Council, according to Zhuravlyev.[361]

As for printed media, Ksenia Zagorovskaya, chief editor at Chas, maintains that the state uses other means of pressure. During autumn 2004, Chas had some problems with overzealous tax inspections and before that, authorities came looking for pirate computer programmes. Zagorovskaya connects these controls with the radical position of her newspaper.[362] With reference to style, colour and content, there seems to be some prevailing differences between Latvian and Russian language journalism in Latvia. In an interview in the English-language weekly newspaper Baltic Times in December 2000, Inte Brikse, head of the School of Journalism at the University of Latvia, claimed that Latvian and Latvia-Russian journalists were still unprofessional in their work, but for different reasons. According to Brikse, Russian language journalism in Latvia came with a strong literary tradition, and that such storytelling skills tended to veer into fiction. On the other hand, Brikse judged Latvian language journalism as distanced and reacting too spontaneously to information without verifying the facts and checking the sources.[363]

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359 '2002 World Press Freedom Review', International Press Institute, IPI, *www.freemedia.at/wpfr/Europe/latvia.htm*, homepage visited in October 2005.

360 National Broadcasting Council of Latvia, *www.nrtp.lv*, visited October 4, 2005.

361 'V Latvii lishili efira russkoe radio', *www.regnum.ru*, March 16, 2005.

362 Zagorskaya, April 2005.

363 As referred to in '2000World Press Freedom Review', International Press Institute, IPI, *www.freemedia.at/wpfr/Europe/latvia.htm*; homepage visited in October 2005.

An impression that still prevails is that Russian language dailies are more oriented towards the left than Latvian language publications. Anna Novitskaya, news director at the Telegraf, says that her paper probably chooses more social themes compared with Latvian newspapers. At least Telegraf – and other Russian language dailies – gives these kinds of news a more salient place on the front page with large pictures and headlines, whereas Latvian dailies usually choose to tell the same story some pages into the newspaper. Novitskaya agrees that Russian language dailies are more pro-Russian than pro-Latvian.[364] Given the same question, Zagorovskaya at Chas claims that the Russian language press is more pro-European or pro-EU than Latvian dailies, not pro-Russian.[365] Probably, this should be interpreted in such a way that Russian language media in Latvia, according to Zagorovskaya, would be keener on upholding Latvian obligations than the state itself when it comes to human and minority rights as defined in international treaties and commitments accepted by Latvia.

It seems that the special features of Russian-language journalism in Latvia are better received by Russian speakers than Latvian-language journalism. During a couple of years, Diena tried to publish a Russian version of its newspaper, but in December 1999, *Novy Dien* published its last edition. It was shut down ostensibly because the publishers of Diena thought it had succeeded in bringing the two communities closer together and it was therefore no longer needed. Critics meant, though, that its waning circulation and regular lack of advertising were evidence enough that Novy Dien was closed for financial reasons. The majority in the Russian community felt that Novy Dien rarely addressed their concerns, since it merely consisted of translations of Diena stories,.[366]

This picture of lacking interest in Latvian media is confirmed by a study carried out by the Baltic Social Science Institute in 2001-2002. This study showed that the popularity of radio stations and newspapers broadcasting and printing in Latvian continued to decrease among Latvia-Russians, even if the number of magazine readers were increasing. Latvian television programmes were more popular than the printed press, but they too had lost a small portion of the Russian-speaking audience over the past 2-3 years preceding the study. One explanation put forward in the study was a slightly decreased number of people who believed that it was very important for the whole population to know Latvian.[367] Another conclusion that might be added without contradicting

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364 Novitskaya, March 2005.

365 Zagorskaya, April 2005.

366 '1999 World Press Freedom Review', International Press Institute, IPI, *www.free-media.at/wpfr/Europe/latvia.htm*, homepage visited in October 2005.

367 Zepa, Birgita & Kolesnikova, Karina (2002): *Language, a Survey of the Latvian Population, November 2001 - January 2002*, Baltic Social Science Institute. As referred to at *www.policy.lv*, section Social Integration, site visited September 28, 2005.

the findings is that issues discussed in Latvian media are of no or minor interest to the Latvia-Russian community.

However, in today's liberal Latvian media economy, editorial independence hinges not on state non-interference and large audiences or huge circulation figures only, but on advertisement as well. Diena became the first paper in Latvia to focus seriously on advertising to achieve sound economic results that would ensure editorial independence. Unlike Diena, many other Latvian newspapers, radio and TV stations have not managed to attract the necessary amount of advertising and have become very vulnerable to influence from outside – first of all from owners and investors. Many newspapers, radio and TV channels are thus sponsored by political and economic groups that want to get their message across.[368] Partially due to a lack of transparency in the patterns of media ownership in Latvia as well as the absence of laws to regulate media concentration or cross-media ownership, it is a somewhat tricky task to identify these groups. Balcytiene, another author behind the study of the Baltic media world, means that although partial information about owners can be obtained from the Company Register, a lack of publicly available and updated information about the real owners of different media companies is the main drawback in the Latvian media market.[369]

In this context, media companies publishing and broadcasting in Russian are not considered as the least opaque, concerning public access to company information.[370] Still, it is well known that the largest national Russian-language dailies, Vesti Segodnya and Chas, are owned by two major competing publishing houses, Fenster and Petits. *Fenster* owns 75 per cent of *Litera* that again fully owns Vesti Segodnya. *Petits* is the 100 per cent owner of Chas and is owned, in turn, by a local person, Aleksey Sheynin. The third national paper in Russian, Telegraf, is owned in full by another local private businessman, Valeriy Belokony. The business daily Kommersant Baltik is also owned by Fenster and even distributed together with Vesti Segodnya, whereas Bizness & Baltiya is owned by *AS Masu mediju centrs Bizness & Baltija*.[371] Compared with Latvian language media, Harro-Loit notes that first, ownership is thus separated from Latvian language media ownership. Second, the Russian-language press is less concentrated and less stable.[372]

According to the sources utilized for preparing this text, no formal or direct links between the dominant Russian-language media and the radical political

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368 Harro-Loit, op. cit. p. 94.

369 Balcytiene, op. cit. p. 43.

370 Harro-Loit, op. cit. p. 99.

371 Harro-Loit, op. cit. pp. 99-100; 108-109.

372 Harro-Loit, op. cit. p. 105.

parties and NGOs within the Latvia-Russian community have been discovered. It is true, though, that at least the Socialist Party and Zapchel publish papers of their own, the monthly *Sotsialist Latvii* and the internet-based *Rakurs*, but these are hardly any newspapers in the full sense of the word. Neither are they issued on a daily basis, nor do they have any general news coverage beyond issues of interest to their members and sympathizers. Still, the old Zapchel made an effort to reach a broader audience by obtaining the then very popular Russian language daily *Panorama Latvii*, with a target audience of poor elderly people. When in charge, the party did not succeed in running the paper, and it went bankrupt in 2003, at the same time as when the coalition itself started to fall apart.[373]

Nonetheless, informal connections cannot be completely ruled out. For instance, Saeima deputy Nikolay Kabanov made his career within the newspaper Vesti Segodnya as a journalist and senior manager, before he was elected to the Saeima for the Zapchel fraction on a party ticket from Equal Rights. He still writes chronicles for Vesti Segodnya besides his ordinary work as a Saeima deputy. In the same way, Valeriy Karpuskin from People's Harmony Party worked in the sports department of Chas before becoming a Saeima deputy. Allegedly, in their reporting from the election campaigns to the European Parliament, Vesti Segodnya apparently marketed Zapchel and Chas the People's Harmony Party.[374]

The first annual report of OKROL offers some complementary reading from the other side about the media's relations with civil society. OKROL does not conceal that it has tried to cultivate good relations with media in Latvia, at first hand with Russian-language media. The press is perceived as being favourably disposed to OKROL as it usually publishes the main content of the material supplied by the organization. Also *Radio 102.7* (*Mix FM*) as well as the integration channel of Latvijas Radio, 'Dome Square', from one time to another give the OKROL activists opportunity to broadcast. On the contrary, the television usually gives a more biased picture of the organization. OKROL gives no further information how it has been received by Latvian-language media, but as its first year in existence was dedicated to the Russian-speaking community and the formation of a 'national self-consciousness among the Russians', contacts with ethnic Latvians have so far not been prioritized.[375]

The annual report of OKROL also reveals a far-reaching instrumental view on the role of media in society. News media are basically perceived as comple-

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373 '2003 World Press Freedom Review', International Press Institute, IPI, *www.free-media.at/wpfr/Europe/latvia.htm*, homepage visited in October 2005.

374 'V Latvii uchrezhden Obedinenny Kongress Russkoy obshchiny Latvii', *www.regnum.ru* September 13, 2004, p. 3.

375 *Itogi raboty Pravleniya OKROL za istekshiy god*, op. cit.

ments to whatever information channels a political party or an NGO might possess on their own. It is more or less taken for granted that Russian-language media should be loyal to issues dear to the Russian-speaking community such as state school education in Russian for Russian-speaking children, the status of Russian as an official language, automatic citizenship to all remaining non-citizens, etc. In addition, contemplating the above-mentioned fate of Novy Dien, this kind of journalism is what the Latvia-Russian audience really rewards.

Russian language dailies are also very aware that they serve solely a Russian-speaking audience. 'When it comes to Russian publishers, journalists and readers, most of the process is dominated by an ethnic or non-Western European culture.'[376] It is both a question of following the logic of the market and a conscious move of the owners and publishers based on convictions and ideology.[377] At Diena, journalist Ilve Grinoma says that Russian language press has more or less shouldered a mission. Even Telegraf is included in this judgement, as, according to Grinoma, it has begun to deviate from a neutral account of reality to a missionary role.[378] This impression is also reflected in a content analysis study about the treatment of citizenship and social integration issues in media in Latvia, made in 2001. The results showed that these issues were discussed more frequently in Russian-language media, whose position was more positive towards the arguments of the Latvia-Russian radicals than Latvian media.[379]

Even if Russian language media then might be perceived as biased in favour of Russian-speakers and Latvia-Russians, they are usually restrained to ordinary journalistic work. As they nevertheless constantly feed Latvia-Russians with a perspective of exclusion and unfair treatment by Latvian authorities, their message has a potential political explosive force that might rapidly create crises of a serious character. A case in point is the involvement of the newspaper Panorama Latvii in the confrontation already mentioned between a group of pensioners, mostly ethnic Russians, and the Riga City Council on March 3, 1998. In short, the crisis was triggered by an article about the problems people were having with paying their heating bills, which had been published in Panorama Latvii on the previous day. The author of the article, journalist Inna Harlanova, proposed that anyone who was dissatisfied with the prevailing situation should come to the Riga City Council on March 3 to discuss the issue and to make plans for further action. More than a thousand people responded to her call, which effectively came to block the Valdemara Street, Riga's second busiest street. The organizers had not asked for any official permission to organize such

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376 Dimants, Ainars in Baerug (2005), p. 123.

377 Dimants, op. cit. pp. 127-128, 132-133, 138-139, 141.

378 Ilve Grinoma, April 2005.

379 'Content Analysis of Mass Media', Mediju Tilts, Riga 2001. The report is referred to at *www.policy.lv* and it might be downloaded at *www.np.gov.lv*.

an event, and when the demonstrators neglected requests by the police to clear the street, the police used force to restore order. For several reasons beyond the control of Panorama Latvii, this incident then quickly escalated, which finally created a major crisis in Latvian-Russian relations in spring 1998.[380] It was never proved that Panorama Latvii had purposely provoked the incident, and in court, the newspaper was only fined 25 lats for organising an unauthorized meeting in addition to 339.40 lats to cover the losses endured to the municipal transport system.[381]

The incident clearly reveals to what results unwise use of media power in Latvia might lead. The subsequent news coverage of the crisis as it unfolded in spring 1998 also emphasized that media helped to enhance the polarization of the Latvian society along ethnic and language lines rather than bridge the gap between the different groups. In a study referred to by Bleiere and Stranga in their analysis of the crisis, Russian language media were especially criticized their negative attitude towards Latvian state institutions, the naturalization process and the Latvian language. According to Bleiere and Stranga, both the 'Latvian and the Russian [language] press were often just reproducing the common myths and stereotypes already existing in their target audience. Most often, this was done through editorials and analytical articles, but it also occurred by stressing certain information over other information, just totally disregarding some information, failing to reflect the views of all sides in an argument, and so on. It was not only the political sympathies of the various newspapers and the desire of their sponsors and advertisers that contributed to this, but it was also the aim of the newspapers to maintain their readership.'[382] The logic conclusion of this analysis is therefore that media in Latvia are creating a separate information space for Latvian- and Russian-speaking people.[383] Taking the long view, they might actively contribute to the creation of a divided state, consisting of a Latvia-Russian and a Latvian community.

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380 Bleiere & Stranga (2000), pp. 216, 222.

381 Ibid. p. 226.

382 Ibid. p. 250.

383 Ibid.

7. Conclusions

Demographic realities in Latvia have been given a high priority in national policymaking. Due to a large influx of Russian-speakers after WW II, the general perception among ethnic Latvians about the Soviet legacy at the time of Latvian independence was that it had left them vulnerable to national extinction, as they barely made up 50 per cent of the whole population. For the majority of the Latvian intellectual elite that came to power in the early 1990s, it was therefore unthinkable to accept the so-called zero-option solution that was implemented at the same time in Russia, Lithuania and the CIS states, granting citizenship to all people who were constantly living in the actual state at the time of independence.

Another obstacle preventing ethnic Latvians from unconditionally accepting post-WW II immigrants as Latvian citizens was that they considered the Soviet period as an unlawful occupation of Latvian territory. Hence, citizenship in post-Soviet Latvia ought to be exclusively granted to persons who were citizens of Latvia before it lost its independence, i.e. no later than June 17, 1940, as well as to their descendants. Citizenship laws have then been added to Latvian legislation, making citizenship possible for other groups of people too, given that some basic demands concerning permanent residence, knowledge of Latvian language, history and constitution are met.

Russia, as well as many of those people concerned, has not accepted the Latvian interpretation of the Soviet annexation of Latvia. On the contrary, it is presumed that Latvia voluntarily joined the Soviet Union. Consequently, at the end of WW II, it was liberated by Soviet troops that just returned to Soviet territory that had been occupied by the Germans, forcing any remaining foreign troops to leave. Therefore, people taking up residence in Latvia after the war just migrated within the same state, and as intrastate migrants, they should be granted Latvian citizenship on the same premises as any pre-WW II residents.

Russia and Latvia-Russians have also assumed that the latter should automatically be given the status of a national minority. So far, the concept of a national minority has not been defined in Latvian legislation. References to international praxis are not of much use in this case. In fact, there is no international generally accepted interpretation of the concept, which might have served as a starting point for any minority legislation at the state level. For instance, the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities of the Council of Europe, which has figured frequently in Latvian media during the last few years, does not provide any workable clarification of the matter. The Convention leaves this task to the signing states, so that they can find suitable definitions based on their actual internal situation.

The advocates for a Latvia-Russian minority status have so far failed to explain on which principles they base their claims as well. They have more or less

taken it for granted that Latvia-Russians are a Latvian national minority. Between the lines, three arguments in favour of minority status shine through. First, the post-WW II migration of Russians and other Slavs to Latvia might be considered as a natural continuation of a historic westward movement that has been going on for hundreds of years. In pursuance of their ethnic, cultural and linguistic affinity with pre-WW II Russian immigrants – including Old Believers who arrived centuries ago – all Russian-speakers ought to be granted a national minority status. Second, the sheer number of Russians and Russian-speakers in Latvia – in absolute numbers or as a proportion of the total population – is a sufficient reason for minority status. Third, the international community has considered Latvia-Russians as a national minority *de facto* when dealing with ethnic issues in Latvia.

From a Latvian point of view, there are some good counter-arguments. First, pre-war migration movements to Latvia at a time without any fixed borders between Russia and Latvia should not be mixed up with post-WW II immigration into an occupied territory. Latvia has therefore already made a gracious move by granting residence permits to most post-WW II Latvia-Russians wishing to stay in independent Latvia and by creating mechanisms for their full integration into society. Second, as there is no international definition of the concept of minority, certainly no definition of minority based on absolute or relative demographic figures exists. Why, then, should Latvia be forced to introduce such a definition? Third, the working definition of Latvia-Russians as a national minority used by the international community might at best be considered as a 'minority-light definition'. In order to activate OSCE in the Baltic area, a less stringent definition of minority had to be used, as the competence of OSCE to deal with ethnic issues is limited to minorities, not to immigrant groups. Common practice in Europe otherwise is to grant minority status to ethnic groups who have resided in the actual country for several generations. Sweden, as a case in point, applies the minority concept only to groups who resided in Sweden before the year 1900 and who have preserved their ethnic and cultural distinctiveness: Sami, Swedish Finns, Tornedalers, Roma and Jews. Thus, the international community has certainly not given the Latvia-Russians any status as a minority group *de jure*.

Thus, with regard to the Latvia-Russians' *political* status, i.e. citizenship, as well as to their *cultural* status concerning language and other minority rights, there is an unbridgeable gap between Russia and Latvia-Russians on one side and the ethnic Latvian elite on the other. Fourteen years of verbal trench warfare has not been able to solve the issue, as neither side is prepared to yield their arguments.

As the issue seems insoluble, a popular opinion has been that historical issues should be left to historians to solve as the rest of society moves on into the future. Within the frames of the existing confrontational discourse, it is hard to see how one could transgress the issues at stake and move on, if neither side can

proclaim victory in the debates over Latvian 20th century history and over the proper definition of a minority group.

The prevailing circumstances have created a situation with a widespread pessimism among voters, according to Alex Krasnitsky.[384] The explanation is that, so far, the democratic system has not made possible a reasonable channelling of the interests of the Russian-speakers. Instead, Latvian nationalist forces have been allowed to orchestrate the political debate ever since Latvian independence. A possible outcome of such a situation might be that street manifestations will occur more frequently. Maybe fewer activists will be involved, as a general apathy takes hold on most people, but those who are active might become more radical. Even if most Latvia-Russians – until now – think within the boundaries of a Latvian unitary statehood in line with the principles of the *Satversme*, the Latvian Constitution, the situation might change.

If Krasnitsky would turn out to be right, one might imagine at least three scenarios that point to three different sets of possible outcomes. The first scenario implies that Latvia-Russians would simply leave Latvia *en masse*, looking for a better future elsewhere. But, as net emigration has almost completely ceased, it is more likely that remaining Latvia-Russians prefer to stay even if the political and cultural *status quo* would remain.[385] The other two scenarios imply that Latvia-Russian political thought develops towards either a federal or a secessionist solution based on ethnic principles. However, even if it is unlikely that any of these scenarios would be implemented in any near future, they might become ideal models, desirable utopias, in Latvia-Russian radical political thinking, alienating the group from the actual development and political realities. With less motivation for being integrated in accordance with the present premises offered by the Latvian elite, the whole process would slow down, which in turn would continue to put the present Latvian statehood under strain.

A contributing factor to a federalist or secessionist development of political thought is the encouragement and moral support that Latvia-Russians might receive from any force outside Latvia backing their demands and giving credits for the righteousness of their struggle against the actual policies. The only likely candidate willing to play such a role is Russia. The rewards from a Russian point of view could be a prolonged influence in Latvia and in the Baltic region through loyal supporters in Latvia itself. The rewards could get even bigger, if the international community would begin to side with the Russian position in the Baltic states. Russia could possibly achieve this, if its support to the Latvia-

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384 Alex Krasnitsky, April 2005.

385 Probably better economic prospects elsewhere are the main reason why Latvia still has some net emigration. This emigration is not based on ethnic principles, however, and it tends to be westbound instead of eastbound, thus, basically, it is independent from the issues discussed in this analysis.

Russians would turn Latvia into a weak state, whose ethnic policies were discredited in the eyes of the international community. Forced to give up the Baltic states in the early 1990s, Russia would then be able to exercise some kind of remote control of the territory.

With reference to the above-mentioned background, the aim of this study has been to ascertain whether Russia plays an active role in Latvian integration politics by fomenting ethnic discord and infiltrating the Latvia-Russian community through political parties and NGOs under its control, or whether the situation in Latvia unfolds and develops according to the interior logic of Latvian domestic politics. These two extreme cases were reformulated into two hypotheses, whose significance was to be tested. It was furthermore assumed that both hypotheses represent ideal cases with a sliding scale in between, on which the actual situation is somewhere to be found. A more precisely formulated aim could therefore be formulated as finding out which scenario is the predominant one, and, given the present circumstances and assuming a dynamic situation, which scenario will likely dominate in the future.

According to the findings, the arguments for a Russian predominance seem somewhat weak. It is true that the Russian Federation reserves itself the right to act as a protector of its so-called ‘compatriots abroad’ and that it has even adopted a precisely formulated state policy law for this purpose. It is furthermore true that some of those political groups and NGOs, which are associated with radical Latvia-Russian demands, have been given preferential treatment by official representatives of the Russian Federation, and that some of these groups have also received Russian financing for their activities. Anyway, Russian support has not been able to create a united Latvia-Russian front. Analysts in Russia as well as in Latvia agree that if anything, Russian financing has caused more of splits and fraction formations among the Latvia-Russians than unity. It has more or less been perceived as a business model or *modus vivendi* for many activist groups. In addition, some Latvia-Russian radicals even decline Russian support with thanks, as they consider Russia as too clumsy a player in the Baltic states. According to this view, those who suffer the most of any Russian ‘support’ are the Latvia-Russians themselves, as any Russian mistake usually backfires on them, the compatriot group that Russia says it wants to protect and support.

Still, in this respect, Russian diplomacy has certainly been more successful at the international level. Russia has kept the issues of language policies, citizenship and minority status in the Baltic states alive, not allowing them to be removed from the international agenda, even if its initiatives has not always been well received by its peers. Certainly, the Latvia-Russians have benefited from this part of Russian diplomacy, which is usually recognized.

The Russian state is not the sole Russian player in the Baltic region, as its policies and actual dealings with the situation are contested by different other forces, ‘free-lancers’ in Russian national policy-making. The most powerful

force is the City of Moscow, which has opened a big representation house of its own in Riga. Other actors are, for instance, politicians transgressing their official mandates as elected representatives or deputies in order to strengthen their domestic credibility as Russian patriots and nationalists, true defenders of Russianness and Russian core values.

As annoying as their activities and positions might be for the Latvian state, as long as these actors are not officially backed by the Russian government in all their dealings, they probably represent a minor problem for Latvian security organs. One effective instrument has been to deny any visas for visiting Latvia. It is also possible that the free-lancers' position has grown even more precarious, as there are some signs that Russia has softened its confrontational style in its relations with Latvia. According to this view, Russia would now be trying to buy Latvia over to its side by emphasising the economic relationship between the two states, partly at the expense of the compatriot policy. If this interpretation of Russian foreign policy is correct, it could certainly do without any remaining free-lancers trying to promote their own position and status within Russia proper at the expense of Latvian language and citizenship policies.

In contrast to Russian difficulties in finding the right cord to play in Latvian integration politics and a recent possible voluntary abstention from trying at all, Latvia itself can display strong evidence of an active self-organized Latvia-Russian civil society built up around certain political parties and NGOs.

At the national level, there are two parties with seats in the eighth Saeima, the People's Harmony Party and Zapchel, which have made it their main task to defend the Latvia-Russians positions. They are accompanied by the Socialist party, whose defence of the Latvia-Russians is based on its socialist and internationalist principles. At the regional and local levels, there are even more parties courting the Latvia-Russians' favour.

In order to prevent corruption, party financing and spending is very closely monitored in Latvia by the state. For a party of any political colour it is therefore very difficult to accept financing from anyone except their members and closest sympathizers. As a side effect of the anti-corruption monitoring, any Russian help beyond moral support would hardly go unnoticed.

The pro-Latvia-Russian parties are accompanied by a spectrum of different NGOs specialising in human rights, cultural and social issues as well as the unregistered Shtab, leading the protests against the school reform of 2004. Some of these NGOs are no more than supporting troops to a specific political party, most frequently Zapchel; some others set their own agenda and act independently. Strategies among the NGOs shift from power politics through street protests and mass mobilization of sympathizers to the formation of expert panels and dialogue with the government. It is possibly easier for NGOs to accept Russian financing and get away with it than for a political party. Obviously, some organizations have received financial support from Russia. However, as stated above, Russian money has hardly contributed to a strengthened and empowered

NGO sector. Organizations with Russian support have also quite often lost whatever credibility they had in the eyes of the Latvian elite. In this way, these NGOs have been deprived of any opportunity to have an impact on the development in Latvia.

In the wake of the protests against the school language reform in 2004, a new stratum of the Latvia-Russian community, who, until then, had been notoriously silent on political matters, entered the political stage. It consisted of local businessmen from small and middle-sized companies, and they brought with them much-needed resources and organising expertise into the radical Latvia-Russian movement. With their deep knowledge of the local society and their thinking in market and accountability terms, these people probably had a solidifying impact that Russia's support could never achieve. It has certainly been of no disadvantage either that the local businessmen did not only offer help in cash but in kind as well, such as transports of activists, catering, printing of activist materials and so on. In this way, they kept full control of their resources, which has guaranteed that they are used in the way for which they were intended.

Taking no official part in the radical Latvia-Russian movement, Russian language mass media are nevertheless usually perceived as being a close ally. Some informal links between journalists and different radical parties and NGOs do exist, but their character as described in this analysis seems to be rather weak. Traces back to Soviet media also seem to become more and more irrelevant for actual Russian-language journalism in today's Latvia. Factors that are more important for the positive positioning to the radical movement of the Russian language media in Latvia are the owners and publishers' own convictions and ideology as well as a conscious move to follow the logic of the market: Mass media report on issues that its audience find important. With or without any intentions, Russian-language media have thus become an effective distributor of information from the radical movement to the Latvia-Russian community, a circumstance that is recognized at least by OKROL.

Thus, the Latvia-Russian community of today makes up a more or less self-sufficient system that has its own features and develops according to its own internal logic. In comparison with western understanding, the majority of NGOs and other formations are in fact no more than political pressure groups led by Saeima deputies and have little to do with grassroots movements. The school reform led to a radicalization away from moderate forces, and since 2004, it seems to be shifting among a core of three organizations, namely Zapchel, the Shtab and OKROL. At present, the Shtab seems to be no more than a youth formation of Zapchel, which continues to work through other organizations as well, like LKPCh and ROL. So far, there are no formal ties between Zapchel and OKROL. Still, a significant part of the OKROL leaders are former members of Zapchel and many of its activists are activists of the Shtab as well.

The overall conclusion of this analysis must therefore be that the Latvia-Russians set their own agenda, and that it sometimes coincides with Russian

policies. Even if much hope is still centred on Russia, the radical activists also seek support from structures based on western European humanism and legal traditions. Therefore, assuming *ceteris paribus*, Russian influence on the Latvia-Russian community will grow weaker. Consequently, it would be a mistake to dismiss all Latvia-Russian protest actions as manifestations of Russian destabilization politics in the Baltic states. The radical Latvia-Russians' protest actions are first and foremost a reaction to Latvian interior politics, and to the extent that they might constitute serious security threats to the Latvian statehood, they must be addressed as such.

For this to happen, though, it appears likely that both sides have to move beyond the actual confrontational discourse and face the conflict in a new way that make both sides look like winners. One model could be to grant automatically any remaining non-citizens Latvian citizenship, but to preserve the school reform from 2004 without any further changes. In this way, Slavic migration into Latvian territory after WW II would be legalized, setting aside any hint of a traumatising and alienating personal guilt and responsibility for Soviet occupation. Considered as immigrants, these people would on the other hand have to recognize that they have no further rights than any other immigrant groups around the world, thus it would be their duty to pick up the local language and obtain a minimum of knowledge in Latvian culture, traditions and history. The PACE delegation to Latvia in March 2004 seems to be in favour of such a solution as well.[386]

[386] Parliamentary Assembly of Europe 'Progress report of the Bureau of the Assembly and of the Standing Committee', Doc. 10212, June 21, 2004, Appendix 1: 'Draft Opinion on the Reopening of Monitoring Procedure as Regards Latvia'.

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