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Migration and Repatriation Issues in Post-Soviet Countries: the Latvian Case

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Introduction

Migration and repatriation issues are among the most important political and economic questions facing the post-Soviet countries, and in most cases they play a significant role in international relations among the ex-Soviet states, as well as with many other countries. In addition, most of these issues are directly or indirectly connected with various difficulties which arose or existed during the Soviet era.

As one of the post-Soviet countries, Latvia has similarities with many other of the former republics of the USSR in this respect. At the same time, however, it (as well as all the other ex-Soviet nations) has its own specific issues which influence the process of migration and repatriation, as well as related issues.

Latvia's demographic situation deteriorated severely after 1940, when the Soviet Union occupied and forcibly annexed the country. Killings, deportations, political emigration and other forms of displacement (military service, assignments to work outside Latvia, etc.) all helped to create this problem, and it is only natural that the country is now interested in having anyone who is an ethnic Latvian return to the country. A good number have already done so, while many others are thinking of following suit in the near or far future. In addition, the emigration of ethnic Latvians to other parts of the ex-Soviet Union has slowed dramatically.

The issue of ethnic Latvians, however, has not drawn as much attention, especially outside Latvia, as has the matter of ethnic Russians and other so-called "Russian speakers" who arrived in Latvia during the Soviet occupation. They pose a very serious issue which may have profound consequences in the future of the country.

Currently Latvia's migration flow is caused largely by Russians, Belarussians, Ukrainians and people other nationalities from the Soviet Union who have left or are planning to leave Latvia for their countries of origin or for other countries, most often in the West. As in the majority of post-Soviet countries, a second source of migration flow is Jews and Germans who are emigrating to the West.

A separate migration-related issue which has emerged in the 1990s involves illegal migrants and refugees, usually people from Third World countries who seek to enter Latvia and then to depart for points to the West. Illegal migration has been one of the country's most unpleasant problems.

The general purpose of this report is to analyze migration and repatriation issues in Latvia as part of recent developments in the European security agenda which has changed radically over the course of the last several years. The security of ethno-national identities has become part of the European agenda, as have related issues, including migration and other

population movements. Of course, threats against ethno-national identity, as well as minority and border problems have been more severe in the post-communist countries of Central and East Europe than they have in Western Europe. Within this context, the post-Soviet republics make up a specific part of Europe.

For Latvia, immigration and emigration issues are much more important in terms of ethno-national identity than is the case in most other European countries. These issues have been discussed at the international level as part of the evaluation of Latvia's policies and of issues connected to the human rights situation of the "Russian speaking" population in Latvia since the restoration of the country's independence. The situation in Estonia is in many respects similar.

Major migration and repatriation issues in Latvia were the subject of the research which is presented in this report. The author had several related aims:

1) The first aim is to investigate pre-independence migration and repatriation in Latvia, comparing these to the situation in other former republics of the USSR and general trends in the area in the Soviet Union as a whole. In this respect the study will contribute to research on the effects of the Soviet occupation on migration in Latvia, especially during the period 1945-1950 and the period 1951-1989.

2) The second aim is to evaluate the positions and attitudes of various political forces in Latvia, in Russia and in the West on migration issues in the country during the struggle for the restoration of independence and afterward.

3) The third aim is to explore repatriation and immigration into Latvia.

4) The fourth aim is to research emigration from Latvia to the East (Russia and the other CIS countries) and the West.

5) The final aim is to discuss the issues of refugees, illegal migration, transit migration and related population movements.

Extensive and often heated debates have been conducted about migration and repatriation issues in Latvia and beyond its borders -- in Parliament, among politicians, in the newspapers, etc. A great body of literature has been created in response to this fact.

There are three major positions which have been taken with respect to migration and repatriation:

1) Everyone (or nearly everyone) must be given a free choice in choosing whether to live in Latvia or to emigrate to another country; Latvian citizenship can be obtained by those who arrived in Latvia during the Soviet occupation by individual naturalization which involves an examination in the Latvian language, as well as a test on Latvian history and the Latvian constitution, and an oath of loyalty to the Latvian state;

2) Everyone (or nearly everyone) who arrived in Latvia during the Soviet occupation must be given automatic citizenship without any language and history examination, and those who arrived in the post-war years should

not have to make an effort to move to Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, or other countries of origin;

3) Everyone (or nearly everyone) who arrived in Latvia during the Soviet occupation should leave Latvia, and the government should sign agreements to this effect with Russia and other countries, receiving international support to carry out this process.

There are various intermediary positions among these three major opinions, all of which have been discussed extensively in the literature. The first version has gained the most support in Latvia, but discussions with representatives of the other viewpoint are continuing. It appears, however, that the first view is the most justified and the most appropriate for a democratic country which faces the situation in which Latvia has found itself. It is absolutely certain that none of the three groups of politicians and commentators who represent these various views is completely satisfied with what has happened so far in the area of migration and repatriation in post-independence Latvia, and there are significant elements in each group which argue that too many concessions have been made to representatives of the other viewpoints or that decisions which have been taken in the political sector on these issues are not being implemented properly. At the same time, however, it can be said that all three groups have more or less made peace with the existing situation, because a certain compromise has been reached among all interested parties. This compromise has been in effect for a fairly long period of time, and this gives rise to hopes that Latvia will be able to avoid excessive conflicts in the future.

This article will propose the hypothesis, which the author will seek to evaluate on the basis of an analysis of the facts, that Soviet-era experience with migration and repatriation has been extremely negative in many respects, and this negative experience will, for some time to come, continue to hamper Latvia's efforts to adopt migration and repatriation models which resemble those of the developed world. However, the hypothesis also includes the idea that things are happening in Latvia with respect to migration and repatriation which are bringing the country closer to that goal.

There are few scholarly studies on migration and repatriation in Latvia. Articles and books by such authors as Peteris Zvidrins, Parsla Eglite, Ilmars Mezs, Elmars Vebers, Boriss Cilevics, Ausma Tabuna, Aivars Tabuns, Uldis Usackis, and others, have focused on various parts of this major issue. Generally speaking, the same situation prevails in Estonia and Lithuania.

Some aspects of this issue have also been reviewed by authors in the West, as well as in Russia. Most western authors support the first of the aforementioned three positions, while Russian authors are more likely to support the second version. Among the works which have been published so far, special notice is merited by the works of Dr. Audra Sipaviciene, especially her "International Migration in the Baltic States: New Patterns and Policy", which was published under the auspices of the Helsinki Reports in 1996. In that work, Dr. Sipaviciene looks at the major issues of migration and

repatriation in Lithuania and offers a comparison of the three Baltic countries through the year 1995. Many aspects of this extensive topic, however, have received only cursory treatment in the literature, and no extensive analysis has been written.

In sum, we can say that research into migration and repatriation in Latvia is still in its earliest stages.

Migration and repatriation in Latvia during Soviet domination

Migration during the period when Latvia was a republic of the Soviet Union occurred completely against the will of the people. Latvia and Estonia were specific cases in the USSR, something that becomes evident when they are compared with the third Baltic state, Lithuania. To understand the difference, it is necessary to begin with the demographic and economic situation in the Baltic states before the Soviet occupation.

In 1939 in the current (postwar) borders of Latvia, ethnic Latvians constituted 77% of the population. In Estonia (also in postwar borders), the share of the titular nationality was higher -- ethnic Estonians constituted 92% of all inhabitants. In Lithuania in 1939 (also in current borders), Lithuanians made up about 76% of the population.[1] It must be noted that in the case of Latvia and Estonia, it is not complicated to provide figures concerning the population numbers in post-war borders because both countries and well-elaborated and functioning systems of statistics. The same is not true with respect to Lithuania, mostly because before World War II, there was only one census (in 1923), and also because the current territory of Lithuania includes parts of what prior to the war were parts of Poland, Belarus and Germany. Be that as it may, Latvia was between the other two Baltic states in terms of the percentage of the population represented by the titular nationality -- 77% in Latvia as opposed to 92% in Estonia and 76% in Lithuania.[2]

In the present-day capital cities of the three countries in 1940, the share of the titular nationality was as follows: 63% Latvians in Riga, 85.6% Estonians in Tallinn and only about 20% Lithuanians in Vilnius (prior to World War II Vilnius was part of Poland, and the Lithuanian capital was Kaunas). The titular nationalities, in other words, had a clear majority in Riga and Tallinn, but not in Vilnius, where it was in a distinct minority.[3]

The number of ethnic Russians living in Latvia in 1940 (present-day borders) was approximately 170,000,[4] while the corresponding figures for Estonia and Lithuania were around 50,000 and an estimated 95,000 ethnic Russians respectively.[5] In total, there were some 315,000 ethnic Russians in the current borders of the Baltic states. Almost 50 years later, those numbers have increased enormously (see table 1).

Majority of the post-war newcomers were in essence economic refugees from poor rural areas. Therefore they were interested to settle in

Latvia and Estonia and not so much in Lithuania. In this respect Lithuania was more similar to other then Soviet republics in the European part of the former USSR and mainly therefore the number of inhabitants did not surpasse the 1940 level until 1969.

During Soviet rule Lithuanians became a majority in Vilnius while the share of Latvians and Estonians in Riga and Tallinn declined.

Table 1

The Number of Ethnic Russians in the Baltic Countries, 1940-1989 (,000)

	1940	Share of pop. (%)	1989	Share of pop. (%)	Increase, 1940-1989	1989 as % of 1940
Latvia	170	9.0	906	34.0	+735	433%
Estonia	50	4.7	475	30.3	+425	850%
Lithuania	95	3.0	345	9.4	+250	263%
Total	315		1,726		+1,411	448%

There have been various estimates concerning the direct population losses which Latvian suffered in the 1940s as the result of emigration, Soviet and Nazi deportations, military activity, etc. Even now, when many previously closed archival files have been opened, it is difficult to assemble data which were prepared by various agencies in different situations and with difference purposes. Most researchers agree that in the immediate aftermath of World War II, the number of permanent inhabitants in Latvia had dropped by approximately one-third.[6]

Latvia suffered greater losses than Estonia and Lithuania due to killings, emigration and deportations. According to "guesstimates" (educated guesses),[7] Latvia lost about 30% of its pre-war population during World War II, compared to approximately 25% in Estonia and 15% in Lithuania. Emigration and wartime displacements led to between 115,000 and 129,000 inhabitants of Latvia leaving, never to return. Another estimate has put the number at 130,000.[8]

After the war, Soviet terror and deportations continued. A guerrilla war against the Soviet occupation continued into the 1950s,[9] but thousands of the country's indigenous inhabitants were deported to the East. In 1950, according to one estimate,[10] approximately 10% of the pre-war Latvian population ended up living in the West as political refugees, while a slightly higher percentage, perhaps 12%, were deported to Soviet prisons and labor camps. According to this estimate, about 22% of ethnic Latvians were forced to live outside their homeland.

Many representatives of other ethnic groups in Latvia -- Russians, Poles, Belarussians, Hebrews, Lithuanians and others -- shared the same fate as Latvians. Some became refugees in the West, others were deported to the East. Among the most severely persecuted were Russians who fled Russia as political refugees after the Bolshevik revolution. There were approximately 30,000 people of this type in Latvia in the early 1920s. Representatives of this group, as well as others who were executed or deported by the Soviet regime, were dubbed enemies of the people, and their property was confiscated. Houses, apartments, furniture and even clothing were turned over to newcomers from the Soviet Union who began to arrive in great numbers almost immediately after the war. In other instances, government authorities simply helped themselves to what was available. Many local residents who were not imprisoned or deported were ordered to leave their homes for housing of much lower quality, because pre-war houses and apartments were needed for the new arrivals.

As a result of the influx from other parts of the Soviet Union, the Latvian population burgeoned, and in 1949 the number of inhabitants was considerably larger than had been the case in 1940. It is important to note that the volume of housing stock in Latvia diminished severely during the same period, because many buildings which had been destroyed during the war were not rebuilt, and very few new residential buildings were erected. The average per capita living space in Latvia's cities and towns was approximately 18 square meters in 1940.

A secret statistical data collection which was published in 1958 (with the notation "May not be published in the open press") stated that in 1940, the total floor space of residential buildings in Latvian cities was 7.72 million square meters, while in 1946, as the result of the war, that figure had dropped to just 5.96 million square meters, a decline of 22.8%. In 1950, the lost living space had been restored only partially, to 6.762 million square meters, or 87.6% of the 1940 level. The urban population of Latvia, however, had increased radically between 1940 and 1950, and this happened at the expense of the living conditions of local residents.[11]

The greatest amount of immigration (inflow of colonists) into Latvia took place between 1945 and 1950. It is estimated that the number of people who immigrated into Latvia during this period was larger than the number of people who were lost because of various types of unnatural population loss (killing, deportation, emigration). Some 450,000 people are thought to have arrived in Latvia during this time. Eventually it became impossible to maintain this volume of inflow, because the availability of housing dried up, and the construction of new residential facilities was very rare. These facts are reflected in statistical data: Between 1951 and 1955, the number of immigrants in Latvia was "only" 50,100 larger than the number of emigrants (including a relatively small number of people who were executed or deported during the last years of Stalin's rule). This figure is approximately nine times smaller than the corresponding figure between 1945 and 1950. In every five

years after 1950, there were between 150,000 and 200,000 people who arrived in Latvia for residency of greater or lesser duration, as well as between 120,000 and 150,000 people who left Latvia for other parts in the Soviet empire (see table).

Table 2

Immigration and emigration in Latvia, 1951-1990 (,000)

	Arrived from other republics of the USSR	Departed for other republics of the USSR	Net increase in the number of inhabitants
1951-1955	212.0	161.8	50.2
1956-1960	165.5	145.8	19.7
1961-1965	180.6	119.0	61.5
1966-1970	146.8	101.8	45.0
1971-1975	202.0	141.0	61.0
1976-1980	187.2	149.6	37.6
1981-1985	171.3	131.7	39.6
1986-1990	149.8	122.9	26.9
Total	1415.2	1073.6	341.6

Source: Latvijas demografijas gadagramata (Latvian demographics annual). Riga (1993), p. 195.

The migration patterns in Estonia were similar to those in Latvia between 1945 and 1950, as well as later.

We can say, in other words, that there were two major stages in the history of post-war migration in Latvia and Estonia. The first stage involved the excessively rapid immigration of individuals into the two countries, a process that required the confiscation of many homes and various personal effects of the existing population. The second stage can be seen as "normal" late Stalinist or post-Stalinist migration, underpinned largely by the construction of new housing for immigrants.

Not all parts of Latvia were equally attractive for the immigrants. The eastern part of Latvia (the Latgale region), which borders directly on Russia and Belarus, was less attractive that the capital city of Riga, as well as the more developed central (Vidzeme and Zemgale) and western (Kurzeme) parts of the country. According to statistics from the Latvian Department of Citizenship and Immigration, in 1994 only 11.5% of the country's non-citizens lived in Latgale, while 49.6% lived in Riga, 14.9% lived in Vidzeme, 12.4% lived in Zemgale, and 11.9% lived in Kurzeme.

The process of migration in Lithuania during the Soviet era was considerably different than in Latvia and Estonia. If between 1945 and 1949

there was a great influx of immigrants from Russia, Belarus, Ukraine and other Soviet republics into Latvia and Estonia, the inflow in Lithuania was much more limited. The result of this was that the proportion of the indigenous population in Latvia and Estonia (meaning not only representatives of the titular nations, but also indigenous Russians, Poles and other nationalities) declined substantially in the years after the war, while in Lithuania the inflow was so insignificant that it did not have any substantial effect on the proportion between the titular nationality and other ethnic groups.

In 1950 ethnic Latvians constituted about 63% of inhabitants in Latvia (77% in 1940), Estonians constituted about 76% (92%) of the Estonian population, but Lithuanians made up about 75% (76%) of that country's population -- a very small proportional decrease indeed.[12]

One reason for this difference is the fact that Latvia and Estonia were considerably more developed and prosperous before World War II than was Lithuania.[13] Both countries managed to preserve much of their wealth after the war. Lithuania, being relatively backward and poor, was not as attractive for immigrants. There was much less property to nationalize or confiscate in Lithuania, and the average per capita living space in Lithuania's cities and towns before the war was only about 63% of that in Latvia. The lower level of development in Lithuania was the major reason why migration there was low in comparison with Latvia.

It is also believed that a major obstacle to immigration into Lithuania was the fact that anti-Soviet guerrilla activity was more active there than in the other Baltic states. These activities were possible in part because of the smaller number of Soviet migrants in Lithuania, but it is also true that many potential immigrants thought twice about their move due to the guerrilla activity. The total number of inhabitants in Lithuania reached the 1940 level only in 1969 -- twenty years later than in Latvia and Estonia.[14] This was true despite the fact that Lithuania lost only 15% of its population during the war years, as compared to a 30% loss in Latvia. In 1950, the number of inhabitants in Lithuania was 2,573,000, or 83.4% of the pre-war level. Estimates suggest that if Latvia had been as poor and agriculturally based as Lithuania in the interwar period, its post-war population would have returned to the pre-war level even later than in Lithuania, perhaps even after 1990.

Between 1951 and 1990, the number of people who immigrated into the country exceeded the number who emigrated by 344,300 individuals.[15] In 1990, more than 800,000 civilian residents in Latvia were people whose origin was post-war immigration. At the end of the Soviet era, immigrants and their descendants made up roughly one-third of the Latvian population. Indeed, net migration in Latvia and Estonia was higher than any other place in the Soviet Union, as well as in all of Europe.[16]

Immigration in post-Soviet Latvia

One of the key demands made by people who actively pursued Latvian independence was the right to regulate immigration processes in the interests of the republic. During the period of *perestroika*, certain limitations were put on the process of immigration, and since the restoration of independence, Latvia has adopted laws and regulations that have sharply limited the number of people settling in Latvia permanently. The effects of this process have, naturally been felt most severely in the CIS countries, because immigration from western countries has proceeded at a very slow pace, one which has not caused any significant problems.

Unlike Estonia and Lithuania, however, Latvia has not set immigration quotas. The right to immigrate is reserved for three types of people: those who want to bring together families; those who want to settle in Latvia for business purposes; and those who have a Latvian background in terms of their ethnicity and want to settle in the land of their forebears. In terms of the second category, Latvia accepts as immigrants only those business people who would serve an urgently required need in the country. Even those people, however, do not have an easy time receiving the right of permanent residency.

In other respects, Latvia has more stringent immigration rules than the other two Baltic states. For example, people who at one time were residents of the Soviet-era Latvian republic but who did not register in the country's population register after the restoration of independence must renew their residency permits periodically. Latvia, like Estonia and Lithuania, has also adopted specific regulations concerning people who have no right to receive as residency permit or to immigrate into Latvia. There are some differences in approach among the Baltic states in this respect, but Latvia bars immigration to people who:

- Suffer from infection disease;
- Are mentally deranged;
- Are dipsomaniacs or drug addicts;
- Have no legal source of income;
- Have past criminal convictions;
- Have participated or are participating in totalitarian or terrorist organizations which are aimed against Latvia, Lithuania or Estonia;
- Have provided false information ;
- Have no documents confirming their identity, etc.[17]

People who arrive in Latvia for a temporary period require entry visas, except in the case of people from those countries with which Latvia has visa-free travel agreements (Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Great Britain; negotiations are proceeding with the Nordic countries). Like Estonia and Lithuania, Latvia does not have visa-free relations with any of the CIS countries. That is because during the Soviet era, immigration from the

rest of the Soviet Union to the Baltic states was perceived as a source of various problems.

Immigration in Latvia since 1991, when independence was restored, has been at the following rate: 14,684 individuals in 1991, 6,199 in 1992, 4,114 in 1993, 3,046 in 1994, 2,799 in 1995, 2,747 in 1996 and 960 in the first four months of 1997.[18]

It continues to be true that most immigrants into Latvia come from the CIS countries. According to the Latvian Statistical Bureau, for example, of all legal immigrants who settled in Latvia for permanent residence in 1995 (2,799 people), 2,298 came from the CIS. In 1996 the number was 2,274 of 2,747 individuals. The majority of these individuals came from Russia -- 1,838 people in 1995 and 1,780 people in 1996. The second largest group came from Ukraine (206 and 14 people respectively), followed by Belarus (141 and 118 individuals).[19]

In terms of the ethnic distribution of people arriving in Latvia in 1996, of the 2,747 people arrivals, 42% were ethnic Russians (1,164 people), 34% were Latvians (932 people). Other ethnic groups from which people arrived in Latvia were Ukrainians (162) and Belarussians (152), each nation representing approximately 6% of immigrants. Immigrants of other nationalities made up approximately 12% of the total; the largest groups were the Poles (62), Hebrews (49), Lithuanians (46), Rroma (24), Armenians (24) and Germans (18).[20]

The majority of new arrivals were men (1,867), while women (880) made up approximately one-third of the group.

Repatriation to Latvia

The Latvian government, as well as society, have demonstrated particular interest in having ethnic Latvians and citizens of Latvia move for permanent residency in the country. This has been a subject of active discussion among Latvians who currently reside in other countries. The largest number of Latvians arriving in the country so far has come from Russia and the other CIS countries. In 1989, when the last Soviet census was conducted, 46,800 ethnic Latvians lived in the Russian Federation (3.2% of all Latvians in the USSR). The number of ethnic Latvians in other Soviet republics in 1989 was as follows: 7,400 in Ukraine, 4,200 in Lithuania, 3,400 in Kazakhstan, 3,100 in Estonia, 2,700 in Belarus, 1,100 in Uzbekistan, 600 in Turkmenistan and 2,200 in other republics. The total for all Soviet republics excluding Latvia itself was 71,200. It should be noted that Latvians lived in the Soviet Union during the period of the independent Latvian state, as well, but during the Stalinist repressions of the 1930s, their number declined by approximately one-third to 127,000.

The tendency for the absolute and relative numbers of non-Russian individuals outside their own republics to decrease became particularly evident in the 1960s and developed quite rapidly in the 1970s and 1980s. One of the major reasons for this was the fact that the Kremlin increasingly sought to Russify these ethnic groups. People who returned to their native republics could at least send their children to native schools, thus enabling younger generations to preserve their ethnic identity.

Almost all post-war censuses in the Soviet Union, beginning with the 1959 census, showed that the number of ethnic Latvians outside of the Latvian republic continued to decrease, partly because of assimilation, but partly because Latvians were returning home. In 1959 there were 101,700 Latvians outside Latvia but in the USSR (7.3% of all ethnic Latvians in the Soviet Union). The percentage in 1989 had declined to only 4.9%.[21]

The trend continued in the post-Soviet era. At the beginning of 1991, there were 43,800 Latvians in the Russian Federation, a decrease of 6.4% over the beginning of 1989.[22] In 1994, 24,500 ethnic Latvians who had arrived from various CIS countries but who were not registered as citizens of Latvia were resident in the Republic of Latvia.

During the Soviet era of *perestroika*, Latvian societies reemerged in many parts of the former Soviet Union. The largest communities existed in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Omsk, Ufa, Tomsk, Krasnoyarsk, Inta (Komi) and Tbilisi.

During *perestroika*, authorities in Latvia initiated policies aimed at facilitating return migration to and from Latvia. The process has continued since the restoration of Latvian independence.[23]

In the beginning, amendments were made to Decree No. 46 of the Council of Ministers (1989) and in other earlier decrees which had substantially expanded the process of housing exchange from Latvia to Russia and other republics of the former Soviet Union, and well as the process of purchasing housing in Latvia for Latvian citizens or people of Latvian descent who wanted to settle in Latvia as the result of an exchange or purchase process. Among the most important pieces of legislation at this time were Council of Ministers Decree No. 82, "On changes and additions to several decrees by the Government of the Republic of Latvia on issues of regulating migration", issued on 27 September 1990,[24] and Council of Ministers Decree "On changes and additions to issues of regulating the process of migration", adopted on 12 March 1992.[25]

Also as part of the process, a Department of Citizenship and Immigration was created, and its mission included resolution of repatriation issues. This was mandated in a government decree on the creation of the department.[26] Within the department there was a structural unit, the Repatriation Sector, which handled emigration issues. Later it was renamed the Repatriation Centre. The facility's three staff members were supposed to deal with the legal aspects of repatriation, to maintain contacts with public organizations that were involved in repatriation issues, and to assist such

organizations when possible. Repatriation issues were also the responsibility of regional divisions of the department.

One decree aimed at supporting the repatriation process was approved by the Council of Ministers on 10 January 1992: "On paying compensation to people who vacate living space in the Republic of Latvia".[27] According to this decree, local governments and institutions which controlled residential buildings could pay compensation for vacated apartments, as well as the resettlement expenses of people who took up residence from places outside of Latvia. The decree remained in effect for only one year, however -- until the end of 1992 -- and a new decree was not adopted before 1994.

Toward the end of 1992 the Department of Citizenship and Immigration produced a new draft decree. It stated that local governments would have the right to sell ownership or rental rights to apartments in order "to assist in resolving housing questions for illegally deported repatriates, as well as poorly provided families." The decree would have allowed compensation money to be taken not from the local government budget, but from funds obtained from the sale itself, and this would have made it possible to pay compensation to a larger number of resettlers.[28]

The new decree was not approved. One objection against it was that people who purchased rental rights to apartments through the proposed process would have to pay for the same rights a second time when the privatization of housing began. Because of the absence of a governing decree, a number of illegal transactions took place with respect to rental rights to housing. The government, in other words, did not facilitate repatriation and at the same time squandered an opportunity to earn money to help repatriates who were returning to Latvia.[29] The new decree "On payment of compensation to departing people who have vacated housing"[30] was approved on 8 June 1994, when a lot of time and opportunity had already been lost.

Latvia began to deal officially with migration issues in April 1991, when the Department of Migration Affairs was established under the auspices of the Council of Ministers. On 2 January 1992 the department was renamed the Department of Citizenship and Immigration. Initially it was subordinated to the Ministry of Justice, then, from 30 June 1992 -- to State Minister Janis Dinevics, and then from 3 August 1993 -- to the Ministry of the Interior. On 12 November 1996 the Cabinet of Ministers renamed the institution the Directorate of Citizenship and Immigration (Pilsonibas un imigracijas parvalde).

In April 1991 the department employed 15 persons, but in the following years staffing increased, mostly because many local branches were established. In August 1995 the department employed 851 people, while the number of workers at the end of 1996 was 745.[31]

One reason why the Latvian government was not prepared to adopt a law on repatriation immediately after the restoration of independence was the fact that there were few possibilities to offer repatriates financial assistance.

A Repatriation Center was established at the Department of Citizenship, but it could do no more than to distribute information and to provide administrative assistance in the repatriation process.[32] It was only in September 1995 that the Latvian parliament, after lengthy debates, adopted a law on repatriation. The law entrusts local municipalities with responsibility for rendering assistance to repatriates; it specifies the obligations of the Repatriation Center, which operates under the auspices of the Ministry of the Interior; and it establishes a Repatriation Fund to be financed from the state budget (USD 113,000 in 1996).

According to Lauma Vlasova, attaché for diaspora issues at the Latvian embassy in Moscow, quite a few Latvians who were deported to Siberia during the Soviet occupation of Latvia continue to live in Northern Russia. Why have they decided to stay there when many other deportees returned to Latvia? A major reason is that people don't really have anywhere to go in Latvia. The repatriation law provides that people who repatriate can obtain housing, as well as financial support for travel expenses. The law does not, however, provide for ongoing expenses. Pensions in Latvia are low, and people who are middle-aged or older have great trouble finding work. In addition, many of the Latvians who live in Siberia have married non-Latvians, and this, too, can create problems in terms of adaptation in Latvia. The number of deportees who have returned to Latvia in the 1990s, accordingly, is quite small.[33]

Repatriation of Latvians from the West has been a different matter. According to various estimates, there are between 100,000 and 150,000 ethnic Latvians residing in various western countries. 29,300 of these people have registered as citizens of the Republic of Latvia.[34] Some have repatriated to Latvia, but the vast majority has declined to do so, believing that the situation in Latvia is not yet sufficiently favorable. One problem is the large number of Russian-speaking non-citizens who do not speak Latvian, a fact which makes some western Latvians conclude, much to their dissatisfaction, that they must learn Russian in order to function in Latvia.[35]

The World Federation of Free Latvians opened an office in Riga in 1991 with the aim of helping Latvia to restore its independence and to move toward a democratic society. The office also supported the efforts of Latvians from the West to participate in the country's political, economic and cultural life.[36] Twelve thousand Latvians in the West voted in parliamentary elections in June 1993. There were 40 candidates from the West, and 17 were elected to the 100-member parliament. This western representation was much higher than in the parliaments of other post-communist countries.[37]

Several hundred Latvians from the West resettled in Latvia during the first three years of the country's independence.[38] Western Latvians have been active in many spheres of life and have particularly helped to make substantial changes in Latvia's educational system.[39]

The office of the World Federation of Free Latvians published information for people who were thinking about returning to Latvia,[40] while the

American Latvian Association sponsored a program called "Talcinieki" (Helpers) that paired people in the West with jobs in Latvia. It soon became clear, however, that a small minority of ethnic Latvians from the West were ready and willing to move to Latvia. A lack of information and contacts with Latvian institutions was just one of the problems.[41] Many of those who did make the trip found that reintegration in Latvia was not easy. The Latvian government had no specific policy with respect to the western Latvians,[42] even though a great many opportunities existed for skilled and talented western Latvians as the country continued to implement its reform program. Western Latvians were advised to be creative in applying western experience in Latvia and to avoid confrontation with local Latvians.[43]

In the event, however, the contradictions between western and local Latvians proved to be quite substantial. Many local Latvians lost faith in the reform process as living standards plummeted, and euphoric trust in all things western soon dissipated. Many local Latvians began to feel that the new arrivals from the West were incompetent and unwilling to work as hard on Latvia's behalf as local Latvians were doing. In addition, most western Latvians maintained dual citizenship and were accused of being ready to abandon Latvia if the situation there became untenable.[44] In due course many western Latvians began to understand that there were major differences between the way they saw things and the way local Latvians perceived them, especially in terms of the way of life in the turbulence of post-Soviet Latvia.[45] Gradually the interest of western Latvians began to decline, especially as the cost of living in Latvia, and particularly in the capital city of Riga, began to rise rapidly. Local Latvians, for their part, concluded that they had expected too much from their western brethren and that western Latvians were not miracle workers. If there were some highly respectable individuals, there was also no shortage of immoral adventurers.

The chairwoman of the World Federation of Free Latvians, Vaira Paegle, has said that after the restoration of Latvian independence, western Latvians hoped to help the rebirth of the country with advice and financial resources, thereby becoming involved in social and political processes in the country. These hopes, says Paegle, were not fulfilled.[46] It is estimated that western Latvians have provided assistance at a value of some USD 20 million over the last several years, but this amount has been too small to make a significant impression. Thousands of western Latvians have visited the country since the renewal of its independence, but relatively few have chosen to stay. It is estimated that approximately 1,000 western Latvians have established a permanent residence in Latvia, although it is difficult, if not impossible, to predict which people will remain for the rest of their lives and which are in Latvia long-term, but still temporarily.

The fact is that the vast majority of the estimated 175,000 persons of Latvian descent who are resident in the West[47] have decided to stay put, many of them for economic reasons. Latvia is poor and economic recovery is proceeding slowly.[48] In addition, many western Latvians, both those who

were born in the country and fled during World War II, and their descendants, have lifelong links in the West -- families, jobs, friends, etc. Middle-aged Latvians do not want to abandon pension schemes and educational opportunities for their children. Indeed, the largest number of western Latvians who have established residence in Latvia comes from the younger generation. These are people who especially benefit from the fact that they may be more open to cooperation with local Latvians than people from the older generation who may carry baggage of mistrust and suspicion. Moreover, younger people may be more likely to be oriented toward the future.[49]

Some western Latvians have complained that the Latvian government has not been supportive in establishing former cooperation with western Latvians and their organizations,[50] but many are still intent on helping Latvia even though they do not want to live there. Vaira Paegle of the World

Table 3

International migration of ethnic Latvians between Latvia and other countries in 1996

Country	Immigration			Emigration			Net migration		
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
Total	932	676	256	530	317	213	402	359	43
Lithuania	17	11	6	17	9	8	0	2	-2
Estonia	14	4	10	5	2	3	9	2	7
Russia	578	489	89	261	198	63	317	291	26
Ukraine	61	29	32	20	13	7	41	16	25
Belarus	20	12	8	10	6	4	10	6	4
Moldova	11	7	4	2	1	1	9	6	3
Georgia	3	2	1	0	0	0	3	2	1
Kazakhstan	6	5	1	1	1	0	5	4	1
Tajikistan	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0
Uzbekistan	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1
Canada	34	19	15	7	2	5	27	17	10
USA	81	43	38	59	28	31	22	15	7
Australia	17	10	7	6	4	2	11	6	5
Sweden	17	10	7	8	3	5	9	7	2
UK	14	9	5	9	5	4	5	4	1
Greece	4	0	4	0	0	0	4	0	4
Switzerland	2	1	1	0	0	0	2	1	1
Poland	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1
Belgium	4	3	1	4	0	4	0	3	-3
France	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	-1
Italy	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0
Bulgaria	1	0	1	2	0	2	-1	0	-1
Portugal	0	0	0	1	1	0	-1	-1	0
Finland	0	0	0	1	0	1	-1	0	-1
Austria	1	0	1	3	3	0	-2	-3	1
Czech.Rep.	0	0	0	2	0	2	-2	0	-2
Denmark	1	1	0	3	1	2	-2	0	-2
Netherlands	0	0	0	3	1	2	-3	-1	-2
Norway	0	0	0	7	1	6	-7	-1	-6
Israel	3	1	2	28	14	14	-25	-13	-12
Germany	37	17	20	67	23	44	-30	-6	-24
Other	1	1	0	2	1	1	-1	0	-1

Source: Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia

Federation of Free Latvians has proposed the establishment of a government office in Latvia to maintain contacts with the Latvian diaspora.

In 1996, the number of ethnic Latvians in Latvia increased by 402 persons as the result of immigration (359 men and 43 women). The majority arrived from Russia and the CIS, while 99 people (23.6%) came from the West. During the course of the year, 932 ethnic Latvians (676 men and 256 women) arrived to live in Latvia, but 530 Latvians (317 men and 213 women) left for other countries, thus resulting in the net migration of 402 individuals.[51]

Ethnic Russians in a post-Soviet country: to stay or to leave?

The status of ethnic Russians and other so-called Russian speakers in post-Soviet countries outside the Russian Federation is a major issue in terms of the domestic and foreign policy of many of these countries. Migration and repatriation issues are among the most difficult.

According to the last Soviet census (1989), some 25 million ethnic Russians live outside the borders of the Russian Federation. Also, there are approximately 26 million people in Russia who are not ethnic Russians. When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, many problems emerged with respect to the rights of various nationalities and ethnic groups in the post-Soviet countries.

One of the main reasons for the collapse of the Soviet empire was the fact that non-Russian populations sharply opposed the process of "Russificiation" which the Soviet government implemented by encouraging ethnic Russians to move to non-Russian territories. To a great extent this policy was a continuation of the Russification policies of the Russian czars in the late 19th and early 20th century. At the beginning of this century, only some 2.5 million ethnic Russians lived outside the current borders of the Russian Federation but within the territory of what is now the former Soviet Union. During the term in office of the imperial prime minister Stolipin, however, significant efforts were made to settle Russian peasants in non-Russian areas, especially in the territories which are now part of Kazakhstan and the Middle Asian countries and to lesser degree also in Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania. Several decades later, collectivization and industrialization programs implemented by Stalin led to enormous movements of ethnic Russians into non-Russian areas.

Inside Russian Federation and other Soviet republics Latvian villiges and comunities suffered much from that policy. In 1937, according to a census taken that year, 8 million ethnic Russians lived in the USSR but outside the borders of Russia itself. The annexation of the Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) and the incorporation into the USSR of areas of western Ukraine and western Belarus and Besarabia probably did not

change these numbers very much, and it is estimated that in 1940, before the outbreak of war between Nazi Germany and the Bolshevik USSR, there were some 9 million ethnic Russians outside of Russia but inside the Soviet Union. Two decades later, however, that number had nearly doubled. According to the 1959 census, 16,250,000 ethnic Russians lived in other Soviet republics. In the succeeding, post-Stalinist decades, these numbers increased more slowly. In 1989, according to the last Soviet census, the number stood at 25.29 million, and increase of 55.6% over 1959.

In 1989, as was stated before, there were 905,515 ethnic Russians living in Latvia (0.62% of all ethnic Russians living in the USSR). The number has decreased as the result of emigration. As was the case in the other two Baltic countries, the greatest level of emigration from Latvia to Russia took place in 1992, the first year after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Many people who had been sent to Latvia to implement the policies of Sovietization and Russification decided to leave. Another specific segment of the population from which many people departed was the group connected to the Soviet (Russian) armed forces, especially members of officers' families. The collapse of the Soviet-era military industry and its research facilities also increased the number of people leaving the country. A significant share of those who left Latvia for the various republics of the CIS were people who wanted to participate in the rebirth of their own fatherlands. More than 30 non-governmental organizations appeared in Latvia, declaring that they would help people repatriate to and from Latvia. The best known among these was the Society of Russian Latvians, which was established in 1989 in Riga with the goal of helping ethnic Latvians to repatriate from Russia and the rest of the former Soviet Union. A second well-known group was the Latvian Association for Assisting the Rebirth of Russia, "Korni", which was established in June 1991 and which advocated and helped with repatriation to Russia.

Between 1991 and 1997, emigration from Latvia to Russia outpaced immigration from Russia to Latvia. The net migration between the two countries, according to Latvia's statistical bureau, was 4,447 people in 1991, 24,396 in 1992, 17,710 in 1993, 14,949 in 1994, 7,503 in 1995 and 5,100 in 1996. Figures given by the Russian Federation usually tend to be higher, but not by much.[52] One reason for the difference in statistics is that some people left Latvia without alerting Latvian officials of this fact.

Migration and repatriation patterns in Estonia and Lithuania have been similar to those in Latvia as far as Russia is concerned. If existing trends continue, the number of persons leaving the Baltic countries will be much smaller than officials in the Russian Federation have forecasted in early 1990s.

In total, the migration balance between Latvia and other countries between 1991 and 1997 was that 34,600 people arrived and 162,600 left, or a net loss of 131,000. Public opinion in Russia on migration and repatriation issues is divided. Those who hope for a restoration of the USSR or the

Russian empire oppose the repatriation of ethnic Russians, while those who object to Russian imperialist expansionism support it. A prominent Russian intellectual, Dmitrii Likhachev, has said: "We need the 25 million ethnic Russians who are currently living abroad to return home. We strive to help them."[53] Alexander Solzhenytsin has also advocated the return of ethnic Russians to the Russian federation.

Arguments supporting the return migration of ethnic Russians is, in many cases, based primarily on demographic calculations. It is estimated that over the next 40 to 50 years, the number of ethnic Russians in the Russian Federation will be halved, largely because of very low birth rates and very high mortality. In the year 2000, the number of ethnic Russians in the Russian Federation will be slightly more than 110 million (in 1989 the number was 119.9 million). In the countries of the "near abroad", the number will be about 20 million.[54] In 1989, the number of newborn ethnic Russians in the Russian Federation was approximately the same as the number of newborns of other nationalities in the country. That means that Russians are fated to become an ethnic minority not only in the so-called "national republics" which are part of the Russian Federation, but indeed in Russia as a whole.

The increase in the number of ethnic Russians in the Russian Federation which has been experienced over the last five years has been the result of immigration from the countries of the "near abroad", and it has been insufficient to meet the country's demographic needs. In 1994, for example, approximately 450,000 ethnic Russians took up residency in the Russian Federation. This return migration is only partially slowing down the continuing decrease in the number of ethnic Russians in Russia. There are many regions, especially along the border with China, which are extremely sparsely populated and which are suffering intense difficulties because of decreasing population numbers.

In November 1993 Latvia and Russia signed an agreement on repatriation issues and assistance to repatriates. The document was written in general terms, and there is a need for another agreement in which general principles are underpinned with financial assistance in various spheres.[55]

It is estimated that there are at least 60,000 people living in Latvia at this time who have decided to leave voluntarily for Russia but who are unable to do so for financial reasons. A group of deputies in the Latvian parliament have been working on the creation of a bilateral program to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of Russians. They are proposing that the German and Russian governments be involved in this process because the infamous Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact between Hitler and Stalin in 1939 was the basis for Latvia's current demographic complications. The deputies are also seeking financial support for their program, not only from Germany, but also from other western countries.[56]

Some Russian politicians claim frequently that many ethnic Russians are being forced to leave Latvia because they do not have Latvian citizenship. In January1997, 28% of Latvia's registered inhabitants were not

citizens, but 39% of ethnic Russians in the country were citizens. There are also an estimated 20,000 citizens of the Russian Federation living in Latvia.

In December 1995 and January 1996 an opinion poll was conducted among 2,761 schoolchildren aged 13 to 19 in eighteen Russian schools throughout Latvia. Survey results showed that the slow pace of naturalization in Latvia is directly connected to the question of migration. Approximately half of the students were already citizens of Latvia, but among those who were not, 10.8% said clearly that they do not want to obtain Latvian citizenship. Another 24.4% said that they have not thought about the issue, and 1.9% did not answer. Of those who did not express a wish to obtain Latvian citizenship, 28.5% said that it was because they do not want to lose the ability to travel visa-free in the former Soviet Union, 23.3% said that they wish to avoid serving in the Latvian armed forces, and 21.9% said that they want to leave Latvia. 15.9% wished to become citizens of another country, and 1.9% have already done so. Results of this opinion poll are especially important because people between 16 and 20 are the first group being given the opportunity to become naturalized citizens in Latvia in 1996. Attitudes in other age groups are not, generally speaking, much different.

The residents of Latvia who are most actively interested in obtaining citizenship, according to surveys, are ethnic Lithuanians and Estonians. Considerably less interested are ethnic Poles, while ethnic Russians and Belarussians are still less interested.[57]

The total number of people who left Latvia in 1996 was 9,999 (4,896 men and 5,103 women). Taking into account the fact that 2,747 person immigrated into Latvia in 1996, the net migration constituted 7,252 persons.[58] Among those who emigrated, 63% were ethnic Russians, 9% were Ukrainians, 8% were Hebrews, 7% were Belarussians, 5% were Latvians, and 8% were representatives of other nationalities.

Outmigration in Kazakhstan and Kirgiztan which are regarded as belonging to those post-Soviet countries which are not ilvolved in internal bloody conflicts has been much hgher than in Latvia (Sotruzhestvo nezavisimikh gosudarstv v 1995 godu. Statisticheskii yezehegodnik. Moscow, 1996, p.17).

Many politicians and commentators in the Russian Federation have insisted that the human rights of non-Latvians in Latvia are violated extensively; the term "apartheid" is frequently used. Both in Latvia and in Russia, some politicians have declared their interest in providing financial assistance to help those ethnic Russians who want to depart Latvia to do so. A deputy in the Russian parliament, Olga Beklemischcheva, visited Riga in 1994 and declared: "In my opinion it would be just if the expenses of repatriation to Russia were covered both by Russia and Latvia, involving also international organizations and western countries."[59]

The deputy director of Russia's Migration Service, Grigori Marabanov, visited Latvia in February 1997 to discuss the possibility of signing an agreement between Russia and Latvia to regulate the process of resettlement

and to ensure the rights of people who choose to resettle. It was agreed that the Migration Service would open an office in Latvia.[60] It was open soon after.

Many specialists have declared that active emigration from Latvia has ended and that the process will occur very slowly in the future. They expect that many of the migrants who arrived in Latvia after World War II and their descendants will integrate and assimilate quite rapidly, perhaps during the course of a single generation.[61]

Partly because of emigration and partly for demographic reasons, the number of ethnic Russians in Latvia has decreased substantially -- by approximately 90,000 at the end of 1996.[62] Indeed, the overall population of Latvia has decreased significantly in the 1990s. Although ethnic Latvians immigrated more than emigrated during this period, the overall number of ethnic Latvians decreased by some 10,000 in the 1990s. The main reason has been a radically declining birth rate during the period of economic transition, as well as increasing mortality. The birth rate of ethnic Russians in Latvia has been even lower, although this has been the case since the 1960s, largely because most Russians in Latvia have lived in urban areas, where the birth rate overall has been lower than in rural areas). For this reason, the decline in the number of ethnic Russians in Latvia has been larger than that of Latvians.

Specialist Parsla Eglite has predicted that the population of Latvia will decrease by some 64,000 between 1995 and the year 2000 as the result of migration.[63] This forecast, which was written two years ago, appears to be excessive, however, as the emigration rate from Latvia has declined very rapidly, both to the East and the West. In 1997, the Russian Migration Service published its own forecast about the possible number of immigrants into Russia from all post-Soviet countries, predicting that no more than 18,800 people will immigrate to Russia from Latvia by the year 2000 (see table 4).

Many Russians and others want to leave for Russia and CIS but as almost everybody agrees the major obstacle is lack of money and information. Currently Riga city council is working on establishing an information centre for those who seek for resettlement opportunities in Russia.

Emigraton to the west from Latvia is very limited (exeptions are Jews and Germans). A. Sipaviciene says that temporal moves from Lithuania to the West are significant in number and she gives according surway results . It seems that very similar is the situaton in Latvia.

In May 1997, the European Commission sponsored a seminar for representatives of the Baltic Sea states, "Migration and refugee policy on the eastern border of the EU". Significant attention was attracted by a statement which was made by Peter Fischer, a professor from Germany, who said that the EU's joint labor market is basically closed to residents of the Baltic states who might want to migrate to Western Europe in search of a job, but that in the future, given the EU's extensive dedication to migration rights, the Baltic

states could expect the situation to change, especially after becoming members of the EU themselves. For the time being, however, it is no secret that the West is afraid of mass migration from the potential EU member countries in Eastern Europe, a process which could lead to tensions in the labor market, as well as additional social expenditures.
It is possible to conclude , on the basis of in-depth analysis of related facts, that there is no basis for such fears when it comes to the Baltic countries

Table 4

Expected immigration into Russia from post-Soviet countries between 1996 and 2000, by region of immigration (,000)

Region into which immigr. expected	All ex-Soviet states	Belarus	Kazakh-stan	Moldova	Ukraine	Kirghizia	Tajikis-tan
Total	2,795.5	96.7	862.9	53.4	791.5	29.5	68.5
Northern	145.1	8	61.3	0.7	58.5	0.3	0.9
Northwestern	133.3	8.5	38.8	1.5	37.2	0.8	2.3
Central	524.4	23.5	150.1	5.9	170.8	4.2	12.2
Volga-Vjatka	102.6	2.9	30.3	1.4	35.5	0.6	2.2
Central	223.2	4.1	85.4	3.2	55.5	3.7	6.4
Blackland	335.7	8.1	69	6.8	69.6	5.2	16.8
Privolga	395.2	8.5	118.2	4.8	58.5	2.2	6.4
North Caucasus	261.2	7.5	67.2	8.8	65.6	2.7	10.1
Urals	331.9	11.2	101.9	15.2	121.7	6.8	6.9
West Siberia	128.8	4.5	45	2.7	49.8	1.4	1.9
East Siberia	180.1	6.6	85.4	1.7	61.7	1.2	1.6
Far East	34	3.3	10.3	0.7	7.1	0.4	0.8
Kaliningrad							

Region into which immigr. expected	Turkme-nistan	Uzbek-istan	Azerbai-jan	Armenia	Georgia	Latvia	Lithua-nia	Estonia
Total	100.1	309.6	134	173.4	142.9	18.8	3.3	10.9
Northern	1.9	4	3	2.6	2.3	0.8	0.2	0.6
Northwestern	4.7	10.5	6.4	7.4	6.8	4	0.5	3.9
Central	18.9	48.6	27.2	30.9	24	4.3	0.9	2.9
Volga-Vjatka	4.1	10.4	3.4	6.6	4	0.8	0.1	0.3
Central	6.7	25.8	8.3	11.2	10.6	1.3	0.2	0.8
Blackland	18.8	73.7	26.3	24.8	14.1	1.5	0.3	0.7
Privolga	20.9	30	33.6	49.4	60.5	1.3	0.4	0.5
North Caucasus	12.6	53.6	8	14	9.1	1.3	0.3	0.4
Urals	5.9	31.7	9.1	14	6.1	0.9	0.2	0.3
West Siberia	2.1	8.7	3.4	6.1	2.6	0.4	0.1	0.1
East Siberia	2.5	8.9	3	4.8	2.1	0.4	0.1	0.1
Far East	1	3.7	2.3	1.6	0.7	1.8	0	0.3
Kaliningrad								

Source: "Prognoz immigratsii v Rossiyu iz stran SNG i Baltii" (Prognosis of immigration to Russia from the CIS and the Baltic states), *Informatsionno-analiticheskiy byulletin*, No. 1, 1997, p. 65.

because:

1) The migration potential from the three countries is smaller than Western Europe believes;

2) There is limited demand for Baltic migrants in the Western European labor market;

3) Mass migration could be prevented by successful economic integration.

It is also clear that favorable economic change in the Baltic states will limit mass migration tendencies in those countries, but that a low level of migration is always desirable if economic integration is the goal.[64]

Democracy and human rights

Migration and repatriation issues have been the object of extensive debate in Russian-language periodicals in Latvia. The press in the Russian Federation has also participated actively in this debate. In many cases authors of articles about these topics fail to give readers an objective view of the situation, choosing instead to politicize the issue extensively. Among the expressions which have been used in the discussion are "discrimination against non-Latvians", "Nazism towards non-Latvians", "racism", "apartheid", "massive violation of human rights", "ethnic cleansing", "Russophobia", etc. The aim of such articles has been to create the impression that the situation of ethnic Russians and other non-indigenous residents in Latvia is simply terrible. Latvians, as well as many people from other ethnic groups, have not been convinced. Ethnic Latvians are often offended by the more jingoistic articles, especially those which claim that Latvians are seeking to expel all non-Latvians from the country. The fact is that there have been no incidents of ethnic violence in Latvia since 1991.

This has not, however, stopped Russia from misrepresenting the situation with human rights in Latvia and Estonia in a variety of international forums. Many Russian politicians and commentators seem to see human rights as "largely applying only to the minority population of non-citizens, and not to each and every individual," according to a review of human rights in Latvia.[65]

One of the most often attacked institutions in Latvia is the Department of Citizenship and Immigration. At the time when the department began registering the inhabitants of Latvia, the state's policy on the issues was in several respects less than clear. Some problems occurred because of insufficiencies or contradictions in laws and regulations governing the issue, but other problems were the result of improper behavior on the part of department employees,. This behavior was criticized both within Latvia and by representatives of several international institutions active in the field of human rights. Most of the department's conflicts were the result of its refusal (justified in some instances but unjustified in others) to register people as permanent residents of Latvia. Numerous complaints were received about this, although more recently the situation has changed.

The number of complaints against the department has declined. In 1996, the Latvian National Human Rights Office received 322 complaints about the department -- less than 20% of the total number of complaints about human rights issues in that year.[66] In the first quarter of 1997, the decline in the number of complaints continued.[67]

Another area in which there are many allegations of human rights violations in Latvia is the issue of differences between the rights of citizens and those of non-citizens in the country. There have been numerous articles about this issue in the Latvian and non-Latvian news media. At one point there were nearly 70 specific differences in political, employment, ownership and other rights. Acting on the basis of a request from the parliament's human rights committee, the Latvian National Human Rights Office prepared its opinion of these differences in the context of international rights and customs. Several international experts took part in this process.[68] The report concluded that since the list of 70 differences was drawn up, Latvian law had changed considerably, and only 34 differences were in effect in December 1996. Of these, according to the Human Rights Office, only 10 could be justified.[69] One specific form of employment which was closed to non-citizens was fire fighting, and the report concluded that "for individuals who are responsible to the director of the fire fighting service and who perform only fire fighting and immediate rescue work, but do not participate in important decision making at the national level, the requirement for Latvian citizenship is not justified."[70] Other job restrictions which the report criticized were those applied to private detectives, armed guards, members of airline crews, licensed pharmacists and veterinary pharmacists, and lecturers and specialists at the Latvian Academy of Medicine.

Another fraught issue in the area of human rights is the matter of naturalization in Latvia. There have been claims that the process of obtaining Latvian citizenship is so complicated, and the required examination on Latvian history so difficult, that the possibility of becoming a Latvian citizen is little more than theoretical.[71] Naturalization in Latvia has, in fact, proceeded quite slowly; fewer than 6,000 people have obtained Latvian citizenship so far. Although most western experts have said that Latvia's naturalization requirements correspond to international standards, there has been serious pressure from certain quarters to water them down to the point where they would be all but meaningless.

According to the director of the Latvian Naturalization Office, Eizenija Aldermane, the actual reason for the slow pace of naturalization is the fact that there is a low level of civic consciousness among non-citizens in Latvia. Mrs. Aldermane feels that the government must make it unquestionably clear that pressure from Russia or from some experts at the Council of Europe will not cause the state to weaken naturalization requirements and that there is no point in waiting for the government to do so.[72]

The majority of western commentators and scholars have agreed that Latvia's naturalization requirements are not excessive and that they are not in

violation of the principles of democracy. On the other hand, one may well agree with a different claim, that both Latvia and Estonia have established what are known as ethnic democracies. These are defined by Smootha and Hauf as a system when structural superior status is given to a particular segment of the population where the non-dominant group is regarded as having relatively less claim to the state and also as not being fully loyal.[73] In both countries, a certain amount of hegemony has been granted to people who were citizens before 1940 and their descendants, this at the expense of the people who arrived in Latvia and Estonia after the Soviet occupation of 1940. This strictly legalistic approach to defining the body of citizenship does not include only ethnic Estonians and Latvians, because the pre-war citizenry also included Russians, Belarussians, Poles, Hebrews, etc. All those who arrived in Estonia and Latvia after the Soviet occupation, however (and this includes no small number of ethnic Latvians and Estonians), are required to obtain citizenship and the political rights which are linked to it.

The hegemony of the core nation has also been bolstered by language laws which in Latvia's case make Latvian the sole official state language. Because of language and citizenship restrictions, ethnic Latvians are overrepresented in elected state bodies and at all levels of government. It is, however, true that both citizens and non-citizens have access to a wide range of civil and political rights, including freedom of the press, access to an independent judiciary and the right to travel freely. Ethnic communities have specific rights to organize schools where lessons are taught in their own language, to publish newspapers, to produce radio and television programs (in practice this has almost always meant programs in Russian), to organize cultural associations and clubs, etc.[74]

These "ethnic democracies" in Latvia and Estonia can be seen as a means for conflict regulation, because they have provided a bases for accommodating the sense of insecurity of the core nation while at the same time opening the door for free choice for post-war immigrants to integrate and obtain Latvian or Estonian citizenship, to live in the two countries without any citizenship, to obtain the citizenship of a different country, or to emigrate to any other country.

Russia has adopted laws and regulations concerning people who move to Russia from other post-Soviet countries. The laws are written to encourage people who want to move to obtain the status of refugee or forced resettler. That is because simple resettlers and repatriates receive virtually no government assistance once they arrive in Russia. Refugees and forced resettlers, however, have much better prospects of obtaining significant material assistance.

The Russian *Interfax* agency has quoted the Russian Migration Service in claiming that between the beginning of 1992 and October 1996, the number of people who left Latvia with the status of refugee or forced resettler was 18,000.[75] Many experts have expressed their doubt about that figure.

The fact is that in a great many respects, Latvia has established a situation which allows Russians and people other nationalities who are not citizens of Latvia to function freely in society and to move toward ever greater integration with Latvian society. The groundwork for this was established, to a certain extent, during the Soviet era. Many Russians, Belarussians, Ukrainians and representatives of other nationalities were active supporters of Latvia's bid for independence from the Soviet Union.

Changes in intercultural communications patterns in Latvia

A very important factor in the further integration of the Latvian population is intercultural communications among the various nationalities in the country. During the struggle against the totalitarian Soviet regime in the late 1980s, as well as after the restoration of Latvian independence, essential changes occurred in Latvia in this area. These were to some extent a continuation of trends which had existed for some time. Currently all aspects of intercultural communications are influenced by the ability of Latvia's residents to express different views on former and existing attitudes and problems freely.

Especially significant is the fact that the interests and worries of ethnic Latvians, which were suppressed during the Soviet era, gained free expression upon the collapse of the regime. In the field of culture, a key demand has been Derussification. The domination of Soviet Russian culture has been rejected throughout the non-Russian republics of the former Soviet Union, and there has been a reemergence of non-Soviet national cultures, along with an increased consumption of western culture. This all forms a background for changes in intercultural communication patterns in Latvia.

After the Soviet takeover of 1940, virtually all of the cultural activities which were neither Latvian nor Russian in terms of ethnic definition were brought to a halt. Schools, newspapers, publishing houses and cultural societies of various ethnic groups were closed down, and the ethnic minorities were subjected to severe Russification. During the struggle for the restoration of Latvian independence and afterward, the smaller ethnic groupings in the country (Poles, Hebrews, Lithuanians, Estonians, Belarussians, etc.) began to reestablish their own ethnic organizations and culturally autonomous networks. Ethnic groups which largely arrived in Latvia after World War II (Ukrainians, Moldovans, Tatars, Armenians, Georgians, Azerbaijans, etc.) were, for the first time in their entire history in Latvia, given an opportunities to establish ethnically based cultural organizations.

The cultural activities of ethnic Russians in Latvia, as well as their role in intercultural communication, have receded considerably since the restored independence of the Latvian state. At the same time, however, there can be

no doubt that ethnic Russians will continue to be the main partners in the intercultural dialogue which Latvians will continue to wage in the country. In 1997, Russians make up more than 30% of the Latvian population, and there are numerous representatives of other ethnic groups who are loosely known as "Russian speakers".

In 1994, 40.8% of schoolchildren in Latvia attended schools at which Russian was the primary language of instruction. In 1988, the analogous figure was 47.6%. The change has been influenced primarily by the fact that new schools and classes with other languages of instruction have been opened in Latvia. Data from the Department of Citizenship and Immigration from September 1994 show that Russian is the sole family language for 36.5% of Latvia's inhabitants. One serious obstacle in terms of intercultural communication as far as Russians concerned is that many Russians have a poor command of Latvian. According to 1989 census data, only 22.3% of Russians in that year spoke Latvian.[76] At the same time, 68.3% of ethnic Latvians spoke Russian, according to official data. The gulf has narrowed over the last several years, and currently it appears that approximately one-third of ethnic Russians in Latvia are able to speak the local language.[77] The majority of ethnic Russians agree that it would be of benefit to them to be able to speak Latvian. Sociological polls conducted by M. Rodin and V. Volkov in 1993 and 1995 show that younger ethnic Russians are more interested in learning Latvian and integrating into Latvian society than are people of other age groups.

Prospects for good intercultural communication in the future between the majority of ethnic Latvians and Russians are also affected by the fact that the two groups have similar views with respect to many economic and political issues. The second "New Baltic Barometer" (April 1995), an opinion poll conducted by R. Rose and his colleagues, shows that there is wide agreement between most Latvians and most Russians with respect to democratic developments in independent Latvian, as well as with respect to the idea that a majority of Latvians fear the Russian state and hard-line Russian nationalism. There are, both in Latvia and in Russia, Russians who potentially could pose a threat both to peaceful development and to cooperation in all spheres. Radical Russian nationalists defend the view that a system of apartheid has been created in Latvia and that discrimination has been waged against everything Russian. Most Russians, however, believe these accusations to be baseless.

It appears that Latvia, a country which has experienced intercultural communication for many centuries, has many things going for it when it comes to further progress in this area. For one thing, there is a high rate of ethnic intermarriage in Latvia. Approximately one-third of all marriages are interethnic (one-fifth of all marriages in which one partner is an ethnic Latvian). This fact provides evidence that there are no insurmountable intercultural tensions between the various ethnic groups in the Latvian population.

Specific efforts have been made by several organizations to improve interethnic and intercultural relations, including the Latvian Center for Human Rights and Ethnic Studies, which was established in Riga in December 1993. It works toward promoting cooperation and understanding among Latvia's ethnic communities. One of the most interesting local organizations is the Multinational Cultural Center in Daugavpils, Latvia's second city. There are 14 national cultural societies in the city, including Russians, Latvians, Lettigallian, Balto-Slavic, Polish, Hebrew, "Inter-Baltic", etc. Members in these societies do not necessarily all belong to the same ethnic grouping, a fact which can be explained by the multi-ethnic nature of the city.

The Multinational Cultural Center has stated that its goal is to popularize the idea of multiculturalism in society.[78] The various cultural societies, however, have differing views on what this really means, and this has led to some serious debate.

The patterns of intercultural communications in Latvia are currently in a period of transition. Despite controversies and varying opinions on many subjects, intercultural communication in Latvia seems to be quite stable. However, there are still many unresolved issues, including national legislation and Latvia's international agreements with the ethnic homelands of Latvia's ethnic groups. Activities by non-governmental organizations may play a very important role in the future development of these processes.

Illegal migration: refugees

In the early 1990s the Latvian government encountered a new and unexpected problem: substantial numbers of migrants from the Middle East, Asia and Africa who had illegally entered Russia, Ukraine and Belarus and who hoped to use the Baltic states as a transit point toward the Nordic countries and Western Europe. This was an enormous problem which involved legal, financial, ethical and other dimensions. The initial actions taken by the Latvian government were aimed at determining the legal status of the new arrivals, dealing with the humanitarian aspects of caring for these persons, and, especially, strengthening Latvia's borders.[79]

Illegal migrants began to arrive in Latvia in the early 1990s. Many of them were Kurds from Iraq, but there were also residents of Vietnam, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Many refugees managed to "charter" small ships or boats in Latvia's smaller sea ports and to use these vessels to travel to Sweden and Denmark. Latvia at that time did not have treaties with the Nordic countries on the return of illegal migrants, so the captains of the ships faced legal prosecution, but the refugees themselves often were granted residency in the Nordic states.[80]

Even though data about the number of people who have been detained on Latvia's borders while attempting to illegally enter the country are

far from complete, they do provide some idea of the problem. During 1994, each month there were between 120 and 190 arrests, on average, of would-be illegal border crossers. That amounts to between 1,500 and 2,000 individuals a year. International research indicates that Latvia's numbers were many times higher than those in Finland and Turkey, to name just a few countries. Other research into the control of unlawful migration throughout the world suggests that no more than 3-5% of illegal migrants are caught in the process. There is no reason to believe that the situation in Latvia is any different.

From this we can conclude that in 1993 and 1994, between 30,000 and 40,000 illegal migrants crossed Latvia's borders. There were also people who crossed the Latvian border illegally in the other direction, i.e. -- outbound. It is estimated that the number of illegal emigrants in 1994 was approximately one-third lower than illegal immigrants -- between 20,000 and 30,000 people.

The presence of an uncontrolled number of illegal inhabitants in the country creates serious security problems. Among these people are retired Russian military officers, members of organized crime structures, and the like. Because there are extensive connections between illegal migration and organized crime, this problem has severe implications in terms of various social problems in Latvia (illegal trade in weapons, smuggling, bribery, the narcotics business, etc.).

A large share of people who arrive in Latvia illegally are migrants from the Middle East and Near East. They come through Russia and other CIS countries. Most of the illegal immigrants in those countries come from economically unstable countries in Asia and Africa, including Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Iraq. According to data from the Russian Federal Migration Service, more than 500,000 such people were present in Russia in 1994. There are also large numbers of illegal migrants in Ukraine and Belarus, and many of them hope to get to Western Europe by way of Latvia and the other Baltic states as transit countries. The illegal migrants take advantage of the fact that migration law in the Baltic states and the CIS countries is by no means in good order, and, in Latvia's care, there are problems that arise from the fact that governing systems are still being established. There are also problems with bribery and the sale of forget documents.

Most of the illegal immigrants who arrive in Latvia have forged papers which allow them to travel on airliners and to get past border control facilities. An entire industry has sprung up to meet the extensive demand for false documents. The first stopover for illegal migrants from the Middle East or Asia is somewhere in the South -- Afghanistan, Turkey, Iran, Iraq or China. In all of these places there are organized assistance networks which offer forged invitations that are needed for entry into Russia and the CIS countries, as well as false passports and visas. Forgery of documents also takes place in Latvia. Between November 1993 and September 1994 the authorities discovered 61 forged Soviet foreign passports which had been produced in

Latvia.[81] Several companies in Latvia have been found to have access to blank copies of Soviet foreign passports which, according to data from Russia's Interpol office, were delivered to Georgia and Abkhazia in 1993 and which apparently have been stolen or otherwise illegally obtained.

The route taken by most illegal migrants passes through Russia or other CIS countries, through Poland or the Baltic states and then on to Germany or Scandinavia. An illegal migrant who arrives in Latvia can choose to proceed by land or by sea. Smugglers offer land transportation for between USD 1,500 and USD 2,000, while a sea voyage costs around USD 2,000. The "southern option" -- a land voyage -- passes through Poland to Germany, and the most common method has been to include illegal migrants in tourist groups. At one time there were several "tourist companies" in Riga which specialized in this business. There is also a "northern route" by land, which went through Estonia and Karelia to Sweden or Finland. The sea option puts people in shipping containers in the Ventspils port and then brings them to Sweden via Gottland island. In many cases this did not require any documents at all, because the cost of the service included the appropriate "assistance" by the ship captain and the border guard official. Illegal migrants who have documents are often happy to get rid of them, because they want to ask for refugee status as soon as they reach Sweden, and it does not do to have the authorities know precisely from where the individual has come.

A second sea route has involved a trip from Riga to Tallinn, from whence the "tourists" can board a ferry for Sweden or Denmark. These activities, at least at one time, were quite extensive.[82]

In Latvia, as in other countries around the Baltic Sea, the illegal migration process has closely been linked to organized crime.[83] As Latvia has gradually strengthened its institutions, efforts to hinder the process have become more concentrated, but this has merely served to drive the matter underground. At one time inspectors from the Immigration Police could nab large groups of illegal migrants -- as many as 60 at once sometimes -- simply by conducting passport control in place where illegal migrants were likely to be found -- the railway station, harbors, cheap hotels, hostels and marketplaces. Today, however, the Immigration Police only catch about 50 illegal migrants each month.

"The process has become more difficult because people know that we have gained experience, and they are starting to hide," says Immigration Police Commander A. Kurpnieks. "Many illegal immigrants have legalized their status in Latvia through the purchase of illegal documents, and it is very difficult to smoke such people out."[84] In the first four months of 1997, the police arrested 184 illegal migrants.[85]

Given that there are quite a few illegal migrants in Latvia at this time, efforts are being conducted to find them, arrest them and deport them. In 1996, the National Immigration Police conducted a document check on 3,165 people in the capital city of Riga, finding 689 who were in the country

illegally. All were arrested. The immigration division of the Riga Police Department, meanwhile, checked 895 people and arrested 259. These are data which reflect only the work of two police departments. Illegal migrants are also caught by the Latvian border guard, as well as by authorities in other cities and towns.

The fact that this work has been occurring at a very rapid pace is suggested simply by the fact that the immigration division of the Riga Police Department has been in operation only since 1 August 1996, but it has already taken some very successful steps in resolving the various problems which it must face. The number of people who are checked and arrested, however, has tended to decrease, mostly because violators of the law are becoming increasingly cautious in their activities, although one hopes that in part this has been because the authorities have become more vigilant and skilled in their efforts.

If in 1995 Latvia deported 602 individuals who had come to the country illegally, then in 1996 the total number was only 485 people, and in the first four months of 1997 -- 95 individuals. Most of the deportations have been to Russia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Belarus. In each instance proof had to be obtained that the respective individual had arrived in Latvia from that particular country. Criminal proceedings in 1995 were launched against 39 people who returned to Latvia after being deported, and 14 of those matters were turned over to the courts. Criminal charges were usually filed for illegal border crossing, violation of visa regulations and use of forged documents. People who are sent to prison for these violations are expelled from the country as soon as they have completed their prison term.

In the first four months of 1997, 14 people were expelled from Latvia upon the completion of prison terms -- 4 to Ukraine, 3 to Azerbaidzhan, 2 apiece to Belarus and Lithuania, and one each to Georgia, Moldova and Russia. In 1996 the number of foreigners completing prison terms was 114. Of these 115 were expelled from Latvia, while the others remained in the country's border facilities for some time, because convicted criminals do not always have an easy time receiving permission to return to their own countries.[86]

Since the beginning of 1993, Latvia has denied entry visas for a number of reasons on 4,433 instances. In 1996 alone, 1,021 people were barred from entering Latvia.

It has also happened that people who at one time arrived in Latvia legally have become illegal residents since then. This applies to a number of people who came to Latvia during the Soviet era as students (mostly from Africa and South Asia) or as guest workers (Mongolians and Vietnamese) at various Latvian factories. Knowing the difficult conditions in their homelands, many of these people have decided that they do not want to go home. Most of the guest workers have been located and sent home, but the authorities have had greater trouble locating the former students whose visas expired when they completed their studies.

Looking back at the history of illegal migration in Latvia, it must be said that the institutions which have been charged with battling against it were, at least at the beginning, forced to work in very difficult and occasionally even dangerous conditions. In some instances there was an absence of cooperation among the various structural units which were supposed to work together on the issue. There was a lack of equipment to establish databases needed to maintain information about the illegal migration scene, and effective communications systems needed to be established. In was only in September 1994 that the Cabinet of Ministers even decided to establish a separate Immigration Police.[87]

There is still a need to improve on Latvian law in the area of migration. The issue of whether Latvia should accede to international conventions on migration issues has been particularly fraught. Initially a Cabinet of Ministers committee recommended against signing the 1951 Geneva convention on refugees, arguing that Latvia could not provide the conditions for refugee housing which the convention mandates. The decisive objection against signing the convention, however, appears to have been a conviction among a number of leading politicians that if Latvia were to create even minimally favorable conditions for refugees, it would be swamped with illegal migrants immediately, just like Sweden. This argument was promoted in mid-1994 by the Latvian ambassador to Sweden, Imants Gross.[88]

Events soon conspired, however, to prove that Latvia needed to resolve the refugee issue in all due haste. During a storm, a Latvian ship, *Katrana*, ran aground near an Estonian island. It turned out that there were 140 Asians aboard the ship, all of whom claimed to be refugees. Estonia sent the people back to Latvia the very next day. Latvia, in turn, sought to expel them secretly to Russia, from where they had come, but that did not work. The refugees ended up in a hastily constructed camp for internees at Olaine, not far from Riga.

A special government working group began elaborating national law on illegal migration and refugees in mid-1995, but for a variety of reasons, especially sharp opposition by a former interior minister, Janis Adamsons, the process moved slowly. In mid-1996 a second interministerial working group was established to elaborate the refugee and asylum policy and to prepare Latvia for accession to the 1951 UN convention and its 1967 protocol. Leadership of the commission was entrusted to the parliamentary secretary of the Foreign Ministry, Olavs Bruvers.

In October 1996, the Cabinet of Ministers, in order to specify the range of people who could apply for refugee status or asylum in Latvia in order to flee persecution in their home countries, approved a conceptual document from the Bruvers working group which addressed these issues. The working group was charged with submitting proposed legislation to the Cabinet of Ministers along with a review of the UN convention and any amendments to Latvian law which would be needed in order to join that document.

The legislation which was eventually proposed was put on a fast track by the government's inter-faction cooperation council, and Parliament's Commission on Human Rights and Public Affairs unanimously approved the bill, "On asylum seekers and refugees in the Republic of Latvia" at the end of April 1997. Commission members said that the legislation is needed for several important reasons:

1) In the spring of 1997 the European Union was scheduled to begin a lengthy review of the extent to which its various associate members are ready to begin negotiations on full membership;

2) The legislation would allow Latvia to institute visa-free travel arrangements with a number of countries.

The fact is that Lithuania and Estonia have both joined the Geneva convention, in January 1997 and February 1997, respectively.[89] In addition, the Estonian parliament adopted a law on refugees on 18 February 1997.[90] The Latvian parliament gave final approval to the refugee law and ratified the Geneva convention on 19 June 1997. The Latvian law states that refugee status cannot be granted to people who are subjects of the law "On the status of those citizens of the former USSR who do not have citizenship in the Republic of Latvia or any other country" and that refugee status can be granted only to such people who arrive in Latvia because they have justified fear of persecution because of their race, religion, nationality, social belonging or political views in the country where they are citizens. The law provides for the establishment of a Refugee Affairs Center to deal with these issues.[91]

Latvia has also reached refugee readmission agreements with Lithuania, Estonia, Denmark, Finland, Sweden and several other western countries. Negotiations with other western countries are proceeding successfully, but these are not the countries which are causing Latvia the most serious headaches. That honor belongs to Russia, Belarus and Ukraine, because most of the illegal migrants who come to Latvia from those countries are either involved in the criminal world or are homeless wanderers. The Latvian Foreign Ministry submitted proposed readmission agreements to Russia and Belarus some time ago, but there has been no concrete response from either country. Belarus has claimed that it does not sign treaties of this type with anyone, while Russia has said that it will sign a readmission treaty only if Latvia approves visa-free travel between Russia and Latvia.[92]

It is unlikely that readmission agreements will be signed with most CIS countries in the near future. The only readmission treaty which exists at this time is with Ukraine (June 1997), a country with which Latvia does not have a border. Russia and Belarus have dragged their feet on this issue, apparently because of domestic problems. Russian officials have taken the view that the issue of a readmission treaty is more important for Latvia, which needs such a treaty as part of the requirements for joining the European Union, than for Russia. Indeed, Moscow has signed no readmission agreements at all with its neighbors. Russia understands full well that most illegal migrants into the

Baltic states first pass through Russia, arriving in that country through its porous southern border. Moscow wants to resolve that issue before it signs any readmission agreement with Latvia.[93]

Another serious problem in the area of migration affairs is the specification of a place to put illegal migrants. The aforementioned camp at Olaine was established in the mid-1990s, and at one point some 120 people lived there, a process which was extremely expensive for Latvia -- some one million lats (approximately USD 2 million) over the course of 18 months. Eventually the Scandinavian countries agreed to take in the majority of the residents at the Olaine camp, but 22 people from Vietnam, India, Sudan, Angola and other African countries remained at the center in April 1997.[94]

In the future there are plans to put illegal migrants at the Olaine camp, while a former Soviet army base at Mucenieki has been chosen for the creation of a new refugee center. The facility will be able to handle up to 250 people at a time while they are waiting for the disposition of their request for refugee status, and people will be able to stay there for up to six months. Olaine, according to the working group recommendation, would be used to house people who have been listed for deportation, but the financing for the Olaine facility is not year clear. Both Scandinavian countries and the United Nations High Commission on Refugees have promised funding for the Mucenieki refugee center, but not for the Olaine location.

Another extremely important issue here is training for Latvian border guards to make them more professional. In the spring of 1997, only about one-half of Latvia's border guard force was made up of professional individuals, while the other half came from military conscripts serving 12-month tours of duty. Conscripts received two or three months of training, after which they started to perform border guard functions. In due course, however, they left military service, and the border guard lost whatever benefit it had had.

In March 1997 the government decided to change the situation and to implement a fully professional border guard.[95] This will cost approximately 500,000 lats. The government also decided to increase efforts in developing border facilities along the Russian and Belarussian frontiers. The process apparently will be easier with Belarus, because Latvia has no border disputes with that country.[96]

Conclusion

The following conclusions can be drawn from all of the aforementioned information:

Latvia, like Estonia, is continuing to experience quite strongly the negative consequences of Soviet-era immigration. The unnatural immigration of the earlier period has affected the current flow of migration and repatriation

in the two countries to a very great extent. Facts which are at our disposal affirm that this effect will remain in place for a long time to come.

The repeal of limitations on migration to the West has had very little effect on migration patterns. Emigration from Latvia to the West, as well as from Estonia and Lithuania, is rare, and it is safe to assume that it will not increase, not least because of limitations on immigration which are imposed in the West.

Latvia's experience has shown that because of the enormous numbers of immigrants from the Soviet era, as well as the proportion which these people represent in the Latvian population, integration of the Latvian society is quite difficult. Although Latvian language skills among non-Latvians have improved over the last several years (approximately one-third of the immigrants are able to communicate in Latvian), these skills are developing slowly, and this has caused many immigrants to isolate themselves in their own environment.

In order to avoid any worsening in this situation, the governments of all three Baltic states have chosen to limit immigration from Russia and the other countries of the CIS. This position can be viewed as proper, even though for many individuals, it gives rise to negative emotions.

Compared to several other countries in the Confederation of Independent States, Latvia has better indicators with respect to emigration and repatriation from the country. This essentially affirms that the living conditions of post-war immigrants of Russian, Ukrainian and Belarussian stock are sufficiently good to keep them from going off to search for better fortune elsewhere or moving back to their countries of origin.

Data show that the main factors which split the residents of Latvia into groups is not ethnic belonging or citizenship, but rather the political views to which each individual subscribes and the material condition of each person. Clear evidence of this is provided by the fact that in parliamentary and local elections, a large share of Russians and other non-Latvians vote for the major Latvian political parties. None of the specifically Russian political parties which have fielded candidates in parliamentary elections has succeeded in winning a single seat, even though if all ethnic Russian citizens in Latvia had voted for these parties, at least 12 deputies would have been elected to the 100-seat chamber.

All this means that also in the area of migration and repatriation, the main significance lies not in the ethnic factor, but rather in the extent to which representatives of various professions, social groups, etc., feel secure with respect to their future in Latvia -- their ability to find a job, personal development opportunities for themselves and their families, etc.

This affirms that the main factor affecting migration and repatriation to Russia is economic considerations. The collapse of many Soviet-era factories and other institutions, or at least a radical narrowing of output, left approximately 100,000 people out of work, and many of these people see little chance of getting a new job in Latvia; instead, they are looking to Russia

as a place of employment. One major factor which keeps people from finding jobs and advancing their careers in Latvia is the fact that many Russians and other post-war immigrants still have difficulties with the Latvian language.

Latvia's statistical bureau does not have data about people who migrated to the East or the West for a longer period of time, only to return to Latvia later. These people usually do not register information about themselves. Many are people who have gone to work in Western Europe without the necessary permits, or they are "small businessmen" who travel extensively to purchase inexpensive goods to sell at a profit in Latvia.

In sum, we can conclude that the facts underpin the hypothesis that Latvia has moved forward successfully in implementing democratic norms in the area of migration and repatriation. This process has proceeded slowly, however, and this has led to a number of accusations against the state. Latvia has received, and continues to receive significant support in elaborating its laws and regulations in the area of migration and repatriation, as well as various types of practical, material, educational and other assistance in this area, the country's overall economic problems during the period transition have kept it from carrying out all of its desires. One of the most important areas in which material assistance is needed urgently is the area of assistance for repatriates who have chosen to move to Latvia from other countries, or have chosen to move to other countries from Latvia, but who are kept from doing so because they cannot afford the relocation expenses. These are people who have no intention of integrating with local society, but at the same time they are unable to leave. It has frequently been suggested that the western countries could offer greater assistance in this respect.

In the area of migration and repatriation, one negative factor is the fact that migrants and repatriates lack information about job opportunities in Russia and CIS countries which are their goal. The establishment of information services in this area would not be expensive, but it would provide concrete and practical benefits.

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Summary
Migration and Repatriation in Post-Soviet Countries: the Latvian Case
Juris Prikulis

As one of Post-Soviet countries, Latvia has similarities with other of the former republics of the USSR. At the same time, however, it has (as well as other ex-Soviet nations) its own specific issues. During the Word War II Latvia suffered greater losses than Estonia and Lithuania due to killings, emigration and deportations.
After the war as the result of the population influx from other parts of the Soviet Union, the Latvia population burgeoned, and in 1949 the number of inhabitants was considerably larger than had been the case in 1940. In

Lithuania the inflow of immigrants was not as significant because Lithuania being relatively backward and poor, was not attractive for immigrants. In this respect it was more similar to other then Soviet republics in the European part of the former USSR and mainly therefore the number of inhabitants in Lithuania didn't surpass the 1940 level until 1969.

Estimates suggest that if post-war Latvia had been as poor and agriculturally based as Lithuania, Latvia's post-war population would have returned to the 1940 population level perhaps even after 1990.

In post-Soviet Latvia the right to immigrate is reserved for three types of people: those who want to bring together families; those who want to settle in Latvia for business purposes; and those who have a Latvian background in terms of their ethnicity. The majority of immigrants arrive from Russia and other CIS countries. The largest number of ethnic Latvians arriving in the country so far has come from Russia and CIS. In total , the migration balance between Latvia and other countries between 1991 and 1997 was that 31,600 people arrived and 162,600 left for a net loss of 131,000. The outmigration is decreasing substantially every year. Public opinion in Russia and among ethnic Russians in Latvia is divided on this issue. The majority of experts do not agree that there are massive violations of ethnic Russians human rights in Latvia.

In November 1993 Latvia and Russian Federation signed an agreement on repatriation issues and assistance to repatriates. Illegal immigrants and refugees began to arrive in Latvia in the early 1990s, many of them from Middle East, New East and Africa.

Latvia has done much to establish state structures to deal with illegal immigrants and refugees.

After long debates the Latvian Parliament adopted the refugee law and ratified the Geneva convention on 19 June 1997.

In general Latvia has moved successfully in introducing and implementing democratic norms in the area of migration and repatriation.